

Portland Insight Meditation Center

Complaint Process and Conflict Resolution

(Adopted January 29, 2026)

Background

PIMC has established a [Code of Ethics for Teachers and Community Leaders](#) and a [Code of Conduct](#) to help create a safe community. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that ethical concerns and conflict will inevitably arise within the Portland Insight Meditation Center community. The health of our community is not measured by the presence or absence of conflict, but rather by our willingness to find effective, responsible, and compassionate resolutions of interpersonal tensions when they arise. The commitment to attend to and learn from conflict is a clear application of Buddhist practice in our daily lives. With this intention, practice can become a deeply transformative vehicle for our lives.

Buddhist ethics and conflict-resolution go beyond right or wrong, blame or guilt, winning or losing, offenders or victims. Rather, they are based on compassionately addressing the suffering of all concerned. Hurt, fear, and anger are taken seriously through forums where all parties may speak honestly, safely, and completely about their own direct experiences and feelings. In seeking resolution, Buddhist practice values dialogue over silence, reconciliation over estrangement, forgiveness over resentment, taking responsibility for harm caused by one's actions over assigning blame, and making amends over punishment.

Because the process of reaching such a resolution is often difficult, the PIMC board, teachers and community members have created a three-step process and an independent Ethics and Reconciliation (EAR) Council to help guide us.

Complaint/Conflict Resolution Process Overview

The below order of process is intended as a suggestion to offer all persons involved in a dispute an opportunity to be heard and seek peaceful resolution and reconciliation.

First Step – Independent Conflict Resolution, prior to formal EAR Council involvement

We encourage the affected individual to first address their ethics concerns or conflict directly with the teacher or other community member in question, provided the individual feels reasonably comfortable and safe doing so. We believe an effort to independently resolve an ethics concern or conflict can bring openness and clarity in a manner that oftentimes successfully resolves the issues in question.

Suggestions for this independent approach include the following:

- Meeting one-on-one
- Meeting with one independent person that both parties trust to mediate.

- Meeting with two allies, one for each party

EAR Council members (described in Second Step) will not serve as mediators in this stage of the independent process.

We acknowledge that power differentials in the teacher–student relationship and other issues may make this step difficult or impracticable. Part of the collective practice as a community is to level the playing field so that power differentials do not undermine the intentions of resolving conflicts or harm and restoring the relationships involved. For those reasons, the affected individual may choose to forgo this first step if it does not feel appropriate or safe.

Second Step: EAR Council Provides Confidential Consultation and/or Support Reconciliation

The EAR Council is a group of three to five PIMC community members, respected for their integrity, who are available to any community member requesting help in dealing with ethical concerns, conflicts, and grievances within the PIMC community, including conflicts with teachers. The PIMC Board appoints council members to three-year terms, following the same procedure for election of board members (this procedure is detailed in the PIMC bylaws).

Portland Insight Meditation Center is committed to cultivating an inclusive and ethically sensitive practice environment. The creation of the EAR Council is an expression of our commitment to build supportive structures for the Sangha around ethical concerns that arise within our community as well as conflict resolution.

Any Sangha member may approach any EAR Council member for consultation. The primary role of EAR Council members at this step is to provide confidential consultation to anyone with concerns about ethical issues or conflicts within the PIMC community. When appropriate, the preference of the Council is to seek reconciliation between all parties in dispute. When an EAR Council member is approached by a Sangha member with a concern, the EAR Council member will notify the other members of the Council, and the Council will determine how it can best be of service to the parties concerned and the Sangha as a whole.

Some of the ways the Council may respond include:

- Serve as a confidential sounding board for a Sangha member's (or Sangha members') concerns.
- Serve as a source of guidance for deeper personal reflection and practice around an ethical issue or a conflict that has arisen.
- Serve as a source of advice on how best to resolve a particular conflict that has arisen with another sangha member or teacher.

- Facilitate skillful discussion and reconciliation between parties in conflict or in other ways bring conflict to a satisfactory resolution.

If the conflict is deemed dangerous or abusive or if it involves a violation of the Teacher Code of Conduct, the formal procedure of a written notification to the EAR Council *must* be followed (see Grievance Process description below). When a complaint of sexual or physical abuse or intimidation is made regarding a tTeacher, the relevant tTeacher-sStudent relationship will be suspended immediately. The EAR Council will request a written grievance and initiate preliminary fact-finding to determine the nature of the complaint.

For matters that require immediate action to protect the safety of PIMC and community members, the EAR Council member in consultation with other EAR Council members and the PIMC Board, will contact the relevant legal or health authorities.

Third Step: Grievance Process

In the rare occasion that a more formal process is necessary (complaints and conflicts that cannot be resolved through dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation), after following the above primary sequence of steps, the following grievance procedure is available.

1. Bringing a Concern

A formal grievance process is initiated by communicating in writing with the EAR Council via the following email address: Council.EAR@portlandinsight.org. This letter of request needs to include:

- A clear statement that a formal grievance process is requested.
- The name of the person(s) whose behavior the complaint concerns.
- A description of the alleged behavior sufficient to allow the EAR Council to decide whether the complaint is appropriate for initiating a formal grievance procedure.
- A history of the attempts, if any, to resolve the complaint through other means.
- A general statement about the resolution desired.

2. Accepting the Concern

Once the EAR Council has accepted a request, it must convey a notification of its acceptance within two weeks to both the party filing the complaint and the party named in the complaint. As part of this notification, the Council will state its understanding of the issue under inquiry and will distribute a copy of the original letter of request to the party named in the complaint.

3. Forming a Grievance Committee

A Grievance Committee will form within two weeks of a notification and consist of the EAR Council as well as two non-leader Sangha members identified by the Council. The Grievance Committee is required to meet within two weeks of its formation to address a grievance. A majority of the members of the Grievance Committee need to be present in order to hold a meeting.

This committee will investigate, issue findings, and render a decision on the complaint.

4. Guiding Principles

Decisions by the Grievance Committee will, to the extent possible, adhere to these principles:

- **Safety** – when safety is at issue, decisions will act to ensure the safety of all parties, and of the community as a whole. If a critical safety issue is seen, immediate action will be taken to ensure that safety issues have been attended to.
- **Compassion** – decisions will embody compassion for each individual, regardless of their actions.
- **Respect** – the decision-making process, and any solution proposed, will be respectful to all parties.
- **Fairness** – any solution proposed by the Grievance Committee will be fair to all parties. Any call for remedial action will be fairly distributed among all parties.
- **Supportive** – any solution proposed will support all parties. The Grievance Committee will act as it can to assist all parties to find avenues to address any physical or emotional problems that have led to the issue or have been caused by the issue.
- **Spiritual Growth** – the Grievance Committee will assist all parties as it can to use the issue to further spiritual growth.

5. Investigating the Concern

The Grievance Committee will schedule closed hearings in which all parties are given a chance to present their understanding of the issue under investigation. The Grievance Committee may question all parties and may request additional information. The committee will document the proceedings.

The Grievance Committee may ask other people to provide information pertinent to the complaint. All parties will have a full and fair opportunity to respond to all information – oral, written, or otherwise – gathered by the Grievance Committee.

Except for informing the appropriate community leaders, the proceedings will be held confidentially for the duration of the proceedings.

6. Grievance Committee Findings

When the Grievance Committee members are satisfied that they are adequately informed, they will review and discuss the case among themselves. At its discretion, the Grievance Committee may seek non-binding advice from any other source. When serious issues arise concerning a teacher, counsel will be sought from a senior Dharma teacher or other resource devoted to helping resolve this kind of issue.

The Grievance Committee's decision should be reached by consensus. Within two weeks of a decision, all parties will reconvene, at which time the Grievance Committee will distribute copies of its written findings and read them aloud. For matters involving the potential suspension of a PIMC teacher or employee, the Grievance Committee will consult with the PIMC Board in jointly establishing the best course of action.