



ABRF Code of Conduct (revised June 2025)

Unacceptable Behaviors

ABRF has zero tolerance for any form of discrimination or harassment, including but not limited to sexual harassment, by participants at ABRF events. This includes:

- Intimidating, harassing, abusive, discriminatory, derogatory, demeaning, speech and/or actions by any participant in any ABRF event or activity.
- Harmful or prejudicial verbal or written comments or visual images related to age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability, or other personal characteristics
- Inappropriate use of nudity and/or sexual images in public spaces, communication with another ABRF member, email, text, or social media.
- Deliberate intimidation, stalking, or following
- Unwanted or harassing photography, including failing or refusing to stop photographing/recording upon explicit request or appearance of discomfort (turning away or covering one's face, etc)
- Photographing slides of oral presentations or posters, or recording of scientific and other sessions when notice is given that speakers do not consent to have such photographs or videos made
- Violating the rules and regulations of the conference hotel
- Sustained disruption of scientific sessions or other events
- Unwelcome and uninvited attention or contact
- Physical assault (including unwelcome touch or groping)
- Real or implied threat of physical or emotional harm
- Real or implied threat of professional or financial damage or harm

What To Do If You Witness or Experience Conduct That Violates the Code:

If you feel threatened or witness someone being threatened and in immediate need of assistance, please contact venue staff/security or call 911 immediately.

ABRF staff and leadership are available to assist participants in contacting hotel/university security or local law enforcement, and otherwise assist those experiencing harassment, to enable them to feel safe for the duration of the meeting. We value your attendance and want to make your experience as productive and professionally inspiring as possible. If you witness, experience or are made aware of misconduct by an ABRF member or meeting attendee and wish to raise a concern, you can file a complaint by completing the [ABRF Code of Conduct Incident Form](#) or email the ABRF Code of Conduct Committee. For situations requiring immediate action, contact any member of the Code of Conduct Committee, Executive Board, or in-person meeting facilitator and follow-up with a written form as appropriate.

If possible, provide the following information, preferably in writing:

- Identifying information (name, badge number, clothing work, hair/eye color, tattoos, etc.) of the participant violating the Code (“the Respondent”);
- The behavior that was in violation;
- If the conduct concern is of a type that involves a target, the name of the person subjected to the alleged inappropriate conduct (“the Complainant” or “the Subject” if the complaint is made by a third-party) and contact information, if known
- The approximate time of the behavior (if different than the time the report was made)
- The circumstances surrounding the incident
- A clear statement of any facts that may indicate any ongoing concern of imminent threat to safety of any person(s) or safety or condition of property, and the sources of such facts, with contact information if known;
- Other people involved in or witnessing the incident

All complaints will be treated seriously and responded to promptly.

We Respect Your Confidentiality

The rights and privacy of those involved, including the rights of Respondents, are protected. Subject to a Respondent's right to know the identity of the Complainant or Subject, all reasonable steps will be taken to maintain confidentiality of all parties involved in a complaint. Your identity will only be revealed if it is necessary and only to those who have a clear need to know so they can completely address and resolve the incident you reported. The ABRF Code of Conduct Committee may not maintain confidentiality if, in the Committee's judgment and discretion, safety and/or law requires otherwise.

Conflicts of Interest

When a Code of Conduct complaint is discussed with the Code of Conduct Committee or Executive Board (refer to the process below for details), all members of the Code of Conduct Committee or Executive Board shall recuse themselves from the investigation process if they believe they have a conflict of interest. Conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to, a close personal or professional working relationship with any of the parties involved or similar experiences that may influence judgment. In the event that a member recuses him or herself from an investigation, a member of the Code of Conduct Committee, or an individual appointed by them for this purpose, will stand in as an ad hoc member of the investigation. Ad hoc members must abide by all of the confidentiality and professional standards expected of the elected members of the committee.

Limitations of Anonymous Reports

ABRF appreciates information about any potential code of conduct issues. You are not required to provide your name. While all reports will be reviewed and evaluated, **only first-person complaints, including contact details, are eligible for the complete investigative process as described in this policy.**

If you decide to report a concern anonymously, please be sure to provide as many details as possible. To facilitate as complete an investigation as possible with an anonymous report, we need to know who, what, when, where, why, and how, as outlined above. Only complainants who are not the subject of inappropriate conduct may file an incident report or complaint anonymously.

You May Receive Updates

After you file a report, you will receive updates from ABRF only if you were the subject of the inappropriate conduct. Anonymous complainants may not see any obvious signs that their complaints are being reviewed or investigated. In fact, because of our commitment to confidential and fair investigations, such persons might never know all that was done to investigate or what corrective actions were taken.

The Investigation and Remediation Process

Violations Requiring Immediate Action

For situations requiring immediate action (for example, harassment during an in-person meeting), contact any member of the Code of Conduct Committee, Executive Board, or in-person meeting facilitator and follow-up with a written form as appropriate.

1. Participants who are asked to cease any behavior(s) contrary to this Code of Conduct are expected to comply immediately.
2. ABRF reserves the right to take any action deemed necessary, including immediate removal from the event without warning or refund, in response to any incident of behavior deemed inappropriate under this Code of Conduct; ABRF reserves the right to prohibit attendance at any future meeting by any individual found to have acted in violation of this Code of Conduct.
3. Persons experiencing harassment or witnessing any incidents of unacceptable behavior in violation of this Code of Conduct are asked to contact an ABRF staff member and ask for either ABRF's Executive Director or the most senior staff person, so that appropriate action can be taken. If neither is available, the ABRF's Board President should be contacted.
4. ABRF has no power to prevent any person accused of unlawful or improper behavior who believes such action has caused him or her legal harm from instituting legal action against the person he or she believes has caused the harm.

1) Staff Procedures

Any member of staff is authorized to issue a verbal warning to an event participant that such person's behavior violates this Code of Conduct. Warnings should be reported to the Executive Director as soon as possible thereafter and should include: identifying information (name of participant), time the warning was issued, behavior that was in violation, approximate time of behavior (if at a different time than the warning), circumstances surrounding the incident, and other people involved in the incident (including witnesses, if any). Verbal or oral warnings and reports should be reduced to writing as soon as practicable after their occurrence.

2) Reporting

- a. When taking a personal report, staff should find a space that is safe and that cannot be overheard. It is recommended that one other staff member or Executive Board member be present as a witness to the report. Staff will not ask a third-party complainant to confront anyone, and, to the extent possible, such complainant's identity will remain known only to the ABRF

representatives receiving the report. However, ABRF may not be able to guarantee confidentiality or anonymity to a complainant or witness.

- b. If at all possible, staff should also interview any witnesses and give the respondent an opportunity to respond to the complaint.

3) Presentations

- a. Presentations or similar events should not be interrupted for one-time inappropriate statements, although a staff member should speak to the presenter afterwards regarding the impropriety of any statements made. ABRF should take immediate action to politely and calmly stop any presentation or event that repeatedly (two or more occasions) or seriously violates this Code of Conduct.

4) Expulsion

- a. A participant may be asked to leave an ABRF event for any of the following:
 - I. A second violation of the Code of Conduct, resulting in a warning from staff;
 - II. Continuation of the offensive behavior after being directed to cease inappropriate conduct;
 - III. A pattern (two or more incidents) of offensive behavior, with or without warnings; or
 - IV. A single serious or intentional offense (e.g. punching, grouping, exposing oneself to another, use of hate speech or speech tending to incite violence).

The Investigation Process for Violations Not Requiring Immediate Action

- 1. An incident report is submitted to the ABRF Code of Conduct Committee ("the Committee"), with information as described above.
- 2. The Committee will review the content of the incident report or complaint.
- 3. If the Committee determines that, even if the allegations of the incident report/complaint are true, no violation has occurred, the matter will be dismissed without contacting either the person alleging the violation or the person alleged to have violated the Code.
- 4. If the Committee determines that, if the allegations of the incident report are true, a Code violation may have occurred, the Committee will initiate an investigation. The complainant may be asked to provide additional information, witnesses may be asked to provide relevant information, and the respondent, after having been provided with a copy of the incident report/complaint and all relevant evidence, shall be afforded an opportunity to provide a written response to the incident

report/complaint. The Committee may, but is not required to, conduct a virtual hearing regarding the matter.

5. After completing its investigation, the Committee will determine whether a violation has occurred and, if so, develop recommendations regarding the appropriate consequences for the violation.
6. If the Committee determines that no violation has occurred, the Committee will so inform the respondent and the complainant in writing and dismiss the complaint. There shall be no right to appeal a dismissed complaint.
7. If the Committee determines that a violation has occurred, the Committee will provide the respondent with a written determination setting forth the violation found and the consequences to be imposed. The respondent will be advised that the Committee's determination may be appealed to the Executive Board by filing a written appeal with the Committee Chair within thirty (30) days of receipt of the Committee's determination. No new evidence may be submitted with the appeal. The appeal shall state the respondent's arguments regarding why the Committee's determination or consequences are not supported by the weight of the evidence considered by the Committee. If no appeal is received by the Committee Chair within the thirty-day period, the Committee's determination shall be considered final and any recommended consequences shall be imposed. The Executive Board will then be informed of the Committee's determination and the consequences imposed.
8. If a timely appeal of the Committee's determination is made, the Executive Board will be provided with copies of the complaint, the respondent's response to the complaint, all relevant evidence considered by the Committee and the appeal filed by the respondent. The Executive Board will review such materials and evaluate the determination and recommended consequences of the Committee. If the Executive Board disagrees with the Committee's determination or recommended consequences, it will direct the Committee either to dismiss the complaint or to reconsider its determination and recommended consequences.
9. If the Executive Board agrees that a violation has occurred and agrees with the Committee's recommended consequences, the Executive Board will advise the respondent and the consequences shall be imposed.
10. The decision of the Executive Board shall be final.

Potential Consequences of Unacceptable Behavior

Unacceptable behavior from any attendee, sponsor, venue staff, or vendor will not be tolerated. Anyone asked to stop unacceptable behavior is expected to comply immediately. Potential consequences of unacceptable behavior may include (may be used in combination):

- Private Reprimand
- Expulsion from a meeting
- Suspension of future meeting attendance for up to three years
- Permanent termination of future meeting attendance
- Suspension of membership activities (including Research Groups, Committees) for up to three years
- Termination of membership for up to three years
- Permanent termination of membership, with the opportunity to apply for reinstatement upon review by the ABRF Executive Board

ABRF reserves the right to inform the employer of any ABRF member who is determined to have violated the Code if consequences imposed for such violation include suspension or termination of ABRF membership.

Consequences imposed depend on the severity of the violation and the corresponding harm caused or threatened to individuals or ABRF. Considerations regarding the severity of the harm include, but are not limited to:

- The nature of the violation
- Whether the violation is repetitive; frequency of repetition
- Whether the violation reinforces long standing barriers or creates barriers to inclusion
- The other actual effects or threatened effects of the violation (harm or threatened harm to individual or ABRF)
- Whether the violations involve safety interests
- Whether the accused, in a first-time violation situation, has taken responsibility, demonstrated an appreciation of the severity of the violation, and taken or committed to action to remedy the adverse effects

Timing

The goal is to complete a formal process 90-120 days from the submission of the initial incident report to the final determination. However, the Committee and/or Executive Board may extend the period if required to ensure a complete and appropriate investigation.

- The Committee will normally meet within 30 days of receipt of the complaint.
- The respondent will be informed of the complaint promptly upon the Committee's initiation of an investigation.
- The respondent will be given 30 days to provide a written response to the Committee.
- Upon receipt of the respondent's response or the expiration of the 30 days in the event that no response is received, the Committee will, within 30 days, make a determination regarding whether a violation has occurred and, if so, what sanctions should be imposed and communicate such determination and recommendations to the respondent.
- The respondent shall have 30 days within which to appeal the Committee's determination and sanctions to the Executive Board. Absent a timely appeal, the determination shall be final and the sanctions shall be imposed.
- If an appeal is made to the Executive Board, it shall normally render its decision within 30 days of receipt of such appeal.

Abbreviated version of the policy for posting:

ABRF is committed to ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for all participants.

We expect all ABRF members to abide by its **Code of Conduct** in all ABRF activities, in-person and online, as well as in written and oral communication.

If you are being subjected to, or notice that someone else is being subjected to, behavior that violates this code of conduct, complete the ABRF Code of Conduct Incident Form or contact a member of the ABRF Executive Board.