

# **Sacred Spaces FAQ**

## **Introduction of Policy & Statement of Values**

Congregation Beth Shalom of Naperville (CBS) is a Jewish community of warmth, purpose, vitality and joy. We are a diverse congregation where Jews and their interfaith families throughout the Western suburbs can find friendship, belonging, and goodwill; a congregation built upon the mutual respect of its members. CBS is a place where we can deepen our knowledge of Judaism and our practice of mitzvot. We are an institution dedicated to creating a religious and spiritual home open to all types of Jewish practice, and to strengthening the very core of Jewish life.

CBS celebrates our diversity and recognizes the fact that Jews are and always have been a multi-racial, multi-ethnic people. We welcome all who choose to join our community, including partners of other faiths and cultural backgrounds. CBS commits to the ongoing, sustained work of becoming an anti-racist synagogue and supporting People of Color in our community. We are a congregation which celebrates and supports the lives, the relationships, and the individual and group contributions of its LGBTQ+ members and friends. We affirm and promote individuals with disabilities and everyone's full participation in the life of the congregation and community. We commit to showing that all members of our community and their families are valued and respected equally.

In order to put these values into practice, we have developed this policy for addressing potential discrimination, abuse, and harassment in our community, which includes all clergy, staff members, congregants, extended family members, and guests. We take seriously the Biblical statement that all people are created "*B-tzelem Elokim*", in the image of G-d, and therefore should be treated with dignity and respect. We also understand that humans sometimes fall short of this ideal in their treatment of one another. It is our obligation to promote a culture that is safe and inclusive, and thus holds our community to the highest standards for preventing and addressing harassment, abuse, and discrimination based on race, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, sex, age, physical or mental disability.

This policy is meant to be an evolving document. As time passes, and we learn from both our individual experiences and our collective implementation, this policy will be reviewed and amended over time, in accordance with CBS bylaws. Such changes

are integral to a healthy process that will enable us to be responsive to evolving circumstances and the practical needs of our community.

### **FAQ 1: What are the important things I need to know about interactions and the building itself?**

Every individual within the Congregation Beth Shalom community has the right to define which types of physical contact feel comfortable and appropriate for them. We are proud that our institution unites a wide spectrum of people - young and old, Jews spanning the denominational spectrum, and people from different cultures and countries-all of whom may have different behavioral norms regarding physical contact. There are those who, for religious reasons, refrain from touching members of the opposite gender; those who feel comfortable touching all genders; people who by nature use touch as a main form of communication; and those who prefer not to be touched at all. **These individual choices should be respected by all, and personal boundaries should not be crossed. Ideally, consent should be sought before any form of physical contact.** We strive to create a culture where all community members feel comfortable to voice their needs regarding physical interactions with others and to communicate discomfort at any point regarding someone's behavior in this realm. As a community, we aim to be sensitive to individuals' cues, body language and preferences, and we acknowledge and respect that not everyone feels similarly about touch and personal space. **If one is unsure of how to behave, the best policy is to ask.**

#### ***Physical Spaces Guidelines:***

CBS strives to meet the following criteria in regards to building safety. Those with the most power have an obligation to set an example in modeling ethical boundaries and welcoming stronger accountability. We recognize the need to balance privacy with safety. We aim for maximum visibility and transparency, and our top priority is safety. Our goal is to have all spaces be either supervised and visible (i.e., observable/interruptible), or locked and inaccessible. This includes, but is not limited to the following guidelines:

### ***Meetings/Open Door Policy***

The following applies to all meetings involving Clergy, Staff, Board Members, Teachers, Students, Congregants:

As a general rule, meetings at CBS should take place in spaces that are observable or interruptible in order to prevent even the appearance of inappropriate conduct.

- Interior doors are never to be locked with people inside (regardless of number).
- CBS has installed windows in all interior doors. Private two person meetings should take place in a room with a window in the door, or with the door ajar.
- When meeting with less than three people during off-hours, or at night, the Facilities Manager or VP Administration should be told in advance.
- Private meetings in public spaces (e.g., parks, restaurants, etc.) are acceptable.

### **FAQ 2: What do I need to know about communication?**

Words can be used to build up or to tear down, manipulate, or deceive. Clergy especially must use words with care recognizing the responsibility that comes with the power and impact of their words. All CBS congregants have a responsibility to use respectful language and hold each other to that standard. These standards apply whether the interaction is taking place in person or virtually.

Concerning behavior related to words or communication from clergy, leaders, or other adults in a position of authority or position of trust would include, whether spoken or written:

- Any language that objectifies (e.g. commenting on a congregant's body or sexual attractiveness whether or not they are present)
- Words spoken to a congregant designed to arouse, harass, degrade, intimidate or threaten
- Any romantic or sexual communication directed at an individual, (e.g. texting or interaction on social media, including sexual conversation, even jokes or in the name of education, or sending or requesting sensual or explicit photographs or content)
- Any attempts to spiritualize or justify physical or sexual contact or interaction using God, the Torah, or spirituality

### **FAQ 3: What exactly is prohibited conduct?**

When reviewing a person's actions or intent, the definitions below are judged as they would be perceived and determined by a reasonable person.

#### ***Prohibited Conduct***

Congregation Beth Shalom prohibits harassment, bullying, sexual misconduct, racism, or other inappropriate behavior. CBS further prohibits any form of retaliation. Engaging in conduct prohibited by this Policy may result in disciplinary action as described in the Policy.

**Bullying:** Bullying is usually seen as acts or verbal comments that could psychologically or 'mentally' hurt or isolate a person. Sometimes, bullying can involve negative physical contact as well. Bullying usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behavior that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people. It has also been described as the assertion of power through aggression.<sup>1</sup>

**Harassment:** Harassment is where behavior is meant to or has the effect of either: violating your dignity, creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.<sup>2</sup>

**Hostile Environment:** A "hostile environment" results from unwelcome and discriminatory conduct that is so sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent that it unreasonably interferes with the ability of a member of the community to participate in or to receive benefits from CBS programs and/or activities.

**Sexual Misconduct:** The term "sexual misconduct" includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking, irrespective of whether it occurs between people of different sexes or the same sex and includes both domestic and other relationships.

#### **FAQ 4: What do I do if I have a problem and wish to file a complaint?**

Making a report, seeking an investigation, or reporting a crime does not mean that CBS is accusing or passing judgment before the investigation occurs. Rather, it means that CBS takes the report seriously and will follow a prescribed process prior to reaching any conclusions. In case of reporting an alleged crime, this process allows professionals, who are independent and trained to investigate whether a crime has been committed, to make a determination. Synagogue leaders are not trained to conduct criminal investigations.

#### **Where to turn: The Sacred Spaces Committee**

In order to further ensure a safe and ethical environment at Congregation Beth Shalom (CBS), as part of the Sacred Spaces policy, a Sacred Spaces committee has been created, charged with establishing policy and addressing violations.

In the event of the need to make a report regarding concerns of policy violations, or abuse, individuals may file a report with one of the following reporting agents:

1. Sacred Spaces Committee- [sacredspacescontact@napershalom.org](mailto:sacredspacescontact@napershalom.org)
2. Board President- [President@napershalom.org](mailto:President@napershalom.org)
3. VP Education- [Education@napershalom.org](mailto:Education@napershalom.org)
4. VP Administration- [Administration@napershalom.org](mailto:Administration@napershalom.org)
5. If an employee, with their supervisor, or any of the above

Below is the form to be used for an initial incident report.

# Initial Incident Report Form

This form should be used to report to the Sacred Spaces Committee any violation of the Sacred Spaces Policy, boundary violations, disclosures of abuse, safety concerns, or other behaviors or allegations of behavior that concern you. Proof or firsthand knowledge of a behavior or incident is not necessary to submit this form. The information contained in this initial report will be treated with the utmost discretion and confidence; if necessary, the report will be shared with medical and law enforcement authorities.

Date and Time of incident/behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of incident/behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. Name of Individual(s) who accidentally or intentionally violated the policy or otherwise engaged in concerning behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Name(s) of others who were affected or observed the incident:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Describe, with as many details as possible, the incident/behavior:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Individual Submitting this report:

Name:

Email:

Cell phone:

Preferred method of contact:

Signature:

Date:

Submit this form in any of the following ways:

1. by email to the Sacred Spaces Committee
2. to any member of the committee, or
3. Placing it in the secure Sacred Spaces mailbox in the synagogue office.

Sacred Spaces Committee Email: [sacredspacescontact@napershalom.org](mailto:sacredspacescontact@napershalom.org)

More details can be found in the Sacred Spaces Policy on the CBS website.  
[Congregation Beth Shalom Sacred Spaces](#)