SAFEGUARDING & GRIEVANCE POLICY

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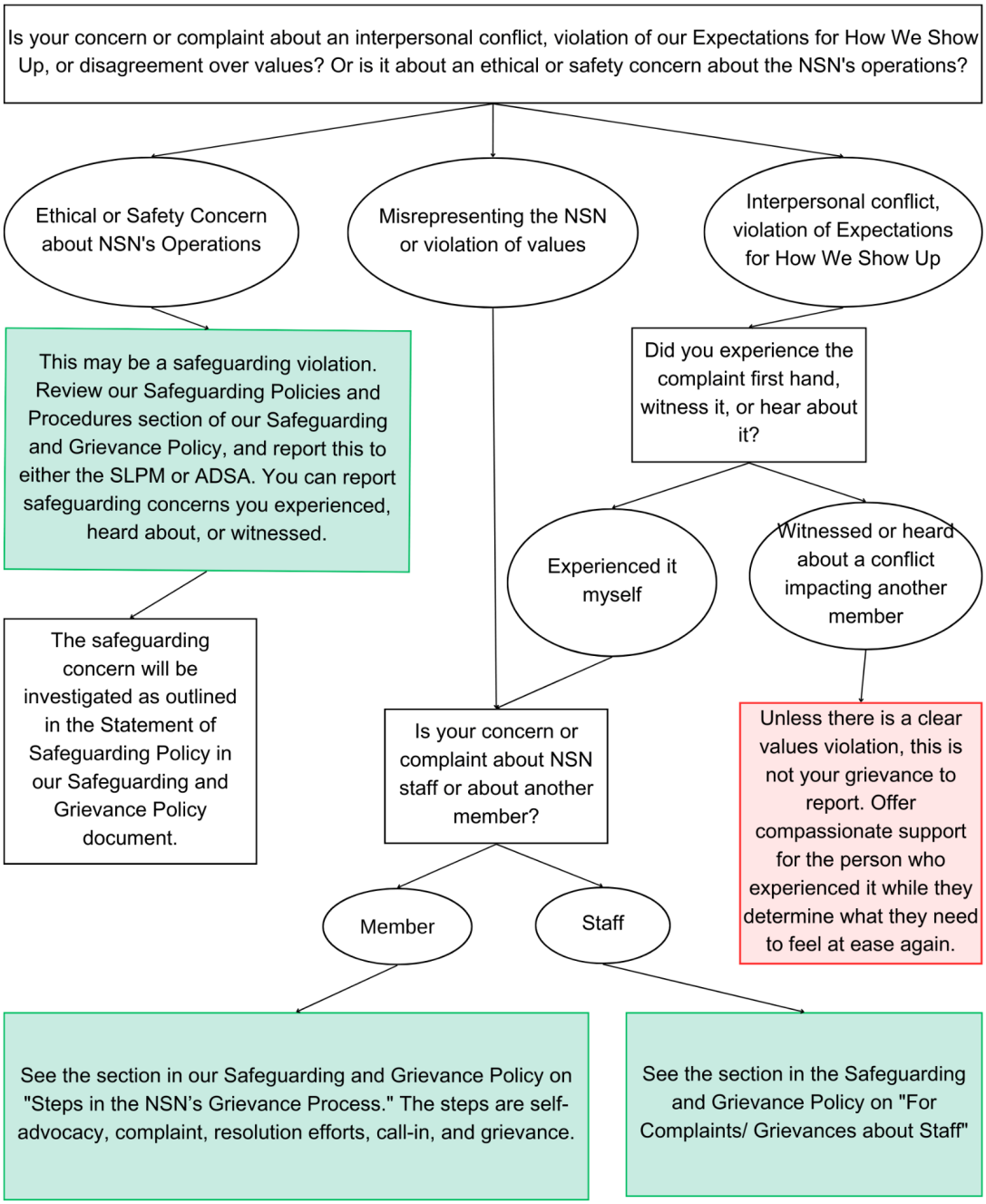
Overwhelmed by having it all in one document? Feel free to check out our safeguarding and grievance policies separately

Safeguarding Policy only

Grievance Policy only

Overview of Safeguarding and Grievance Policies



- Safeguarding procedures and reporting
- Steps in the NSN's grievance process
- For complaints/grievances about staff

Safeguarding Policy Purpose, Scope, and Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to articulate the National Survivor Network's commitment to preventing avoidable harm, mitigating the impacts of harm, and fostering the conditions for repair in our everyday operations.

The National Survivor Network is a values-based professional membership organization offering mentoring, learning opportunities, and professional peer support to advocates working in the many movements to end violence. We are not a direct service organization: case management, clinical support, legal support, and crisis stabilization are all outside the NSN's scope and capacity (although we will always strive to provide referrals when needed).[1] Thus, our safeguarding policy is focused on our role as a professional peer network comprised of advocates and professionals who have lived experience of human trafficking.

What are some examples of services outside the scope of the NSN?	***What kind of support we do provide instead?***
Direct therapeutic or clinical services	*Therapy vouchers and referrals to organizations that specialize in clinical services to survivors*
24/7 emergency support	*Referrals and support through our Get Help page; support for NSN-related concerns during working hours, strong community-building efforts. As of 2023, the NSN is in the process of providing Mental Health First Aid training to as many members as possible.*
Rapid rehousing or ongoing crisis funding	*Our current funding allows us to provide two open calls per year for limited, one-time microgrants for emergency and/or education and professional development.* *We have a small discretionary line item in our budget for providing small amounts of cash assistance for members in crisis, but it is not enough for any members to rely on it as a guaranteed support.*
Guaranteed	*The NSN offers a small number of contracts.*

[1] For more information on why the NSN is not a direct service organization and what kinds of support we are able to provide members with disabilities, in crisis, or who are struggling, see our Disability Justice Policy (forthcoming).

employment	● *Full members of the NSN are eligible to apply for a select number of operational/leadership contracts to serve on working groups. These contracts are typically for a 12-month term and may be renewed pending continued funding.* ● *Members of the NSN with specialized knowledge may be hired for project-specific contracts with a set start and end date based on the term of the project. These are unlikely to be renewed, and contractors should plan accordingly.* ● *Current funding allows us to provide a limited amount of "professional development" funding to members that can be used to pay for member's professional development and small stipends. These should be confirmed in writing in advance with the SLPM.*
Guaranteed Basic Income	*The NSN is providing guidance to external direct cash programs for survivors, and will make referrals when possible.*

We recognize that the vulnerabilities experienced by survivors of exploitation, abuse, and trafficking may have lifelong impacts and that healing is an ongoing journey. As such, we seek to ensure that all members are treated compassionately, equitably, and with transparency. We do not want to use our power to advantage certain members or staff over others or to cause harm to others. We also do not want to allow our network and spaces to be used by staff or other members to cause harm, thus our safeguarding policy applies both to staff and to members.

We are all survivors of human trafficking, and yet we acknowledge that the long history of harm in the anti-trafficking sector includes harm enacted by survivors. Experiencing trauma can lead to physiological responses in which our fight, flight, flee, and fawn responses can get kicked up even in situations that are not unsafe. We hold survivors who have caused harm with tenderness, recognizing the ways in which long-held survival and coping strategies may rely on harm to others, establishing power-over, or playing people against each other. At the same time, **this kind of behavior cannot be tolerated in a just and equitable professional network, and we must have checks and balances in place that hold the complexity of trauma while maintaining a safe-enough, brave-enough container.**

This means allowing space for expression of feelings and trauma responses without allowing for harmful behaviors towards others. Trauma-informed organizational practices are essential in this work, not just for trafficking survivors in the work but out of recognition that all our co-organizers (with or without lived experience of trafficking) deserve trauma-informed care. Fostering a trauma-informed communication, care, and working environment does not mean, however, that anything goes or that people who have survived harm each get everything they want (as we all may want different things and have different beliefs about what is acceptable).

Our intention to be as trauma-informed as possible while maintaining our commitment to our values and to accountability for harm are the foundation of this safeguarding policy.

What is trauma-informed organizational practice? What is it not?
Trauma-informed organizational practice means that organizations are conscious of the ways trauma shows up in organizations and among members. Trauma-informed organizational practice means we are conscious of individual trauma, as well as collective trauma. Collective trauma can include historical, systemic, intergenerational, and/or community trauma. Trauma-informed practices include letting people know what to expect, being transparent about what you can and can't do, being trustworthy and honest about the organizational goals, offering opportunities for peer support, and building collaborative spaces. **Trauma-informed organizational practice does not mean** nobody will ever be triggered, as our triggers are unique to each of us and highly variable. It does not mean that people are exempt from the expectation of kindness, compassion, and accountability when they are triggered. We are still responsible for our behaviors, but we can have accountability without assigning moral worthiness or blame to others for their responses. Trauma-informed does not mean that survivors' choices can be invalidated or dismissed because of our assumptions about their trauma. It does not mean that the organization must provide clinical or financial support to anyone who is struggling.

Our Values in Action

We are invested in holistically addressing harm within our network through community accountability and shared responsibility. This means that maintaining a safe enough, brave enough, emergent space requires all of us supporting that intention. Our values guide how we do our work. Therefore, putting our values into practice requires a series of commitments by NSN staff and working group co-facilitators and responsibilities of individuals in our community.

Value	**Organizational Commitment and Individual Responsibility**
"The NSN uses the operational, criminal definition of severe forms of trafficking in our criteria for membership: a person who is exploited through force, fraud, or coercion in any form of labor (including commercial sex), or someone who was in the sex trades while a minor. *We welcome and*	**NSN commitment**: Every member who qualifies for membership under this criteria has equal voice in our network, and will be free from having their experiences dismissed, misrepresented, or redefined by others in this network. **Individual responsibility**: Members will practice acceptance and non-judgement of other members' lived experience and expertise. Members will not

prioritize survivors who have experienced human trafficking in any form of labor, and do not conflate trafficking and consensual commercial sex in our values or our membership criteria."	dismiss, misrepresent, or redefine the trafficking experiences of others.
"The NSN believes in trauma-informed, nonviolent communication, and building survivor-centric cultures of care."	**NSN commitment**: Members and staff of our network can expect trauma-sensitive treatment even in cases where the NSN is not the right container for the work they need or want to do. Members and staff of our network will not be expected to endure abusive communications or behavior in order to access membership or work. Our community is focused on the needs of survivors first and foremost. **Individual responsibility**: Members and staff of our network will strive to recognize how their trauma shows up in their interactions and will take space to care for themselves if they do not feel they can communicate nonviolently in a given moment. Members and staff will not use their trauma as an excuse for ongoing harmful behavior. Members and staff will respect each others' needs and care practices during times of conflict, and will avoid carceral approaches to communication pushing back against oppression.
"We emphasize collective goals, shared facilitation, and active listening, and promote informed, inclusive, and equitable dialogue over debate."	**NSN Commitment**: NSN staff and working group co-facilitators will listen to member feedback and concerns and incorporate it whenever possible.[2] NSN staff and working group co-facilitators will consider the needs of our broader membership when making any decisions that impact our network.

[2] Examples where member feedback may not be incorporated include: Where member feedback directly contradicts other member feedback and there is a need to synthesize a broad solution; where member feedback directly lessens the general safety of the community or contradicts known best practices; where member feedback conveys unchecked privilege or implicit bias and would contribute to oppression; where member feedback focuses on individual rather than collective solutions; or where member feedback contradicts the legal obligations of the organization.

	Individual Responsibility: Members and staff will not put others into positions of having to debate their existence, and will listen to better hear and understand, rather than to formulate an argument. Members will recognize and honor their own boundaries around when they are not in a position to listen to hear and understand, and seek or request support as needed. Members who need extra support on this can access additional training; the NSN will prioritize providing and sharing ongoing resources and training with members.
"We seek to create a space where people acknowledge and strategically leverage their privilege and positionality to increase access for all survivors, where resources are shared, where content and strategies are healing and growth-centered, and where we all have the shared responsibility of keeping the space as harm-free as possible through community accountability, including for lateral violence."	**NSN Commitment**: Rather than pretend that privilege does not exist, NSN staff and working group co-facilitators will acknowledge their own power dynamics and privilege and use that power and privilege to get more resources and support into the hands of those with less institutional power or privilege. As part of our commitment to keeping our space as harm-free as possible, members can expect that harm against or by them will not be met with inaction. NSN staff and working group co-facilitators will ensure that policies and protocols will be continuously updated and revised as needed as we learn about gaps in our safeguarding and grievance protocols. NSN staff and working group co-facilitators will also continue to develop and offer capacity-building and learning opportunities for members to build their conflict-resolution skills. **Individual Responsibility:** Members and staff will communicate and respect boundaries, will strive to remain open to learning about and taking accountability for harm caused, and will aspire to a space where repair is possible and people are not disposable, whether the NSN is the right container for their work or not. We recognize that there are many survivor leadership organizations with a variety of community and cultural norms, and our values, policies, and work protect the space for and centers

	the needs of those who have felt excluded from other survivor leadership opportunities. In the event that someone has been asked to pause their membership or their membership is terminated, our public resources (including professional development resources, mental health resources, and periodic open microgrant opportunities) are still available.
"We embrace generative conflict over comfort within the bounds of our shared values, which are articulated in our Values Statement."	**NSN Commitment**: NSN staff and working group co-facilitators and staff will maintain a commitment to presence in generative conflict in order to learn from conflict rather than run from it or shut it down. Staff and working group members will engage in and provide continued learning opportunities and support for members in developing the skills needed to engage in generative conflict. **Individual Responsibility**: Members will work to learn skills for generative conflict, and will make efforts to redirect or avoid engaging in unproductive conflict.
Value: "The NSN acknowledges that human trafficking is horrific, and is an extension of rather than an exception to the range of exploitation inherent in capitalist systems of labor. Normalization of exploitative labor practices increases vulnerability to trafficking. We work to transform these systems while simultaneously engaging in harm reduction to mitigate their impacts."	**NSN Commitment**: NSN staff and working group co-facilitators acknowledges that in a capitalist society, all work includes a level of labor disparities dependent on need and most people are working because they have to or have limited options. While we cannot erase this dynamic from our work we will strive to be conscious of its impacts when engaging in paid work with our members whenever possible. This may include things like offering alternative deliverables (when possible) if an original contract obligation proves impossible or too challenging for a consultant, offering redirection and coaching when the work product is not as agreed upon (rather than immediate termination of the contract), and generous support for consultants' ongoing development and professional networking in an effort to open more pathways to income and security. All first-time survivor contractors to the NSN will review the Contract Checklist with the SLPM before signing the contract to ensure adequate

	understanding of how to read a contract and the terms and obligations of the contract being signed. **Individual Responsibility**: Members who desire to engage in paid work with the NSN or our stakeholders will be transparent about their skills and experience. When engaging in paid work, members will communicate needs for additional support, coaching, or accommodations so that leadership can offer or coordinate adequate support. All paid work through the NSN is governed by our values statement and subject to our Expectations for How We Show Up, and members who opt into paid work will ask for clarification when needed.
"We practice radical empathy and do our work in solidarity with impacted and underserved communities and their fight for collective liberation from oppression."	**NSN Commitment**: NSN staff and working group co-facilitators commits to radical empathy and solidarity with all impacted and oppressed populations. We do not commit to anti-racism work because BIPOC survivors are disproportionately impacted by trafficking but because racism is horrific and causes harm, violence, and exclusion to all BIPOC individuals and communities regardless of trafficking experiences. We do not commit to migrant safety work in order to prevent trafficking but because immigrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, and other migrants deserve safety, freedom of movement, and to have their inherent dignity respected. We do not commit to resisting homophobia and transphobia in order to reduce trafficking among LGBTQ individuals but because they deserve dignity, safety, respect, rights, and bodily autonomy. To paraphrase Lila Watson, our liberty is bound up in each others'. **Individual Responsibility**: Members are encouraged to go beyond being "allies" to being "accomplices" or "co-conspirators," and will advocate for marginalized peoples' and communities' access to safety, dignity, and resources even when they aren't in the room.

"Neither marginalized identities nor a history of complex trauma negates an individual's consent, and we can acknowledge the impacts of power dynamics on what choices are available or feel accessible without denying an individual's creativity, resilience, and choice."	**NSN Commitment**: NSN staff and working group co-facilitators will work to acknowledge the impacts of trauma and how they impact workplace and interpersonal dynamics within our network without minimizing personal autonomy and choices around how we treat each other and express our leadership. **Individual Responsibility**: Members will recognize that their trauma histories do not deny their agency in making the choices they currently make, and is not an excuse for harming others.
"We advocate for disabled people, transgender and queer individuals, noncitizens, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), people with HIV/AIDS, current or formerly incarcerated people, and frequently criminalized communities to be protected through safer working conditions, free from discrimination, harassment, violence, wage theft, fraud, exploitation, and human trafficking."	**NSN Commitment**: NSN staff and working group co-facilitators commits to addressing any forms of discrimination or bias against members with these identities within our network or between members. **Individual Responsibility**: Members will avoid discrimination, slurs, or microagressions against these communities in their work, will remain open to accountability for any intentional or unintentional discrimination, and commit to continually unlearning their own implicit biases.
"Conflation of consensual labor and trafficked sex leads to increased surveillance, criminalization, and incarceration of people from marginalized communities, criminalizes harm reduction and safety practices that people in the sex trades use to keep each other safe, and leads to decreased engagement from direct services and healthcare staff when they are confused about what trafficking is. It also erases the experiences and agency of survivors who have both	**NSN Commitment**: NSN staff and working group co-facilitators will not support conflation of consensual and trafficked sex, accusations or implying that members organizing for sex worker safety and rights are contributing to exploitation, or that criminalization of commercial sex between consenting adults is a viable or effective option. The NSN will not restrict membership or consulting opportunities based upon current or past participation in sex work.

trafficked and consensual experiences in the sex trades and prevents those survivors from feeling included in anti-trafficking spaces."	
"The NSN opposes criminalizing survivors for their trafficking experiences and supports holistic and comprehensive vacatur expansion for all survivors of human trafficking."	**NSN Commitment**: Having a criminal record will not impact any survivor's eligibility for or continued membership in the NSN outside of a credible threat to safety.
"The NSN supports the right to permanent resident status and equitable visa protections as well as a path to citizenship for noncitizen survivors of trafficking."	**NSN Commitment**: Documentation status shall not influence any survivor's eligibility for or continued membership in the NSN.
"The NSN supports meaningful survivor leadership in the movement rather than tokenized contributions, the mitigation of power dynamics over when and how survivors choose to tell their stories, and a movement whose frameworks are big enough to accommodate and advocate for those survivors whose narratives have been ignored or invalidated."	**NSN Commitment**: The NSN strives not to tokenize members in its work, and works to name, identify, and advocate to reduce disparities caused by oppression and trauma without limiting members' contributions or value to their experiences or identities. Our members are engaged advocates, professionals, and activists beyond their lived experiences and identities. Our contract consultants will be selected based on skill and potential to successfully complete the work rather than on their experiences of trauma, and will be supported in their professional learning. The NSN will confirm trafficking experience during the application and interview process; once accepted, members are never expected or required to share any trafficking or trauma details. **Individual Responsibility**: Members understand and honor that ongoing learning is provided to all members, and that paid work opportunities will be assigned based upon skills and professional experience (including experience learned in informal organizing).

	Members' roles on particular projects may be at different levels of the spectrum of survivor engagement, meaning that one project may have two survivors leading the project (empower), three collaborators (collaborate), two consultant reviewers (involve), and be based upon survey responses of two dozen members (ask). All of these roles are essential, yet they require different types and levels of skills, and hold different levels of responsibility and decision-making.

Statement of Safeguarding Policy

1) The Survivor Leadership Program Manager (SLPM) Associate Director of Survivor Advocacy maintain organizational responsibility for ensuring fidelity to this policy, and decisions made as a result of this policy will be made in consultation with the Membership and Community Working Group.
2) Revisions to this policy will be made in partnership with the NSN Steering Group, which consists of returning members of the Restructure Team and the Co-Facilitators of the Membership and Community Working Group (MCWG).
3) The SLPM will secure and maintain all necessary training, capacity-building, and support to faithfully implement this policy. They will ensure that NSN staff and working group co-facilitators involved in making decisions about our membership and community policies also have access to and maintain participation in ongoing relevant capacity-building.
4) The Steering Group will meet regularly to continue work on updating safeguarding, grievance, and ethical policies and protocols, and the MCWG will meet regularly to discuss specifics of implementation and response.
5) The SLPM will review any potential or new programs or projects to identify safeguarding risks, and will develop practices and procedures to mitigate risk in collaboration with the Associate Director of Survivor Advocacy and Steering Group.
6) Cast staff (including survivor leadership staff) are subject to all human resources policies prohibiting discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace.
7) Sexual or romantic relationships between NSN staff and members or consultants are not allowed as they take place in the context of unequal power dynamics and thus undermine the credibility and integrity of the NSN's work.
8) While private relationships between members are not the purview of the NSN, NSN staff and working group co-facilitators (including working group co-facilitators) as well as more experienced or well-known survivor leaders should be conscious of power dynamics with other members. Should working group co-facilitators develop an

intimate, romantic, or sexual relationship with another NSN member, they should disclose the relationship to the SLPM and MCWG can consider checks and balances for fair and equitable organizational decision-making.

Procedures

Prevention

1. Membership Application and New Member Processes
    a. No member of the NSN is compelled or coerced to advocate for our values, particularly in order to access financial resources.
        i. All members will have a chance to read the values statement before applying for membership, and will affirm that the values feel like a good fit before submitting their application. Our full values on our website have any specific language (professional, advocacy, or social justice) linked to plain-language definitions for accessibility. All applicants will have an interview before a membership decision is made, in which the values will be reviewed and the applicant can ask any questions before opting into membership.
        ii. If the applicant still has questions or concerns about the values or is otherwise unsure, they will be sent additional accessible materials to review to support them in their decisions.
        iii. Almost all paid work opportunities for the NSN are limited to full members who we know are already aligned with the values well before any potential income opportunities are possible. This is to prevent situations in which members feel compelled to advocate for values they do not support.
        iv. All of our open calls for microgrants, scholarships, or most of our limited emergency funding are open even to non-members in order to ensure that nobody has to pretend to support the values in order to be considered.
        v. Any of our educational, training, and professional development resources that can be shared publicly are made freely available so that non-members can access our resource library and catalog of video trainings regardless of alignment with our values.
    b. All members should be aware of our Expectations for How We Show Up to ensure transparency about how we navigate communication, community accountability, and confidentiality.
        i. All newly accepted members are expected to attend a 90-120 minute onboarding before they gain access to our interactive spaces, which include our Slack communication channel, meetings, and interactive learning opportunities. This onboarding covers the expectations in depth

as well as our values around accountability, interpersonal respect, and communication, and includes discussion of scenarios.

ii. All members are required to have a signed copy of the Expectations for How We Show Up on file.

iii. We will review the Expectations (using the scenarios from the onboarding) at a monthly member meeting annually.

c. As a values-based membership network for professionals, not every person who applies is a good fit, and the NSN may not be the appropriate container for the work that some applicants want or need to do. While "rejection sensitivity" is common and it does not feel good to not get what we were hoping for, the NSN will strive to implement a trauma-informed procedure for notifying applicants when their application for membership was not accepted.

i. Safety: In order to reduce bias in decision-making, all application decisions will be made collaboratively by the MCWG but all applicant information will otherwise remain confidential. Applicants will be assured that their interview information will not be shared outside the working group.

ii. Trustworthiness and Transparency: Except in rare cases in which sharing the information may result in harm, all applicants who are not accepted will be told the broad reasons why.

iii. Peer Support and Collaboration: All notifications of non-acceptance will include a link to resources for wellness and crisis support in case the feelings of not being accepted into the network are challenging to manage. The applicant may request support through one of our referral programs.

iv. Empowerment, Voice, and Choice: When the non-acceptance involves a concern that someone's understanding of or support for one of our values may not be fully developed, the notification will include resources for learning more and an invitation to re-apply in the next round if additional learning or life changes lead to feeling like it might be a better fit.

v. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues: When appropriate, applicant notifications may include referrals to other survivor leadership groups that might be a better fit. If cultural, historical, or gender issues played a role in the decision (such as someone not understanding racial disparities or privilege), the notification will include resources to learn more.

2. Membership Management

a. All onboarded members are eligible to receive vouchers for free therapy through BetterHelp to ensure they have the support needed to process any trauma that may be kicked up through their participation in our network, the broader anti-trafficking sector, or other aspects of their lives.

b. All members can report challenges experienced with other members, leadership, or staff to the SLPM or any co-facilitator of the Membership and Community Working Group to ensure that they have options.

   c. The information on the SLPM's supervisory circle and how to contact them is made available to all members in monthly posts to the Slack Workspace and Listserv.
   d. The NSN's grievance policy is posted in the membership documents, linked to in every monthly meeting agenda, and shared with members who request support by the SLPM and MCWG co-facilitators.
3. Non-Member Participation
   a. Selected opportunities may be opened to non-members and/or the general public. These will be clearly indicated as "open to NSN members and other survivors of human trafficking" or "open to the public" in marketing and registration materials.
4. Consulting
   a. Any potential consultants who have not contracted with the NSN before will meet with the SLPM prior to signing the contract to review the Contract Checklist to ensure full understanding of the terms of the contract and to have a chance to ask any questions. This checklist reviews payment terms, deliverables, timelines, and expectations. This is to prevent harm that might happen as a result of consultants not being clear on contract terms.
   b. *All* consultants working with the NSN (whether or not they are members) are required to follow our Expectations for How We Show Up (in order to ensure interpersonal compassion and kindness) and Safeguarding Policies (in order to ensure participant safety).
   c. Reasonable efforts will be made to provide coaching or modify the deliverables if contract terms are not being met in an effort to avoid contract termination whenever possible.
   d. Safeguarding concerns or grievances involving violations of privacy or confidentiality, harassment, stalking, doxxing, assault, identity-based attacks, or any other explicit threats to a person's safety will result in the immediate suspension of the consulting opportunity for the duration of the investigation. Compensation for hours that would otherwise be worked during this time will still be remitted during the term of the investigation. Pending the outcome of the investigation the consultant may either be reinstated (if unfounded or resolved satisfactorily) or the contract immediately terminated without compensation except for approved hours worked (if validated or unable to resolve satisfactorily).
   e. Most contracts with members are contingent upon valid membership status. If a members' membership is terminated due to misconduct or unresolved grievances, this is grounds for termination of the contract.
5. Membership Termination
   a. Any termination of membership will occur as outlined in our formal grievance policy below. In almost all cases, member access to resources and participation in the network will remain intact while the grievance is being investigated. In 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.

b. Members will have access to as much information about grievances filed against them as can be safely offered without harm to the member filing the grievance, as outlined in our grievance policies below.
c. The NSN's grievance process includes opportunities for coaching and support between initial filing of the grievance and membership termination to ensure members have opportunities for repair and redirection before termination.
d. To respect the privacy and confidentiality of our members, the SLPM and Steering Group members will be unable provide information about any specific grievance or termination to individuals who were not involved in the grievance(s), but can refer them to the Safeguarding and Grievance Policy to better understand what behaviors might result in a grievance or termination.
e. No members' membership will be terminated without the consensus of the Membership and Community Working Group.
f. When possible and able to be done without harm to other survivors, termination will occur during a meeting to ensure opportunities for processing. These meetings will involve the SLPM and an additional person – usually a co-facilitator of the MCWG – for transparency. In cases that have involved abusive communications, a letter may be sent instead, and will outline (at a minimum) categories of violations if details cannot be shared due to a pattern of harassment or retaliation.
g. All terminations, whether done via meeting or written communication, will include: 1) Self-care and crisis resources to manage challenging feelings that might come up, 2) Information and resources related to the grievances or cause of termination to support ongoing learning and healing, and 3) Information about whether or not the termination is permanent or if the member will be eligible to re-apply at some point.

6. Contracts and Partnerships
    a. All consultants who work with NSN partners or subcontractors will have the opportunity to submit feedback to the SLPM about the quality of the partnership and experience with the stakeholder/partner to determine the appropriateness of ongoing or future partnerships.
    b. No member of the NSN will be asked or expected to participate in a contract partnership where they have, are likely to, or begin to experience harm. Toward this aim, the NSN will minimize partnerships with organizations that are not aligned with our values, and will be transparent with member-consultants about potential concerns in advance of contracting.

Reporting, Responding, and Investigating

1. Protecting and ensuring the safety of everyone involved with the NSN is a priority. All members, consultants, and partners are encouraged to report any concerns about safeguarding to the

SLPM or Associate Director of Survivor Advocacy (ADSA) as soon as possible. This includes any safeguarding violations by members, staff, or partners on behalf of the NSN.

2. If the SLPM or ADSA receives a report of an actual or potential safeguarding issue or violation, the report must be shared with the ADSA (if they were not the one to field the report) and Cast's Chief Impact and Operations Officer.
3. Concerns may be reported anonymously, but people are encouraged to give their names and/or contact details to support investigation when possible. Grievances between members must be filed in accordance with our grievance policy, outlined below.
4. The National Survivor Network will conduct a prompt, discreet, and objective review or investigation of any safeguarding complaints, engaging outside experts and counsel where needed or appropriate. All other grievances will go through our grievance procedures as outlined below. Please note that we may nto be able to full evaluate or investigate anonymous, vague, or general complaints. The investigation will determine what steps to take, how to support the safety and wellness of the persons at risk of harm or who have experienced harm, how much information to share with the person whose practices are being investigated, any additional reports that need to be made, and arrangements to support all involved parties.

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 SLPM, 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 SLPM 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 SLPM'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 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 SLPM 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

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.	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. 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. **In most cases, we will be able to schedule that meeting within two weeks.** 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.
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.	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. 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. We will set up a time within 2-4 weeks to meet with you to discuss how much feels safe and appropriate to

	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 ***if*** 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. 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.
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.	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. 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.

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.).[3]

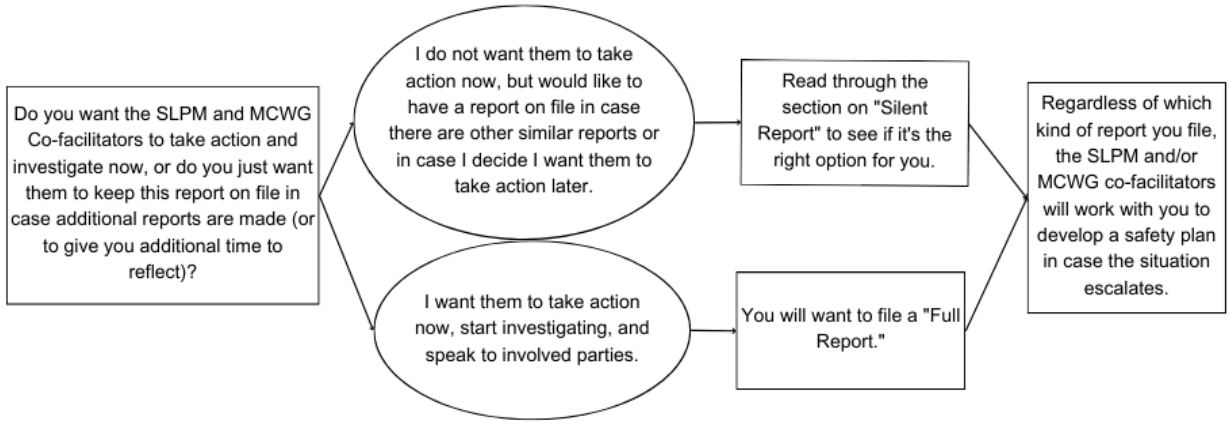
Filing a grievance about another member or a stakeholder

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:

[3] 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 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.
- **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 defenisve, 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:

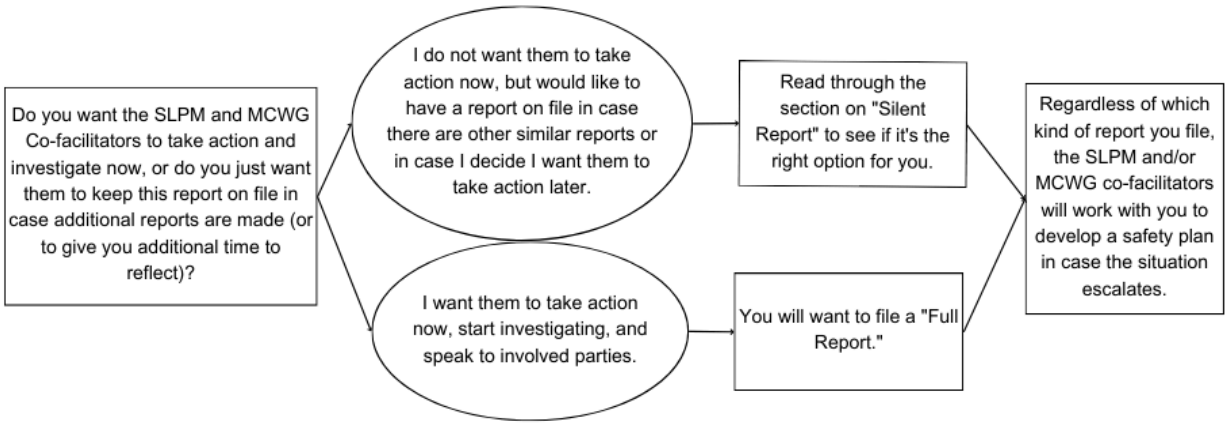
I have asked these individuals if it's okay for the NSN to contact them about this incident and they have agreed. (yes/no) **The NSN will only reach out to people who've given consent to discuss.**

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