

Kagyü Shenpen Tharchin Tibetan Buddhist Sangha Ethics Policy and Protocol for Maintaining a Harmonious Environment for Spiritual Practice

I. Policy Statement

Kagyü Shenpen Tharchin Sangha of Richmond (KST), established in 1993, is a community within the Kagyü Lineage of Vajrayana Tibetan Buddhism. Its primary goal is to preserve the authenticity and continuity of the three vehicles of the Buddha's teachings in the contemporary world in order to benefit all sentient beings, and to make these available to all who are interested. The KST community is made up of lay practitioners.

KST shares with all traditions of Buddhism the three principal refuges and the commitment to avoid the ten negative actions. All teachers and members are expected to take these to heart.

The principal refuges: We take refuge in the three jewels: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and we take refuge in the three roots: the Lama, Yidam, and the Dharma Protectors.

The ten negative actions: We vow to refrain from: 1) killing, 2) taking what is not given, 3) sexual conduct that harms others in any way, 4) false speech, 5) harsh speech, 6) divisive speech, 7) gossip/idle speech 8) covetousness, 9) ill will, and 10) wrong view.

II. Prohibited Conduct

A. Discrimination or Harassment

KST's members are expected to treat each other as well as non-member attendees with respect and kindness both physically and verbally. At KST we will maintain an environment free of discrimination of any kind based on race, color, age, ethnicity or national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

B. Abuse of Power and Position

Teachers, center leaders, and senior sangha members are responsible for recognizing the authority implicit in their roles and refraining from any use of this implicit authority to secure special privileges or to inappropriately influence others, or for any other personal ends; and to refrain from any situation or action that might result in harm to a student or the community.

C. Sexual and Interpersonal Misconduct

KST members are expected to uphold the highest standards of integrity in all personal relationships. While a sexual or romantic relationship between student and teacher is prohibited, those among other sangha members are not.

Regarding pursuing romantic relationships between Sangha members, members must be aware that everyone comes to KST in a different state of mind and/or with a different set of needs and preferences. Some may not be comfortable dating Sangha members. Others may be in a vulnerable state and coming to KST for refuge and a safe space first and foremost. The feeling of comfort and safety for both members and non-members alike at KST takes precedence over the pursuit of romantic relationships. KST members should be aware of these potentials and reflect upon how pursuing romantic relationships with Sangha members might affect the individuals as well as the Sangha as a place of refuge. Inappropriate or unwelcome conduct in this regard shall be considered harassment and addressed as such.

D. Use of Drugs or Alcohol

For those who hold precepts, including applicable lay vows, violation of the precepts regarding drugs, alcohol and other intoxicants is an ethical violation. Use of intoxicants at KST meetings and events is strictly prohibited, the only exception being the ritual use of a tiny amount of alcohol that may be designated in the guidelines for a specific tantric practice or tsok. Likewise, teachers and members are prohibited from being at KST meetings while in an intoxicated state.

III. KST Ethics Council

The KST Ethics Council ("EC") will consist of **three** members selected by the KST Richmond Board to serve **a one-year term**. The EC will include:

1. At least one member of the KST Board
2. At least one member not on the KST Board
3. At least one member of a separate gender than the other two.

Membership of the EC will be reviewed annually by the KST Board. At that time, KST members may volunteer to be on the EC. Preference will be given to those who have not served. All diligence will be given to ensure adherence to EC member composition when possible due to membership composition.

The EC provides counsel and assistance concerning nondiscrimination and harassment policies and procedures, and shall oversee the proper conduct of all grievances and informal resolution measures involving KST teachers, members, and attendees under these policies. If, for any reason, any member(s) of the EC has a conflict of interest, illness, or prolonged absence and is unable to carry out their responsibilities, a designee shall be appointed by majority vote of the KST Board. Any complaints or concerns regarding ethical issues in the community can be submitted to the EC at any time by writing KSTRichmondEC@gmail.com or any individual member of the EC or the KST board. Upon the selection of new EC members, the password to the EC email will be changed.

IV. Grievance Procedure

In the event of a concern arising in the sangha, either by complaint or perception, the sequence of actions outlined below is recommended. The purpose of these steps is to facilitate communication and bring the problem to resolution in as honest, simple, and straightforward a manner as possible. We acknowledge that there is no perfect solution to any problem between people, but we will endeavor to help all parties arrive at the best possible solution given the situation.

If a person in the sangha has a problem with an individual, teacher, board member, or entity within the sangha, that person should work to resolve the problem by following these steps in order:

1. Meet with the person one-on-one and discuss the problem. If this does not bring a resolution, or if either person, using their individual judgment, does not wish, or is too uncomfortable, to meet one-on-one, that person should:
2. Ask for one mutually acceptable person from the Ethics Council to witness and/or mediate the discussion of the problem. If that does not bring about a resolution or either individual does not feel comfortable around the other, either party may:
3. Submit a written statement describing the problem to the Ethics Council by writing KSTRichmondEC@gmail.com or any individual member of the KST board with a request that the Council as a whole meet with the parties to assist with or mediate the issue. If the problem still persists, either party may:
4. Request a formal hearing by submitting an issue in writing to the Ethics Council. At a hearing, which will be conducted by the Ethics Council as a whole, either party may present their version of the dispute, call witnesses, and ask questions of the other party and of the witnesses. A hearing will result in a formal recommendation by the Ethics Council. Either party or the Ethics Council itself may appeal to the KST Richmond Board and for assistance. In that case:
5. After hearing from all parties and reviewing the recommendation of the Ethics Council, the Board and KST Officers may issue a binding decision, or, at their discretion, may contract with an outside mediator or seek advice from other experts and professionals.

KST will endeavor to maintain confidentiality in all informal and formal proceedings. All related documents will be maintained as confidential. All participants will be instructed to maintain confidentiality.

Thank you for reading the KST Ethics Policy and Protocol. These are the guidelines everyone at KST is expected to uphold.

Please acknowledge receipt of the policy by signing below.

I, as a member of Kagyu Shenpen Tharchin Sangha of Richmond, have received and understand the above ethics policy and protocol published February 2020. I understand that I will be asked to review this policy periodically.

Printed name (Recipient)

Date

Signature