

SSSS Statement of Values and Expectations

SSSS, as an organization dedicated to advancing sexual knowledge and science, expects all organization leaders, members, and event attendees to communicate with each other professionally and constructively. In face-to-face, phone, and virtual interactions associated with the organization, we encourage respect—even in the face of disagreement. We also request leaders, members, and event attendees strive to engage in discussions and interactions with open-mindedness, kindness, and respect for alternative viewpoints.

SSSS fosters a worldwide community of professionals from diverse backgrounds and with diverse points of view, and thus, it is critical the work of the organization take place in an environment that recognizes the inherent worth of every person. As an organization, we desire to create a productive, inclusive, and welcoming environment for individuals of all identities, including but not limited to, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, racial and ethnic identity, and religion, as well as abilities, physical appearances, and other group statuses. Likewise, we want SSSS events to be collegial and professional environments where all participants, regardless of career stage, are valued and treated with respect.

Environments that are supportive, inclusive, and free from harassment, hostility, and ridicule are the most productive and conducive to our mission of advancing sexual knowledge. SSSS leadership is committed to ensuring an atmosphere of respect, openness, and inclusion by modeling behavior that promotes these values and by speaking up or intervening when witnessing behavior that violates these values. We also encourage all members and attendees to join us in promoting these values and speaking up when they witness behavior that undermines these values.

SSSS Code of Conduct

The SSSS Code of Conduct is guided by the aspirational Statement of Values and Expectations. The Code of Conduct applies to anyone present at SSSS events and meetings including staff, contractors, vendors, exhibitors, SSSS members, and all other attendees. This code is intended to guide behavior at SSSS events and online spaces; it does not provide guidance about how research should be conducted.

With the goal of providing SSSS members and event attendees with clear guidance about expectations at our organizational meetings and events, we offer examples of three sets of behaviors:

(1) *Aspirational behaviors* represent the types of behaviors we hope all members and event attendees will exhibit; these are ideal behaviors and are consistent with the Statement of Values and Expectations above. These are not enforceable behaviors.

(2) *Expected behaviors* represent the types of behaviors we require of our members and event attendees. Violations of these behaviors may initially invoke an informal response (e.g., a polite request that the violator desist in the behavior), and repeated

violations despite requests to desist may invoke a more formal response (e.g., investigation by an external investigator with the possibility of sanctions).

(3) *Prohibited behaviors* represent behaviors—most of which are illegal—that may be met with an immediate formal response, including an investigation with the possibility of formal sanctions as described in the procedures section below.

Aspirational behaviors could include but are not limited to:

- Be respectful and constructive when providing scholarly feedback or criticism.
- Be considerate of audience members' hearing and visual needs (e.g., by using microphones and clearly designed and readable slides).
- Support respectfully-communicated dissent and alternative viewpoints.
- Keep an open, skeptical, and curious mind.
- Be welcoming and respectful to individuals of all ages, races/ethnicities, gender identities, sexual identities, religions, abilities, physical appearances, etc.
- Make efforts to talk to and include new attendees and those attending the conference alone.
- Be cautious about inviting individuals with less professional or institutional power (e.g., if you are faculty and they are students; if you are their supervisor; if you are senior faculty and they are junior) to private locations or to become inebriated with you, as they may not feel free to decline without fear of repercussions.
- Use welcoming, respectful, and inclusive language. Examples of this include using the language that reflects what people call themselves, and using language that reflects all genders and sexualities.
- Intervene if you see harassment occurring. This could be accomplished by creating a distraction, interjecting yourself into the conversation, or reporting the incident to the SSSS Executive Director, a Board of Directors member, or the onsite Ombuds at the annual meeting.

Expected behaviors could include but are not limited to:

- During talks, save comments, questions, and debate until the question and answer period (unless the speaker invites questions and comments throughout).
- Refrain from commenting on people's bodies or appearance, including but not limited to, comments about their genitals, body shape or size, or sex appeal.
- In the interest of creating a culture of consent, ask for consent before engaging in affectionate behaviors like hugging or back rubbing—especially if you don't know the person well or if you have greater institutional power (see description above) than they do.
- Do not call people by gendered titles or pronouns unless they have directly disclosed their gender, and do not call individuals by non-disclosed gender titles or pronouns.
- Call people by their preferred names.
- Avoid generalizations and disparaging comments about any identity group.

- Avoid making uninvited judgments regarding a person’s lifestyle choices and practices, including those related to food, health, parenting, sex, and employment.
- Do not reveal private aspects of a person’s identity to others without that person’s consent.
- Expect that people at SSSS will talk about sexuality. It is fine to talk about the content of sex research, but don’t ask about attendees’ personal sexuality (e.g., their sexual behaviors or identity).
- Avoid extreme intoxication (from alcohol or other substances) at SSSS events that might lead to interference with the scientific and social agendas.

Prohibited behaviors could include but are not limited to:

- Repeatedly violating the “expected behaviors” described in the above list *despite being asked to stop*.
- *Sustained and repeated* disruption during talks.
- Engaging in sexual behavior (e.g., kissing; touching the buttocks, breasts, or genitals; oral, anal, or vaginal sex) without consent.
- Physically threatening or stalking (following, monitoring, tracking) any attendee.
- Using violent language or threats of violence.
- Encouraging another individual to commit violence, including encouraging a person to commit suicide or to engage in self-harm.
- Repeatedly photographing or recording someone without their permission.
- Repeated sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions that continue after the other person has communicated a lack of interest.
- Epithets, slurs, or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts; jokes and display or circulation of written material or visual images that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group.
- Retaliation against someone who reports a violation of this code of conduct.

SSSS Procedures for Responding to Severe Violations of the Code of Conduct

Because of our commitment to ensuring our events are equitable, respectful, and harassment-free, SSSS has hired an Ombuds Service to provide independent, confidential services during our events. If you believe you have experienced a severe violation of the code of conduct (e.g., sexual harassment, discrimination) at one of our events, you may call the Ombuds Service to seek advice and consultation. The Ombuds can help in the following ways:

- Listen and offer confidential support;
- Provide information, resources, and referrals;
- Help you consider various options for moving forward, which could include alerting hotel security and police if there is immediate danger; and
- Give you informed and practical advice if you choose to make a formal report.

Regardless of whether you choose to use the confidential Ombuds Service, you may always report experiences at our events to the SSSS Executive Director or any member of the SSSS Board of Directors.

If a formal complaint is made to the SSSS leadership and if the behavior reported is judged to involve a prohibited behavior that has occurred within the prior two years at a SSSS event or meeting, then the Executive Director, in consultation with the President, will initiate an investigation in one of two ways: (1) With approval from the complainant and respondent, they will appoint an ad hoc Investigative Committee comprised of at least three SSSS members with no conflicts of interest in the case at hand. Additional training will be provided as needed for a particular case. Members of the ad hoc committee, like all SSSS committee members, are fully insured against all legal liability. The committee will consult with SSSS legal counsel as needed. (2) They will hire an external firm to conduct an investigation if an appropriate committee without conflicts cannot be identified.

The committee or the outside firm will conduct an investigation into the alleged behavior. This may include soliciting a written statement from both the complainant and the respondent and conducting interviews with the two parties and others with direct knowledge of the events in question. Following the investigation, the committee or external investigator will provide a written recommendation about their determination of whether harassment has occurred and, if so, the appropriate sanction(s) to the SSSS Executive Committee, the complainant, and the respondent. The SSSS Executive Committee will decide whether to approve the recommendations prior to the implementation of any sanctions. Sanctions may include any of the following:

- A warning to the harasser to cease their behavior;
- Terminating the harasser from any leadership positions within SSSS and barring the harasser from any future leadership positions;
- Barring the harasser from future SSSS meetings and events; and
- Revoking SSSS membership and/or fellow status.

Throughout the process of investigation and, if relevant, sanctioning, the SSSS Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and Investigative Committee will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of the complainant and respondent while also ensuring a thorough investigation.

SSSS also reserves the right to revoke SSSS membership and/or fellow status in cases of confirmed scientific misconduct or serious breaches of professional ethics, including sexual misconduct or other forms of discrimination, that have occurred outside of SSSS events but that have been formally investigated and sanctioned by another institution, organization, or agency. In order for this action to be taken, the SSSS Board of Directors must have access to public announcements or other documents that describe the findings, sanctions, or action taken by the investigating institution, organization, or agency.

Limitations of this Policy

There are some actions that SSSS leadership does not have the authority to take. Although we can prohibit involvement in SSSS events, we cannot remove someone from a conference hotel; that action must be initiated by hotel security. We also cannot take punitive measures until an investigation is complete, meaning that we cannot expel someone from a SSSS conference or event immediately following a report of misconduct. We do not have jurisdiction over events or gatherings that are not SSSS-sanctioned (e.g., if attendees gather for dinner or drinks after the conference sessions have ended for the day). However, even if an incident is outside of SSSS jurisdiction, the Ombuds Service and the SSSS Executive Committee and Board of Directors will provide support and guidance if a complainant wishes to make a formal report to police or to the Human Resources or Title IX Department of the respondent's home institution and/or if they wish to involve hotel security because they believe that they are at immediate risk.

This document was approved by the SSSS Board of Directors on November 5, 2019.