

# GRIEVANCE POLICY

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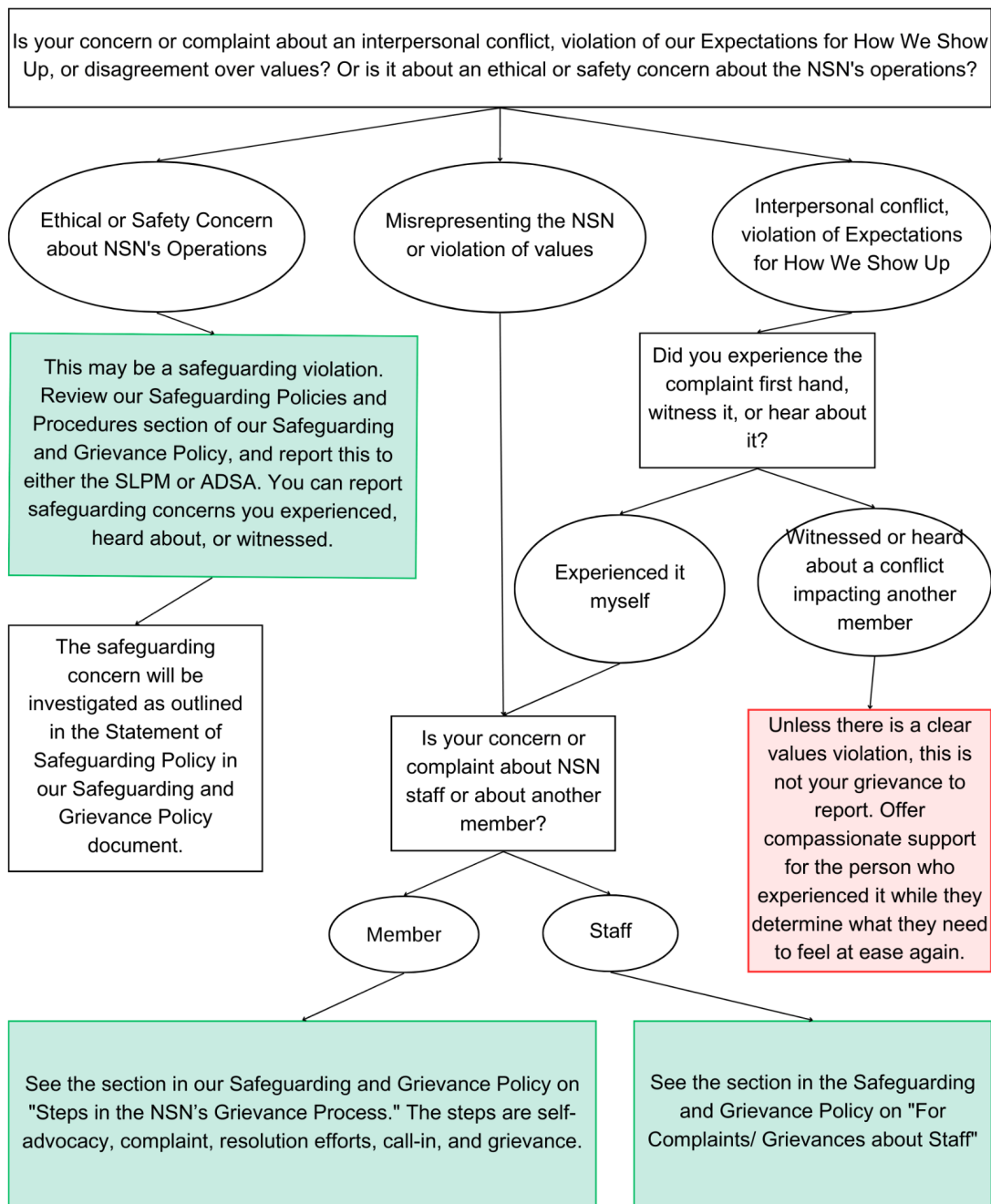
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**NSN's Safeguarding and Grievance Documents**

[Safeguarding and Grievance Policy](#) (combined)

[Safeguarding Policy](#) only

# Overview of Safeguarding and Grievance Policies



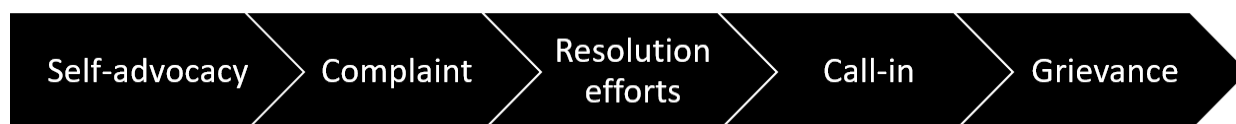
- View the full [Safeguarding and Grievance Policies](#)
- [Steps in the NSN's grievance process](#)
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# Grievance Policy

This policy is to outline the transparent and impartial process for mitigating and resolving conflict between and among members (and potential members) of the National Survivor Network (NSN) and/or Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) staff. Members may submit a grievance or complaint for harm they directly experienced, but may not submit grievances or complaints about harm others have discussed (“airing other people’s complaints”), in alignment with our Expectations for How We Show Up.

In general, our commitment to community accountability includes an expectation that as members, we will continue to grow in our ability to navigate interpersonal conflict in compassionate, direct ways. We understand that trauma can make this difficult, and we are committed to learning to do the difficult things. Therefore, in most cases we have an expectation that members will work through efforts to resolve challenges on their own before filing grievances.

While this grievance policy outlines our general commitment and process, we recognize that each situation is unique and that sometimes “letter of the law” processes are weaponized by abusers and harassers against their targets. Thus, the SLP, MCWG Co-facilitators, and Steering Group members will sometimes have to use their discretion to collaboratively make decisions about the nuances of implementation.



## For complaints/grievances about staff

### *Filing a grievance*

- Because the SLP is the person who receives the grievances submitted online, if your complaint is about Cast staff, the process is different.
- Steps 1-3 are the same as for grievances against other members: Self-advocacy, complaint, and resolution efforts (see the section on grievances against other members for more information about these steps).
- If steps 1-3 fail to resolve the issue or if you do not feel confident or comfortable directly raising the issue with the staff person, you may file a grievance by reaching out directly to a MCWG co-facilitator to let them know you need to file a grievance directly.
- Rather than complete the online form, the MCWG co-facilitator will take your information directly. The form information will be the same, but will be recorded separately to preserve your privacy.

- *If the grievance involves a violation of the NSN's Safeguarding Policy*, the MCWG co-facilitator will bring the grievance directly to the staff member's supervisor to discuss an appropriate resolution. The supervisor will maintain regular communication with the other members of the Steering Group as needed to ensure accountability.
- *If the grievance involves other concerns or violations of our How We Show Up and results in a silent report*, the MCWG co-facilitator will let the other members of the Steering Group know that the grievance has been filed, by whom, and for what concerns but no further action will be taken at that time.
- *If the grievance involves other concerns or violations of our How We Show Up and results in a full report*, the MCWG co-facilitator will bring your concerns to the full Steering Group to decide if action needs to be taken, and to discuss the issue with the staff member. The staff person's supervisor will be included in the discussions.
- If the grievance is not resolved satisfactorily through this process, you may reach out directly to the SLP's [supervisory team](#) in the following order.
  - Associate Director of Survivor Advocacy (Leigh LaChapelle). If the issue is still not resolved, you may reach out to:
  - Chief Impact and Operations Officer (Carolyn Lumpkin).

## Steps in the NSN's Grievance Process

Before filing a formal grievance, please see our pre-grievance checklist.

### Pre-Grievance Checklist

Because we are a community of anti-violence professionals and not a therapeutic or clinical support group, we expect that members will make every effort to resolve conflicts on their own, using the community accountability support that we offer through our trainings and Membership and Community Working Group. ***Members are expected to work through the steps in our pre-grievance checklist before filing a formal grievance except in the rare exceptions of racist, homophobic, or transphobic aggression, as well as intimate partner violence, sexual violence, or stalking.*** Those can escalate beyond our steps and go directly to step five: a formal grievance.

Have you:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Clearly articulated the concern or boundary to the involved parties?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Clearly articulated the behavior that is part of the conflict and asked for it to stop?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Offered a clear "ask" to meet your needs for resolution or to respect your boundary?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. When possible, discussed your concerns with a neutral third party (such as a therapist, coach, or mentor) to determine steps toward resolution or if it is worth filing a grievance in the first place?

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Shared your complaint with either the Survivor Leadership Program Manager or one of the co-facilitators of the Membership and Community Working Group, and discussed options for self-advocacy?

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Found that faithful implementation of the steps above over an appropriate period of time failed to bring about the desired improvement?

These steps will be addressed throughout our grievance process.

## 1. Self-Advocacy

Before filing a complaint with NSN staff and working group co-facilitators, members are encouraged to engage in **self-advocacy** through clear communication and community accountability. Please see our library of [Wellness Resources](#) to build in more support for yourself during this process, as it can be challenging to engage in self-advocacy when there are other power dynamics at play. **At this point, there is no formal grievance happening.**

*Steps 1-4 of the Pre-Grievance Checklist ask if you have:*

1. *Clearly articulated the concern or boundary to the involved parties;*
2. *Clearly articulated the behavior that is part of the conflict and asked for it to stop;*
3. *Offered a clear “ask” to meet your needs for resolution or to respect your boundary;*
4. *When possible, discussed your concerns with a neutral third party (such as a therapist, coach, or mentor) to determine steps toward resolution or if it is worth filing a grievance in the first place? The NSN has vouchers available for free therapy from BetterHelp.com for members.*

Reminder: **For incidences of identity-based aggression (racism, homophobia, or transphobia), as well as interpersonal violence (intimate partner, sexual, stalking, or similar harassment or bullying)**, members may go directly to step five: a formal grievance. If you are unsure if your situation meets the criteria for escalation to a formal grievance, check with the SLP or a member of the MCWG.

Sometimes when we are overwhelmed or triggered, we can forget details and dates. What felt like it happened once or twice might have happened six times, or what felt like it happened over a dozen times may have happened twice. In general, it is a good idea to document incidences that are part of a pattern both to help with remembering what happened and when, as well as with preserving any evidence. If you are experiencing a pattern of harassment, boundary violations, or harm from another person (in or outside of the NSN), you can use our [Incident Documentation Form](#) to track what is happening in order to make things easier if you eventually have to file a formal grievance.

## 2. Informal complaints

An **informal complaint** is when a member shares a complaint they have with the Survivor Leadership Program Manager (SLPM) or one of the co-facilitators of the Membership and Community Working Group. With **informal complaints**, the SLPM or MCWG Co-facilitator will listen, reflect back what they hear the concern is, and support you in determining appropriate steps toward self-directed resolution. An **informal complaint** can be about a conflict with another member, stakeholder, or colleague. The purpose of an **informal complaint** is to seek out guidance for how to navigate a situation on your own, rather than to engage the SLPM or MCWG Co-facilitator in direct intervention. ***At this point, there is no formal grievance happening.***

What might happen with different kinds of informal complaints?	
I share a complaint about how another member is texting me excessively. I have tried to ignore the texts, but it is starting to make it hard for me to come to meetings I think they might be at.	The person you report this to will work with you to talk through options and support you in figuring out a plan to address this directly, firmly, and compassionately. They will then share this with the other members of the MCWG, but no further action will be taken. They may follow back up with you later to see how it's going.
After the above scenario, I asked the person to limit their texts to work topics only, and they did for a few weeks, but then it started back and does not seem to be resolving.	The person you report this to will continue the dialogue with you to determine possible solutions and ways to navigate this, and whether or not you feel it has risen to the level of filing a grievance. If you still want to keep working on it, a grievance will not be filed yet. However, the person you report to will share the update with the MCWG. We may develop some resources for the network on respecting digital and phone boundaries of colleagues. If someone on this group is also in regular coaching/communication with the person who is not respecting the boundary, they may offer some indirect coaching on navigating professional boundaries. However, no grievance will be filed until and unless you request it.
After the above scenario, the other member begins to respond to your attempts to set boundaries by lashing out with repeated long and angry texts, insulting you and making you feel unsafe, alternating with begging for your forgiveness.	Because this involves a violation of confidentiality and privacy, this will trigger an immediate grievance.  Additionally, all cases involving violations of privacy or confidentiality, harassment, stalking, doxxing, assault, identity-based attacks, or any other explicit threats to another person's safety result in the harm-doer having

<p>Other members start telling you that they are sharing details of your personal story with them that you never gave permission for them to share, and that they have sent them screenshots of your text conversations to try to suggest that you are unstable.</p>	<p>their membership paused pending resolution of the grievance. This means that they will be unable to attend NSN meetings, participate in our discussion group, or represent the NSN in any way until it is resolved.</p> <p>In this case, the NSN will temporarily remove the other member's access to our Slack and Listserv, and let them know that their membership has been temporarily paused due to a grievance involving one or more of the above categories of harm. This notification will not include details of the kind of harm or who made the grievance. We will set up a time to meet with them to discuss the nature of the grievance(s), to allow us time to discuss (in collaboration with you) how much feels safe and appropriate to share with them and to develop a safety and support plan to ensure you are well-supported during any fallout. <b>In most cases, we will be able to schedule that meeting within two weeks.</b> In rare cases, it make take up to 4 weeks. In the even that we need more than two weeks, we will notify you as soon as possible.</p>
<p>A separate scenario: You report to the SLPM or a MCWG member that another member posted in a separate survivor forum that they believe you are a liar and threaten to photoshop screenshots of you during our Zoom meetings into sexual positions to mock you. You share the screenshot with the SLPM or MCWG member.</p>	<p>Because this involves a violation of confidentiality and privacy as well as harassment, this will trigger an immediate grievance. Per our policy, the harm-doer having their membership paused pending resolution of the grievance. This means that they will be unable to attend NSN meetings, participate in our discussion group, or represent the NSN in any way until it is resolved.</p> <p>Due to the category of harm, the NSN will temporarily remove the other member's access to our Slack and Listserv, and let them know that their membership has been temporarily paused due to a grievance involving one or more of the above categories of harm. This notification will not include details of the kind of harm or who made the grievance.</p> <p>We will set up a time within 2-4 weeks to meet with you to discuss how much feels safe and appropriate to</p>



	<p>share with them and to develop a safety and support plan for the person making the complaint. The MCWG and SLPM will also meet to determine <i>if</i> there is a time period or conditions to be met after which the member might be eligible to re-apply for membership or if it is to be permanent. This will be informed by the number of grievances against the person and any other extenuating factors.</p> <p>Once a safety and support plan is in place, the SLPM or another member of the MCWG will set up a meeting with the other member in order to terminate their membership.</p>
<p>A separate scenario: You report that you and another member have had a personal conflict that makes it feel uncomfortable, triggering, or even emotionally unsafe, to be in shared space with that person.</p>	<p>No grievance will be filed. The SLPM or MCWG will offer to meet with you to discuss if there is a way to set up a separate space-sharing agreement for a period of 3 months that will honor the most pressing needs of each member. So for example: The member who does not have access to paid professional development through their work may maintain access to the regular skill-shares and the other member may come to the regular monthly meetings. One member might remain in the slack but not participate in Zoom meetings, and the other might temporarily leave the slack but attend the meetings. This 3-month arrangement may be renewed in 3-month increments while you work on repair and healing.</p> <p>During this time, the NSN might offer to connect both members to conflict resolution resources, offer to connect the members to mediation, and ensure that both members have access to trusted support, possibly including therapy through our voucher program.</p>

Typically, a complaint will not result in any direct action from the SLPM or MCWG Co-facilitator. They might, however, engage in strengthening protocols to make it less likely that the situation will reoccur, providing indirect coaching to another member, or clarifying engagements with stakeholders, all without naming the complaint or the person who complained. **Any complaints involving violations of the NSN's Safeguarding Policy will bypass additional steps and result in a formal grievance being filed.**

Filing a complaint is step 5 of the Pre-Grievance Checklist.

Reminder: ***For incidences of identity-based aggression (racism, homophobia, or transphobia), as well as interpersonal violence (intimate partner, sexual, stalking, or similar harassment or bullying)***, members may go directly to step five: a formal grievance. If you are unsure if your situation meets the criteria for escalation to a formal grievance, check with the SLPM or a member of the MCWG.

### 3. Resolution Efforts

After discussing your complaint with NSN staff and working group co-facilitators, take time to implement some of the strategies you came up with. During this process, feel free to request additional meetings with the SLPM or Co-facilitators of the MCWG to support you as you remain responsive to new information or needs. Remember: Conflict resolution takes time and intention. Take pauses when needed to take care of yourself, and remember to avoid responding when triggered!

### 4. Call In

If your attempts at resolution do not bring about a mutually-acceptable outcome, the final step before filing a formal grievance is offering the other person a call-in. If you are able to do this yourself, we encourage your autonomy and self-advocacy. If you feel the situation has become too heated for you to do this safely or compassionately, you can request that the SLPM or one of the MCWG Co-Facilitators join you for emotional support during a call-in meeting, or call-in the other member on your behalf. Our SLPM and MCWG Co-Facilitators all have lived experience as well as professional and/or community-based education with facilitation, crisis response, and/or community organizing. Our Slack channel, orientation, and email announcement list periodically provide reminders of who these people are. A call-in will clearly state that the unresolved challenge may result in a formal grievance process.

The final step of our Pre-Grievance Checklist is to try different steps for resolution and give them time to work through before filing a formal grievance. If after a call-in there is still not changed behavior, you can file a formal grievance using our grievance form.

Reminder: ***For incidences of identity-based aggression (racism, homophobia, or transphobia), as well as interpersonal violence (intimate partner, sexual, stalking, or similar harassment or bullying)***, members may go directly to step five: a formal grievance. If you are unsure if your situation meets the criteria for escalation to a formal grievance, check with the SLPM or a member of the MCWG.

## 5. Formal Grievance

### Filing a Grievance

*For violations of the NSN's Safeguarding Policy, you may report harms you experienced or witnessed. For all other situations, please only fill out a grievance or complaint for harm you directly experienced.* For certain kinds of harm that include documented evidence, the SLPM may ask you for documentation in order to take action (such as cases of online or text harassment, etc.).<sup>1</sup>

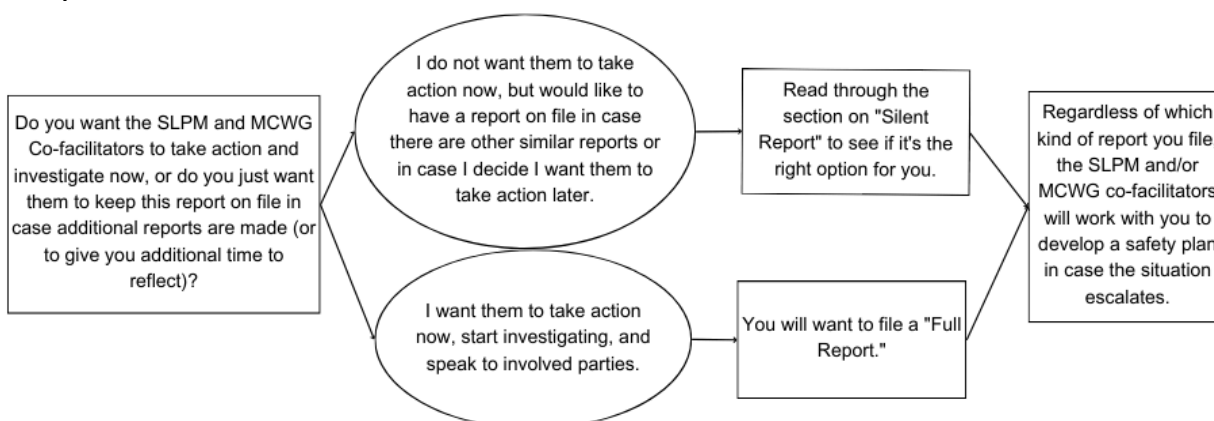
### Filing a grievance about another member or a stakeholder

The [NSN's grievance form](#) will ask for the basic information of the person filing the grievance, and any people involved in or with *firsthand* knowledge of the conflict. It is recommended that you ask any witnesses to the conflict if it is okay for the NSN to reach out to them prior to filing your grievance so they will not feel surprised or "dragged into" the situation.

The grievance form will ask you for a description of the incident or pattern, including dates where possible. You will have an opportunity to link to or upload documentation, such as screenshots or emails. If you have been tracking the pattern (perhaps by using our [Incident Documentation Form](#)), you will have everything in one place.

The grievance form will give you the opportunity to select the type of report you want to file.

### Full Report



When you file a full report, this means that the SLPM and Steering group officially begins the process of addressing the grievance using the following steps:

<sup>1</sup> Members will not be expected to and should not violate local, state, or federal law in obtaining documentation. Members will not be asked to submit documentation in cases where to do so would trigger mandated engagement of carceral systems, and are asked to consider carceral consequences on themselves and others when considering what kind of actions they hope to take.

- 1) The SLPM will schedule a meeting with you and the MCWG co-facilitator of your choosing to discuss your concerns and desired outcomes.
- 2) The SLPM and/or MCWG co-facilitator will work with you to develop a safety/support plan to support your wellness during the time that the grievance is active. This plan will outline steps taken during and after the grievance process to provide support for affected members.
- 3) For cases involving violations of privacy or confidentiality, harassment, stalking, doxxing, assault, identity-based attacks, or any other explicit threats to another person's safety, the member who has caused harm will have their membership paused pending resolution of the grievance. This means that they will be unable to attend NSN meetings, participate in our discussion group, or represent the NSN in any way until it is resolved.  
**Reminder: This does not mean that a decision has been made on the outcome of the grievance, but is a temporary protocol we have in place for *all* grievances to ensure consistent practices to honor the safety of our community.**
- 4) If you opt out of mediation, the SLPM and Steering Group will handle the grievance from there and will reach back out with any questions or to update you on actions taken or decisions made.
- 5) If you opt into mediation, you will have the option of participating in decision-making and discussions with the MCWG, SLPM, and/or other member (when appropriate). **No meetings with the other member will be expected for cases involving harassment, stalking, doxxing, assault, identity-based attacks, or any other explicit threats to another person's safety and any communication would be managed through representatives.**
- 6) For grievances against members, the SLPM and/or MCWG Co-facilitators will determine appropriate levels of support for that member, such as referrals to clinical support or education.
- 7) The SLPM will not share the specifics of any grievances or decisions publicly or with any other members, but public parties may review our Grievance Policy and Expectations for How We Show Up to learn what kinds of actions might have specific responses.

### Silent Report

A silent report is essentially a way to notify the Steering Group that there is a challenge with a person's behavior without requesting any action, in case they are hearing about it from other members as part of a pattern.

- Silent reports are not available for grievances involving harassment, stalking, doxxing, assault, identity-based attacks, or any other explicit threats to another person's safety, although you can choose to have your identity and identifying details withheld. Silent reports are also not available for NSN staff or members of the Membership and Community Working Group, as they are the ones responsible for handling grievances.
- Silent reports *are* available for other kinds of boundary violations, ethical concerns, or other violations of How We Show Up. For example, if another member has misgendered you on several occasions but apologized and indicated it was an accident each time, you might not feel like it warrants a grievance, but you may want to file a silent report in case

this same behavior (or potentially more grievous behavior) is happening to another member.

- The NSN will do our best to shield the identities of reporters, and will work with any reporters to develop a safety and wellness plan (as described in our reporting procedures under “Full Report” above) for if the person's identity is found out.

**Please note:** If there are two reports of any kind in a 12-month period about the same NSN member, the SLPM or a co-facilitator of the MCWG *may* reach out to them to find out what kind of support they may need without sharing any details of your grievance. What this means is that if you file a silent report and another member files a silent or full report about the same person within 12 months of each other, we may informally reach out to that person to offer support or coaching without sharing that a grievance was filed.

You may request in writing that we convert your silent report into a full report at any time by emailing the SLPM or MCWG co-facilitator. Additionally, if additional grievances are filed about the same person, we will email you to let you know in case you want to convert your silent report into a full report.

If we have to take formal action is taken to address your harmdoer’s behaviors (such as pausing their membership in the case of repeated or severe violations of How We Show Up), we will let them know: 1) how many silent or full reports have been filed, 2) the kind of behavior that has been named, although details of the silent reports will not be included. **All harmdoers will be asked to avoid contacting other NSN members to try to identify to reporter. Ongoing contact of this kind (while it makes sense from a trauma standpoint) can be experienced by reporters and other members as harassment or intimidation and will result in the immediate termination of the harmdoer’s membership.**

### **Mediation and accountability support**

When you submit your grievance you will be able to indicate whether or not you would be interested in participating in mediation or accountability discussions with your perceived harmdoer if they are also interested. You are not required to participate in mediation or accountability processes, though it can be helpful in certain situations.

The NSN does not facilitate accountability processes or formal mediation for members due to conflicts of interest and capacity. However, we can refer interested members to skilled mediators or restorative justice practitioners outside of the NSN and may be able to assist in funding mediation.

### **Support for the person filing the grievance**

The NSN is committed to offering support to the person who has filed the grievance, regardless of the outcome of the grievance investigation and process. Part of that support is helping you to better understand the process and what is available to you.

### What happens next?

Before any action is taken, the SLPM or MCWG co-facilitator will discuss next steps with you. If those next steps involve reaching out to other people (whether people who know about the situation or the person who is the subject of your grievance, the SLPM or MCWG co-facilitator will work with you to develop a safety and support plan.

### What are your rights?

You have the right to opt out of any investigation or mediation activities. Meaning, you can share the grievance with the SLPM or MCWG co-facilitator and then let them handle it from there as best they can. You have the right to set boundaries around how much energy you can offer this process, and the SLPM or MCWG co-facilitators will make the best decisions they can based on the information that is available to them. When you have been harmed by someone, you have the right to opt into or out of mediation or additional accountability conversations, and are never expected to participate. If the grievance is not resolved to your satisfaction, you have the right to request a space-sharing plan so that you have an equitably divided plan for access to relevant NSN resources for 3-6 months; we will make reasonable efforts to create this when possible and feasible. If you do not wish to be in community with the NSN or its current members or find that you are no longer in agreement with its values, you have the right to terminate your membership at any time.

### What kinds of support can you access?

- **Support person:** You can ask if another NSN member can attend any grievance-related meetings with you as an advocate. This person is not there to “argue your case” or “serve as a witness,” but is rather there to be a steady presence and emotional support, and may be able to provide debrief support afterward as a friend. Support persons who are not members of the MCWG are not there to state, ask about, or respond to the facts of your grievance, but may interrupt or respond to ask you if you’d like a pause if they notice you are getting overwhelmed, check in with you about whether or not you want to continue in the meeting, or request more time for you to think about a situation if they notice you are rushing through important details. Please choose your support person accordingly and ensure that your support person understands this role; support persons who disrupt or inflame the grievance process will be asked to leave.
- **Therapy voucher:** If you are not already using one of our [betterhelp.com](https://betterhelp.com) therapy vouchers, you can request to access one. These vouchers provide 6 months of free therapy support through [betterhelp.com](https://betterhelp.com).
- **Planning meetings:** The SLPM and co-facilitators of the MCWG can meet with you periodically throughout the grievance process to help brainstorm ideas and to provide referrals to more intensive supports.
- **Safety and support plan:** The SLPM or MCWG co-facilitator can assist you in developing a safety and support plan for how you will care for yourself during the grievance process and how you can ensure support in the case of retaliation or harm. This support plan may include things you can do for yourself, things you can ask your personal support networks to assist with, and ways the NSN can support you organizationally.

## Support for if a grievance is filed about your behavior

Hearing that your behavior has harmed (or was perceived to harm) someone else can be challenging, especially in a social justice culture that has sometimes seen call-outs and cancellations weaponized against individuals who do not have the levels of systemic or structural power and privilege these strategies were created to offset. Please know that the NSN does not believe that people are disposable or that those who have caused harm are inherently bad people.

## Some things to remember

First, take a deep breath. This can be hard, and staying as grounded as you can through the process can create the conditions for repair, support your wellness, and prevent exacerbating or increasing the harm to yourself or others.

- Our intention is to ensure equitable investigation and response to all grievances in our network, and this requires intention and fair process. If you were the one who filed the grievance, you would want us to investigate it fairly; be as committed to the process as you're able.
- When we work on a grievance process, we provide a safety and support plan for involved parties. This might mean additional meetings, not rushing the process, and giving time for the MCWG co-facilitators and SLPM to engage accountability consultants to ensure that our approach to grievances aligns with our values. This means that our investigation processes may be slower than people would like. Most of the parties who support our grievance process (including all the members of our Steering Group) have other jobs, and scheduling concerns may create unavoidable delays. Be as patient with the process as you're able; we will do our best to provide regular updates on processes and anticipated timelines to keep you informed. **During this time, if you engage in insulting, threatening, or abusive communications or behavior with the SLPM, MCWG co-facilitators, other NSN members, or other Cast staff, your membership will be terminated and our investigation will not be able to continue.**
- If you are told or suspect you know who filed the grievance about you, please refrain from contacting them outside of formal grievance channels (which will be explained by the SLPM or MCWG co-facilitators). This includes messaging members to ask if they were the one who complained. Even when the language of your contact or inquiry is not directly threatening, it can be experienced as intimidation or harassment if you reach out in this way. Please trust the process as much as you are able, and know that our aim is repair and resolution whenever possible. Following the process will often be seen (by the person who filed the grievance as well as the SLPM and MCWG co-facilitators) as the first step in accountability or repair. Gossiping or airing complaints about the grievance process in other survivor leadership spaces constitutes an additional violation of confidentiality and is counter to our goals of accountability and repair.
- For cases involving violations of privacy or confidentiality, harassment, stalking, doxxing, assault, identity-based attacks, or any other explicit threats to another person's safety, the member who has caused harm will have their membership paused pending resolution of the grievance. This means that they will be unable to attend NSN meetings, participate in our discussion group, or represent the NSN in any way until it is resolved. **If the SLPM or MCWG co-facilitator indicates that your access to the Slack channel and meetings is paused pending the resolution, it is because the grievance against you involves one of these categories of violation.** This is a safeguarding issue, as we take allegations of violations of this nature very seriously and hope to proactively ensure these kinds of violations do not recur in our network. Because the nature of

these violations can be frightening and feel unsafe for the person filing the grievance, we take steps to help them develop a safety and support plan before we begin meeting with you to discuss the grievance(s). This means that we may not be able to provide extensive information to you about the nature of the grievance immediately or until that plan is developed and in place. We recognize that this can be uncomfortable, disappointing, or disorienting to members, and ask for your understanding and patience as we try to thoughtfully implement safeguards for *all* members. Always remember: If you had filed a grievance of this nature, you would want us to ensure the safeguarding of the community while we investigated properly. We give this same, equitable courtesy to all NSN members who file grievances.

### **What happens next?**

This will depend on the nature of the grievance and whether or not there is (and how long it takes to develop and implement) a safety and support plan for the person who filed the grievance. Typically, for non-safeguarding grievances, the SLPM will reach out to you within 2 weeks to schedule a time to chat and discuss the concerns. For cases that involve safeguarding or one of the exceptional categories listed in the section above, you can expect to hear from the SLPM within 2-6 weeks to set up a time to meet and discuss next steps.

### **Will you be able to tell me who filed the grievances and for what reasons?**

We will always be able to tell you how many grievances were filed and for categories of harm. For example, we could tell you that there were three grievances that involve a combination of confidentiality violations, repeatedly crossing other members' boundaries, and harassment. If there are threats to the other person's safety or credible fears of retaliation, or a number of "silent" grievances, we will not disclose the identity of the people who filed the grievance for their protection. Again, remember that reaching out to the person(s) you know or suspect may have filed the grievance may be understood as harassment or intimidation; please avoid that during the grievance process as it will be grounds for immediate termination of your membership.

### **What are your rights?**

You have the right to opt out of any investigation or mediation activities and terminate your membership yourself. You have the right to set boundaries around how much energy you can offer this process, and the SLPM or MCWG co-facilitators will make the best decisions they can based on the information that is available to them. When you have potentially harmed someone, you have the right to understand your experiences however you choose, although you do not have the right to harass, intimidate, or slander the other person. If the grievance is closed without finding or is resolved satisfactorily (meaning: the outcome includes you remaining in membership), you have the right to request a space-sharing plan so that you have an equitable divided plan for access to relevant NSN resources for 3-6 months; we will make reasonable efforts to create this when possible and feasible. If you do not wish to be in community with the NSN or its current members or find that you are no longer in agreement with its values, you have the right to terminate your membership at any time.

### **What kinds of support can you access?**

- **Support person:** You can ask if another NSN member can attend any grievance-related meetings with you as an accountability partner. This person is not there to "argue your case" or "serve as a witness," but is rather there to be a steady presence and emotional support, and may be able to



provide debrief support afterward as a friend. Support persons who are not members of the MCWG are not there to state, ask about, or respond to the facts of your grievance, but may interrupt or respond to ask you if you'd like a pause if they notice you are getting escalated or defensive, check in with you about whether or not you want to continue in the meeting in this moment, or request more time for you to think about a situation if they notice you are invalidating the other person's experiences or dismissing important details. Please choose your support person accordingly and ensure that your support person understands this role; support persons who disrupt or inflame the grievance process will be asked to leave.

- *When selecting your support person, consider: Who do I know who can love me and also call me in when I'm missing the mark? Who do I trust to tell me the truth when I'm "in the wrong"? Who do I trust to help me remember to stay calm and grounded when things are tough? This is who you want with you in this process.*
- **Therapy voucher:** If you are not already using one of our betterhelp.com therapy vouchers, you can request to access one. These vouchers provide 6 months of free therapy support through betterhelp.com.
- **Planning meetings:** The SLPM and co-facilitators of the MCWG can meet with you periodically throughout the grievance process to help brainstorm ideas and to provide referrals to more intensive supports.
- **Accountability plan:** The SLPM or MCWG co-facilitator can assist you in developing an accountability plan and/or a safety and support plan for how you will care for yourself during the grievance process and how you can ensure that you have compassionate and accountable support.

### Confidentiality and Privacy

The NSN will honor your confidentiality and privacy throughout this process as long as it does not compromise the safety of our members. We will not disclose your identity to other members who have not filed grievances against you, nor will we disclose publicly. People who inquire about the specifics of your case will be directed to the Safeguarding and Grievance Policy to understand how we make decisions and what kinds of violations might lead to different kinds of responses.

Likewise, any flagrant violations of the Expectations for How We Show Up during the course of the investigation and grievance process (including violations of confidentiality and privacy) will result in the immediate termination of your membership.

In our ideal situation, conflicts will be resolved over a period of time through thoughtful conversation, articulation and clarification of the boundaries that are needed, commitment to repair, and community support for repair, with both members remaining in community and without creating "gossip" among members who are not directly involved in the grievance or resolution process. This kind of resolution – which is intended to preserve the dignity of the person filing the grievance as well as the subject of the grievance – cannot happen when confidentiality and privacy are violated.

### Resources

- [Four Parts of Accountability and How to Give a Good Apology](#) (blog post) by Mia Mingus.
- [What Are the Obstacles to Accountability](#) (video) by Project Nia and the Barnard Center for Research on Women.

- [How Shame Can Block Accountability](#) (video) by Project Nia and the Barnard Center for Research on Women.
- [Resources for People Who Are Causing Harm](#) by He Ata Mataora
- [You Are More Than the Worst Thing You've Done](#)

# Additional documents

## Annex 1: Grievance Form

### [National Survivor Network Grievance Form](#)

This form is to provide a transparent and impartial process for mitigating and resolving conflict between and among members (and potential members) of the National Survivor Network (NSN) and/or Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) staff. Before filing a formal grievance, please review our grievance policy, including our pre-grievance checklist. **Please only fill out a grievance or complaint for harm you directly experienced or violations of our values you directly witnessed. Do not violate a survivor's privacy by filing a grievance on someone else's behalf.**

Legal name:

Pseudonym or nickname (if applicable):

Email associated with NSN membership:

Person(s) involved in or with firsthand knowledge of the conflict:

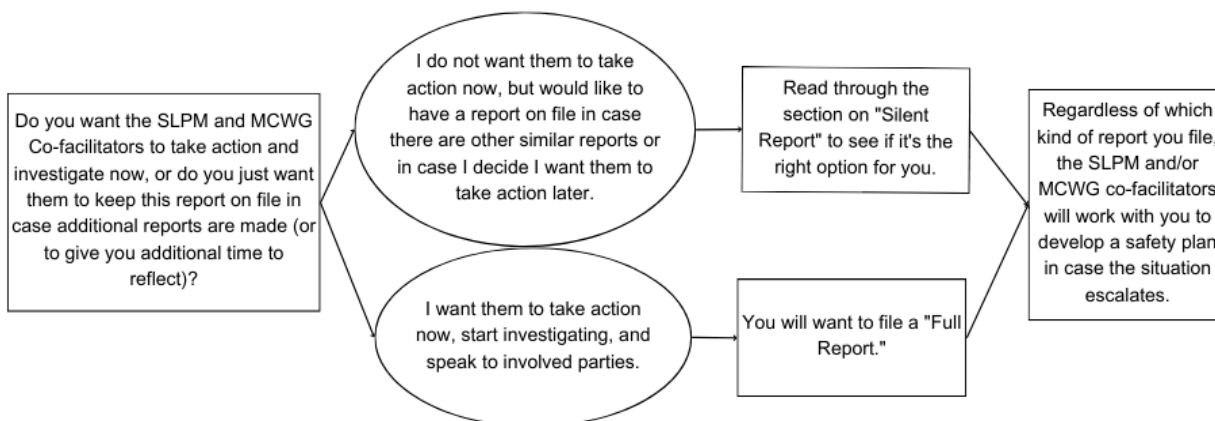
I have asked these individuals if it's okay for the NSN to contact them about this incident and they have agreed. (yes/no) **The NSN will only reach out to people who've given consent to discuss.**

Person(s) you believed to have caused harm to you:

Description of the incident or pattern (include dates when possible):

Do you have any documentation of this incident or pattern?

Do you wish to file a report?



- ☐ Silent report - Silent reports are not available for grievances involving harassment, stalking, doxxing, assault, identity-based attacks, or any other threats to another person's safety, although you can choose to have your identity and identifying details withheld. There will be no discussion, investigation, or mediation requested. Your name and the details of your report will not be shared. If action is taken to address your harmdoer's actions, they will know how many silent or full reports have been filed, but will not have access to details of silent reports. If additional grievances are filed about the same person, you will be given an opportunity to convert your silent report into a full report.) *If there are two reports of any kind in a 12-month period the SLPM or a co-facilitator of the MCWG may reach out to the other NSN member to find out what kind of support they may need though the details of your grievance will not be shared.*
- ☐ Full report (You may be contacted at a future date about reports if additional grievances are filed against your perceived harmdoer, and information from your report may be shared in our accountability conversations with the other member though your involvement will not be required. Your report will not be included in any processes without your consent.)

I am willing to engage in an accountability process if offered by the perceived harmdoer:

- ☐ Yes, if they express a desire at some point to engage in accountability I am open to the engagement.
- ☐ No, I do not wish to engage further.

I understand that the NSN does not permanently remove members from membership without thoughtfully and carefully exploring all the information about a situation. In alignment with our non-carceral values, we treat all members with dignity and respect whether they are filing a grievance or named as a harmdoer in one, and have processes in place to minimize weaponizing grievances as a form of abuse or harassment,

Signature:

Date:

## Annex 2: Safety and Support Plan Template

When you file a grievance, a lot of feelings can get kicked up. You may feel anxious about possible outcomes, or question your choices or past judgment. You may feel frustrated that the grievance process is moving more slowly than you'd want. You may feel hurt or annoyed that there is a process, or worry that the process means you aren't believed. You may be worried that the person you are filing the grievance about will retaliate against you or cause additional harm.

Thinking through what you might need and how you might take care of yourself can help you to feel more empowered and less unprepared while working through this process.

### **Considerations:**

- How I will take care of myself if things get overwhelming?
  - What can I do to create space for myself when I feel overwhelmed? Can I request to have a break from communications about the grievance for a period of time?
  - What practices can I employ to help ground and/or guide me when I am feeling unsafe or triggered?
  - When you get triggered or overwhelmed, what are the old harmful patterns or behaviors that might sneak back to the surface, such as self-harm urges, crisis thinking, or suicidality)? What will I do if I experience one of these old patterns?
- Who can I call on in times of support?
  - Who is a good listener (ideally someone who is not involved in the situation) who can hold space for my feelings without making it about them?
  - Who is someone I find to be grounding and focused to be around?
  - When I am reaching out for support to people who share community with the other person (whether in the NSN or in other communities), how can I still honoring the intention to avoid gossip? Are there folks in our shared communities I know in my heart that I should not discuss this with until there is a resolution?
- What spaces and communities are helpful for me when navigating conflict?
- What do I fear may happen if or when the person learns that I filed the grievance?
  - How will I navigate that?
  - What impacts might this have on me? How can I plan ahead for how I will mitigate those impacts?
  - If there is retaliation, what kind of support would be helpful from my friends and family? From my communities? From the NSN? Can I plan ahead by asking which of those things could be provided should my identity be discovered?

## Annex 3: Accountability Plan Template

Hearing that your behavior has harmed (or was perceived to harm) someone else can be incredibly emotional, and often can kick up a shame spiral for survivors. We often try so hard to avoid negative consequences, so hearing that we got it wrong can be painful. We may have been entirely unaware that we were causing harm so it can feel disorienting and confusing to learn that we were harming others, and that confusion can kick up feelings from past times when we were gaslit. We may have been aware that we were harming others, but thought that it was okay because we were doing the best we could

given our trauma and triggers. Whatever this kicks up for you, it's important both to take care of yourself and to take accountability for the parts of the harm that are yours to claim.

**Considerations:**

- Who are the people I know to be good “mirrors” for me, who can love me while still fully understanding that I’ve caused harm? Who has consistently been honest with me when I am “in the wrong,” whose honest feedback I would trust even if I don’t like it?
  - Do I feel comfortable discussing my reactions to and feelings about the grievance with any of them? Who might be a good support partner or accountability pod?
  - How will I let them know what kinds of support I want and clearly articulate the forms and kinds of communication I know I am best able to receive?
  - How do I want them to let me know if I am responding in a reactive or agitated way and might need to take a pause that I am not recognizing the need for?
- Who are the people I know to engage in gossip or who escalate situations when people around them are upset? What are the spaces whose individual members are consistently unhelpful spaces that are themselves regularly activating or escalating? While it can feel good to have someone get defensive or angry with you, it is typically not helpful to engage these people in accountability support or venting.
- Hearing that someone has been harmed by us can kick up feelings of shame that can lead to defensiveness, denial, self-sabotage, or despair. How will I care for myself when those feelings of shame come up? How will I care for myself if I have overwhelming feelings or urges, including self-harm or suicidality?
- How will I avoid further violations of the NSN’s Expectations for How We Show Up while managing my confusion, hurt, defensiveness, or sadness about this process?
  - The SLPM and MCWG Co-facilitators will not be able to share any details with me other than the broad categories of harm described until a meeting, and can only disclose additional details if I have not escalated the situation before then. When I want to ask them for more details in advance of that meeting, or to ask them for updates outside of the formal process, how will I manage my anxiety? What can I do instead to increase my distress tolerance?
  - Unless the person who filed the grievance gives them permission to share who they are, the SLPM and MCWG may not be able to share the identity of the grievant, depending on the circumstances. Members have reported feeling intimidated, threatened, and frightened when people message them to find out if they were the one who filed the grievance or if they know who did. If the details of my case mean there is a delay in me finding out who filed the grievance against me, how will I manage my own fears, anxieties, and desire for quick answers so that I can avoid intimidating or harassing others while I work through the process?
- Resources:
  - [Four Parts of Accountability and How to Give a Good Apology](#) (blog post) by Mia Mingus.
  - [What Are the Obstacles to Accountability](#) (video) by Project Nia and the Barnard Center for Research on Women.
  - [How Shame Can Block Accountability](#) (video) by Project Nia and the Barnard Center for Research on Women.

- [Resources for People Who Are Causing Harm](#) by He Ata Mataora
- [You Are More Than the Worst Thing You've Done](#)