

NYC-DSA Grievance Policy

INTRODUCTION

NYC-DSA has a Grievance Committee because we recognize that in all social spaces, conflict and harm are bound to occur. The organization is committed to creating as healthy and safe a culture as possible in our various organizational spaces. The unified grievance policy passed by National DSA at the 2025 National Convention can be found at [Unified Grievance Policy - As Amended & Adopted by 2025 DSA Convention](#); NYC-DSA has its own Grievance Policy. The NYC-DSA Grievance Committee was established in November 2017.

This policy applies to all NYC-DSA spaces, both online and off, including but not limited to: protests, formal and informal meetings, mailing lists, text exchanges, phone calls, Google groups, Facebook groups, Twitter comments & DMs, Slack threads, etc.

GRIEVANCE OFFICERS

- The Grievance Committee (GC) is composed of Grievance Officers (GOs). All officers are given equal roles and responsibilities — there are no titles or positions within the Committee.
- GOs come from various backgrounds, and a diversity of past experience is beneficial to the Committee's overall functioning. Some previous experience with mediation and/or restorative justice practices is considered an asset, but not required.
- GOs should not be members of the chapter's Steering Committee (SC) or of any Branch or Working Group Organizing Committee.
- The GC and SC should strive to make the Committee as diverse as possible with respect to race, ethnicity, age, gender, and sexual orientation. Priority will be given to applicants who come from historically marginalized groups.

GRIEVANCE OFFICER APPOINTMENT PROCESS

- Any NYC-DSA member in good standing may apply to be a GO, provided they are not on the Steering Committee or a Branch or Working Group Organizing Committee. Interested members can apply by emailing the GC at grievance@socialists.nyc. GOs may also recruit members they feel would be a good fit and invite them to apply.
- Applicants will have an initial interview with two current GOs. If that interview goes well, they will be invited to attend a full Committee meeting to introduce themselves and answer questions.
- Applicants approved by a majority of the GC will be recommended as new GOs to the NYC-DSA Steering Committee.
- The SC will put out a call via email to the chapter, inviting members to express their opinions about the applicant's fitness for the role via an online form.
- Upon gathering feedback from the chapter, the SC will vote on whether to approve the applicant. A two-thirds majority of the SC is required to appoint a new GO.

GRIEVANCE OFFICER TRAINING

- The SC is responsible for communicating with the GC at the start of the SC's term each year to make a plan for trainings requested by the GC on topics such as responding to sexual assault and harassment, de-escalation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, etc.
- GOs shall have a term limit of three years from the date of their appointment by the SC. After this term, GOs may be re-approved by the SC for another term.
- GOs may resign at any time by submitting notice in writing to the GC, who in turn will make the SC aware of the change.
- The SC may remove a GO by majority vote. The GC and the GO in question should be informed of the cause for removal.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

HARM

- The Grievance Committee (GC) is empowered to assist NYC-DSA members who have experienced harm from another member or group within the chapter.
- Examples of harm include (but are not limited to) harassment, abuse, or assault. Harm may be physical or psychological in nature.

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

- The GC is also empowered to assist members who find themselves in conflict with another member or group within the chapter.
- Examples of conflict include protracted arguments that turn personal, rude remarks, screaming/shouting, or shunning/refusal to engage.

POLITICAL DISAGREEMENTS

- The GC is not empowered to handle interpersonal or intergroup disputes that center on political disagreements, including questions of tactics or ideology.
- If a political disagreement escalates into an interpersonal conflict or instance of harm, then it may become appropriate for the GC to address it.

REQUESTING ASSISTANCE / INITIATING PROCESS

PROCEDURE

- NYC-DSA member or members that have experienced harm or conflict are encouraged to reach out to the GC for support and assistance
- Members may reach the Committee via email (grievance@socialists.nyc) and provide whatever information they are comfortable sharing in an initial request

ASSIGNMENT OF GOs

- Upon being contacted, the GC will assign two GOs to handle the case. In certain instances (limited GC capacity; training of new GOs), three GOs may be assigned
- Assignments are voluntary and subject to the capacity of individual GOs to take on new cases at that time

RECUSAL

- The GC strives to be balanced and fair in its treatment of all individuals and situations. GOs will be up front and disclose relevant connections to a particular situation and recuse themselves from a potential assignment if they feel their connection to any relevant parties or groups may meaningfully compromise their ability to provide fair treatment.
- Members may also request to have certain GOs recused from their case in the event of any conflicts of interest. The GC will try to accommodate such requests, provided other GOs have the capacity to step in.

INITIAL MEETING

- The GOs assigned to a request will respond as soon as possible and set up a time to speak with the individual or group.
- During this meeting, the GOs will ask the requesting party to describe the situation, and how they hope to see it resolved.
- The GOs will describe the difference between the mediation and grievance processes, and discuss with the requesting party which option may be the best fit for their situation.

THE MEDIATION PROCESS

- If the requesting party hopes to resolve the situation via mediation, the assigned GOs will reach out to other involved parties and see if they are open to such a process.
- If all parties consent to engage in a mediation, the process will move forward.
- Mediators from outside of the GC may be used if helpful for the particular situation, with the consent of all parties.
- Mediators will use guidelines in the [NYC-DSA Mediation Protocol](#) developed by the Grievance Committee
- Initiating a peer mediation process does not prevent someone from later filing a formal grievance.

THE GRIEVANCE PROCESS

GUIDELINES

- GOs will do their best to move the process along and complete it in a timely manner.
- The GOs may request that the people involved not contact one another during the investigative process. GOs cannot prohibit the people involved from discussing the issue with other people.
- During the investigation process, the GOs will strive to maintain the confidentiality of the parties and the procedure, except as necessary to conduct their investigation, and will not discuss complaints outside of grievance proceedings.
- No person in NYC-DSA shall in any way retaliate against a complainant, witness, advocate, or GO in connection with any grievance. Retaliatory behaviors include threats, intimidation, reprisals, and/or adverse actions. If any party to the complaint believes there has been retaliation, they may inform the GOs, who will determine whether to factor the retaliation into the original complaint, or treat it as an individual incident.
- There may be situations where there may be little evidence to support an accusation. The GC will do our best to make judgments in these cases when we feel that we can and make decisions with the information we have.

INVESTIGATION

- After the initial conversation, GOs will reach out to the other parties involved and speak with them
- GOs will gather evidence to assess the issue by speaking with witnesses or other people involved in the situation, reviewing any related documentation, etc.
- At the conclusion of the investigation, the GOs will prepare a written report outlining the findings of the investigation, as well as any recommendations for consequences or next steps — both for the parties involved and, when relevant, for the group(s) or space(s) where the harm occurred.
- The other GOs on the GC will review the report and decide whether to adopt its recommendations by majority vote.
- Prior to submission to the SC, the report will be made available to both the complainant and the accused. Both parties may then choose to submit their own written statements disputing or clarifying any aspects of the report. These statements will be sent to the SC along with the final report. The GOs may also include their own response to the parties' statements, should any clarifications be necessary.

OUTCOMES

If the GC recommends consequences related to the grievance, these may include, but are not limited to:

- A prohibition on specific behaviors
- Acknowledgment of the offending behavior and a public apology (if desired by the complainant)
- A request that the accused not contact or approach the complainant

- Suspension from committee meetings and other chapter or organizational events, for a period of time or indefinitely
- Participation in a relevant training or exercise
- Removal from leadership positions in a branch, working group, or other chapter committee for a period of time or indefinitely
- Removal from the chapter
- Recommendation to the NPC that the accused be removed from DSA

The GC strives to work within a restorative justice framework and seeks to work with the parties involved in the grievance process to repair harm without punitive outcomes, whenever possible. Measures such as removal from spaces will only be recommended in cases where other avenues for repairing the situation are either inappropriate or have been exhausted.

DECISION

The SC shall, by majority vote, adopt, modify, or reject the recommendation of the GC. Expulsion of a member shall require a 2/3 majority. The SC shall not significantly modify the GC's recommendation without giving the parties a formal opportunity to respond.

APPEALS

If a member or group does not feel that their concerns can be adequately addressed at the chapter level, they may pursue a grievance with the National Grievance Officer without going through the chapter procedure first. It is important to note, however, that national DSA's grievance policy differs from this NYC DSA policy. It is possible that a grievance may include a violation of the chapter policy but not the national policy, so complainants may not be able to work with the National Grievance Officer for an initial complaint or an appeal.

ANNUAL REPORTING

The Grievance Committee must compile a yearly report for each NYC-DSA convention that includes:

- How many members reached out to the committee for assistance with an issue
- How many issues were mediated
- How many issues were officially investigated as formal grievances
- How many disciplinary actions were taken
- How many decisions were appealed
- Any recommended changes for making the grievance process more effective
- Reflections on any patterns in issues or the culture of the org
- Requests for trainings for the grievance committee for the coming year

This report will not include personally identifying information of any parties in any issue

This report should be shared with convention delegates during the convention with time allotted for question and answer, as well as with the general organizational membership via email.