

RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Rabbis sit in a unique position, engaging in leadership and learning, in mentoring and guiding, and are expected to both practice and live as individuals who can inspire in moments of joy and sit in moments of despair. With these parameters comes a need to understand the difference among power, control, healthy influence, and engagement. This Code of Professional Conduct (“Code” or “Code of Conduct”) is meant to guide Rabbinical Assembly (“RA”) members as ethical leaders of the Conservative/Masorti Movement in how they are meant to engage with those around us.

As a person in a position of leadership and power, a rabbi must live and work with integrity, respect and ethics in all aspects of their lives and leadership. This Code is a set of specific standards and core values that guide the conduct of any rabbi who is a member of the RA. This Code outlines the RA’s definition of ethical leadership, irrespective of where and how each rabbi practices, and applies to all members of the RA throughout their career and in retirement.

There are certain important guiding principles in understanding this Code. As an ethical Code of Professional Conduct, the Code draws on values from our Jewish texts and tradition particularly those values shaping the behavior of people towards one another; namely the obligations between people (*mitzvot bein adam l’haveiro*). It also draws on the acknowledgement from our tradition that when harm occurs there is a need to address that harm. While not every uncomfortable or disrespectful action or inaction rises to the level of a Code violation, this Code works to provide guidance on the practices that rabbis can follow to avoid harm and promote healthy and respectful relationships with constituents and colleagues. If there are questions about specific situations, please [contact](#) the RA Ethics Intake Coordinator, Professional Liaison, or any member of the Va’ad HaKavod (VHK) with any questions or concerns.

Finally, at the onset, it is important to acknowledge that many RA members belong to other professional associations that adhere to a Code of Conduct. The expectation of the RA is that if a member violates their associations’ Code of Conduct, that violation is a per se violation of the RA Code of Conduct; therefore, if found to be in violation by an outside professional association, the RA will uphold that ruling.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....PAGE (TBD)

- INTRODUCTION
 - The Code of Conduct
 - The Va'ad HaKavod
 - Requirement to review the Code and Self-Report Violations
 - Definitions and Concepts
- SECTION 1: STANDARDS REGARDING HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, ABUSE AND MISCONDUCT
- SECTION 2: STANDARDS REGARDING RETALIATION AND FILING A COMPLAINT IN GOOD FAITH
- SECTION 3: STANDARDS REGARDING NON DISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS
- SECTION 4: STANDARDS REGARDING FAMILY PRACTICE
- SECTION 5: STANDARDS REGARDING MINORS
- SECTION 6: STANDARDS REGARDING SEXUAL CONDUCT
- SECTION 7: STANDARDS REGARDING KNOWINGLY ELEVATING/HONORING THOSE WHO COMMIT HEINOUS ACTS
- SECTION 8: STANDARDS REGARDING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSERS
- SECTION 9: STANDARDS REGARDING BYSTANDER INTERVENTION
- SECTION 10: STANDARDS REGARDING COURT PROCEEDINGS
- SECTION 11: STANDARDS REGARDING ARREST OR LAW ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATION OF AN RA MEMBER
- SECTION 12: STANDARDS REGARDING INTEGRITY WITH COLLEAGUES
- SECTION 13: STANDARDS REGARDING SOCIAL MEDIA
- SECTION 14: STANDARDS REGARDING FRAUDULENT CONDUCT
- SECTION 15: STANDARDS REGARDING MISCONDUCT RELATED TO ADDICTION
- SECTION 16: STANDARDS REGARDING COMPLIANCE WITH THE VAAD HAKAVOD
- SECTION 17: STANDARDS REGARDING STANDARDS OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE
- SECTION 18: STANDARDS OF MEMBERSHIP REGARDING INTEGRITY WITH THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCTION

The Code of Professional Conduct

The RA Code of Conduct guides members of the RA to fulfill their obligations individually and collectively to safeguard individuals and communities served by RA rabbis as well as to uphold the sanctity of the rabbinate by providing clear expectations that promote safety, trust, and integrity. Members of the RA agree to abide by the RA Code of Conduct in their professional and personal capacities because of their collective commitment to foster and sustain a respectful and ethical rabbinate through the establishment of shared and transparent standards.

The Va'ad HaKavod

The Va'ad HaKavod (“VHK”) is a standing committee of the RA formed to support compliance with the Code of Conduct and to ensure that measures of accountability are put in place when RA members do not live up to the established standards. Made up of a minimum of fifteen (15) RA members, the VHK is tasked to review and act on complaints of Code violations. Complaints of Code violations are first received by the RA Ethics Intake Coordinator (EIC).

The VHK complaint review process is included as Appendix A [<Forthcoming>](#).

Requirement to Review This Code and Self-Report Violations

Every RA member has an obligation to adhere to the provisions of this Code because of our collective commitment to foster and sustain a respectful and ethical rabbinate through the establishment and upholding of shared and transparent standards. These standards acknowledge the privilege and duty that rabbis accept and the higher expectation of ethics to one another and to the Jewish people to which they must adhere. This is the document that will be used by the VHK to address complaints and determine whether a rabbi has engaged in an abuse of their position and power. Every RA member must review the Code and ensure that they both understand the Code and its purpose.

If a member of the RA realizes or becomes concerned that they have or may have violated the Code, they are required to self-report to the VHK. Members may contact the RA EIC, the chair or co-chair of the VHK, or the RA Professional Liaison to the VHK. This serves two purposes: 1) it allows for transparency and accountability by a rabbi who believes they have or may have made a mistake and 2) to advise rabbis in complex professional circumstances.

Definitions and Concepts:

To ensure consistency in understanding and application of the Code, the following definitions should be applied for the purpose of understanding the Code. They are listed in alphabetical order.

- **Adultery** is defined as extramarital sexual conduct and is not limited to only physical contact.
- **Bullying** is defined as a pattern of physical, verbal, psychological or electronic communication mistreatment that is intended to cause fear, distress, or harm to a constituent, colleague or subordinate.
- **Child/Minor/Youth** are used interchangeably in this Code and refer to anyone below the age of 18.
- **Child Abuse** is defined as any act or series of acts that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child. It may consist of physical, sexual, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect. It may also be referred to as child mistreatment.
- **Consent** is an agreement or permission expressed through affirmative and voluntary words or actions that are mutually understandable to all parties involved, to engage in a specific sexual act at a specific time, that can be withdrawn at any time.
- **Constituent** is defined as a person who is served by a rabbi. This may include a congregant, student, conversion candidate, member of the community, patient or anyone served by a rabbi.
- **Cyberbullying** is defined as a type of bullying where someone uses technology to harass, threaten, humiliate, or target another individual or community. This may include posting or threatening to post photos or videos of someone, including a constituent, colleague or subordinate without their consent, or disseminating or threatening to disseminate an image of someone in an embarrassing or compromised position.
- **Discrimination** is defined as the unfair or unequal treatment of people and groups based on actual or perceived identity or characteristics such as race, gender, sex, sexual orientation, age or disability.
- **Domestic Violence** is defined as a pattern of behavior in any dating, romantic, or intimate partner relationship that is used by one person to gain or maintain control and power over the other. It may consist of physical, sexual, financial, psychological, spiritual, and/or emotional abuse or control.
- **Emotional Abuse** is defined as deliberate non-contact behavior in which an individual insults, humiliates, and generally instills fear in an individual in order to exert control over them and/or their decisions.
 - **Gaslighting** is defined as manipulating someone into questioning their own reality, sanity, or their own experience of an event.

- **Coercion** is defined as a practice of convincing or persuading another to do something they do not want to do by using force, threats or pressure.
- **Manipulation** is defined as influencing or controlling another's choice or outcome when that outcome may benefit the manipulator.
- **Hero Worship** is defined as an enmeshment between a person in a position of power over another, where the individual with less power engages in excessive admiration for the person in power who then encourages and cultivates that dynamic.
- **Financial Abuse** is defined as any improper conduct, done without the informed consent of the individual, that results in a monetary or personal gain to the abuser, monetary or personal loss for the individual, the infliction of financial harm to an individual, or taking advantage of an individual in a way that unfairly benefits the abuser from the individual's monetary resources. This is especially relevant in terms of vulnerable adults such as elders, adults with disabilities, or intimate partners in abusive relationships.
- **Fraud** is defined as actions whereby an RA member engages in purposeful deceit that gives them improper gain or denies a right to another person.
- **Harassment** is defined as behavior that subjects someone to unwelcome or unwanted conduct that is so severe or pervasive that it hinders the person's ability to participate in Jewish communal life, significantly harms their well-being, substantially interferes with their rights, or intimidates them because of their identity. Harassment can be verbal, non-verbal, physical, sexual and/or electronic communication. It can be targeted towards one person or a group of people.
- **Hazing** is defined as any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them, regardless of a person's willingness to participate.
- **Mara D'Atra** is defined as the rabbi responsible for determining halakhic (Jewish legal) parameters for their congregation, institution or organization.
- **Member** is defined as a rabbi who has submitted a signed membership application and is elected to membership by vote at the RA's annual meeting. Any rabbi who chooses not to become a member of the RA within one year of ordination must apply for membership through the Membership Committee. Rabbis ordained at other seminaries who wish to become members of the RA must apply and partake in a membership process with the Membership Committee.
- **Physical Abuse** is defined as any non-accidental physical force or injury that is inflicted on a constituent, colleague, subordinate or family member and has a substantial risk of causing or does cause bodily injury or emotional harm.
- **Rabbi** is defined as an individual ordained by one of the Conservative/Masorti seminaries or who has been admitted to the RA through the formal membership process described under

“Member.” Conservative/Masorti seminaries include: the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies in Los Angeles, the Rabbinical School of the Schechter Institute in Jerusalem, the Seminario Rabinico Latino Americano in Buenos Aires, and the Zacharias Frankel College in Germany.

- **Rabbinate** is defined as the body of one's rabbinic spiritual and/or career work, work position, tenure or office of the rabbi.
- **Retaliation** is defined as the imposition of negative consequences on an individual or institution who has reported, assisted in the investigation of, or otherwise taken action to identify or address prohibited behavior. This is either in response to the reporting of a Code violation to the VHK or their workplace, participating in a VHK process or a Human Resources (“HR”) process at their workplace, or working to deter someone from reporting a possible Code violation in the future.
- **Sexual Misconduct:**
 - **Sexual Harassment** is defined as unwanted or unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature, or which is directed at another because of their sex, gender, gender identity or identity which can include both verbal and nonverbal occurrences that take place in person or through electronic communication.
 - **Sexual Assault/Sexual Abuse/Sexual Violence** is defined as sexual contact, conduct or behavior that occurs without the consent of the recipient. This may include a range of behaviors including groping or unwanted touching, kissing, or forcing someone to perform or witness sex acts.
 - **Child Sexual Abuse** is defined as any occurrence where an adult engages with a minor in any sexual activity - including any conduct or contact.
 - **Grooming** is defined as an act whereby an adult may use seemingly innocent or boundary crossing behaviors to gain the trust and cooperation of a child and/or establish a relationship with a child, the child’s family, or the community, for the purpose of or with the result of engaging in sexual conduct with that child.
- **Spiritual Abuse** is defined as the use of religious authority, objects, symbols, rituals, theological language, and teachings to manipulate, coerce, exert power, or cause harm to an individual or group of people.

SECTION 1: STANDARDS REGARDING HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, ABUSE AND MISCONDUCT

RA members are expected to adhere to a standard of behavior that fosters healthy interactions and promotes safety (physical, emotional, spiritual and sexual). This applies to RA member interactions with individuals in a professional, personal, or familial or communal capacity.

Therefore, any behavior that demeans, degrades or puts the well-being or safety of individuals at risk is a violation of the Code. The Code prohibits any form of discrimination, harassment and abuse. These include derogatory or demeaning comments, insults, slurs or negative actions taken based on identity such as skin color, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability.

Though defined earlier in the Code, below are **examples** of harassment and discriminatory conduct that are prohibited by the Code.

- **Physical abuse, such as**

- Hitting, punching, kicking, biting or threatening these actions
- Any threat or actual use of a weapon against another. Weapons may include but are not limited to knives, guns, wire, rope and any object used to threaten another

- **Sexual abuse and sexual harassment, such as**

- Touching, grabbing, pinching, rubbing, or fondling another person's buttocks, breasts, or genital area, whether over or under clothing, without consent
- Touching another person with one's genitals without consent
- Engaging in sexual behavior with someone too intoxicated or cognitively compromised to give informed consent
- Physically or verbally intimidating or pressuring someone to engage in a sex act, contact or conduct whether done so expressly or implicitly
- Coercing, threatening, or blackmailing someone into sending nude images or recordings
- Engaging in sexualized speech or written exchanges without consent
- Disseminating or threatening to disseminate nude or sexually compromised images or recordings
- Any sexual conduct or contact that involves a minor
- Pressuring another for sexual activity or a request for sexual favors
- Threats of punishment or promises of rewards for sexual behavior
- Displaying sexual materials or pictures

- **Bullying and cyberbullying, such as**

- Any form of physical, verbal, demonstrative or electronic harassment that one should reasonably expect would demean, threaten, physically or emotionally hurt its victims
- Physical harm or threats of physical harm
- Damaging, hiding, or taking of property
- Excluding from a group or activity purposely to hurt and/or advocating for others to dislike a person
- Calling someone offensive or demeaning names
- Scapegoating or pranks resulting in or intending to embarrass
- Innuendoes about gender, age, ability, sex or identity with derogatory implications
- Making jokes involving offensive stereotypes

- Posting offensive, demeaning, or embarrassing comments or images online, whether on a private or public setting
- Texting, whether individually or as a group, mean, offensive or demeaning comments or images
- Creating fake profiles or assuming another's identity in any social media context to create content likely to cause embarrassment or concern
- Taunting others about their actual or perceived age; physical development; ability; socio-economic status; sex; gender; sexual orientation; bodily functions; actual or perceived race, color, or national origin
- Creating and/or disseminating a nude picture of another
- **Emotional Abuse, such as**
 - Repeatedly verbally attacking another in a personal manner
 - Engaging in physically aggressive behavior towards objects in front of another person, or towards that person, an example of which would include throwing objects
 - Purposely and routinely ignoring or isolating an individual from others
 - Engaging in gaslighting, coercion or manipulation
- **Coercively Abusive Behavior or Hazing, such as**
 - Requiring or coercing someone to do any of the following:
 - Be subjected to abusive and demeaning speech or participate in acts of personal servitude
 - Participate in any illegal activity
 - Participate in physically dangerous activities such as exposing oneself to extreme weather conditions without appropriate protection
 - Drink alcohol, vape or use drugs
 - Consume any inappropriate or hazardous substances or force such substance to be smeared on the body
 - Endure any physical striking, beating, burning, branding or to engage in self-mutilation or to commit such acts upon another

SECTION 2: STANDARDS REGARDING RETALIATION AND FILING A COMPLAINT IN GOOD FAITH

It is important that the RA create the conditions to make it possible for people to come forward with complaints of harm without fear. People who come forward with a complaint against a rabbi often do so with a lot of trepidation and anxiety given the role that rabbis play in communities. Organizations are strengthened when they view reporting as beneficial rather than harmful. The standards regarding retaliation are part of the RA's commitment to creating an environment that promotes reporting when harm occurs.

Retaliation refers to any adverse action, intimidation, threat, or discrimination against an individual for filing a complaint or participating in fact finding, or otherwise assisting in the handling of the ethics complaint (including by serving in an official capacity).

Retaliation also refers to a person or institution taking any adverse action against an individual when:

- It is in response to the exercise of attempting to report or reporting a Code violation to the VHK; or
- It is in response to the exercise of attempting to report or reporting Code violating behaviors to the rabbi's place of work; or
- It is to deter or prevent someone from reporting a possible Code violation.

A Rabbi may not:

- Retaliate against an individual for reporting, seeking to report, or participating in a VHK process, even if the underlying complaint is not connected to the Rabbi accused of retaliation.
- Retaliate against an individual for reporting, seeking to report, or participating in an HR process at their place of employment.
- Retaliate against an individual for reporting to the police, or seeking a legal remedy.

A report of retaliation is a violation unto itself, and is considered to be an additional offense which may result in an enhancement of the consequences of the original offense.

Filing a complaint in **good faith** is never considered *Lashon Hara* (negative truths about someone) or *Motzi Shem Rab* (negative information that may end up being non-truths). A complaint is in good faith when it does not willfully ignore facts that would disprove or negate the complaint.

Even if the outcome of the VHK process is one where the rabbi is ultimately not found to have violated the Code, that does not mean that the complaint was filed in bad faith. Sometimes inappropriate or uncomfortable behavior does not rise to the level of a Code infraction, but that does not mean the behavior is acceptable nor commendable. If an individual makes a complaint in good faith, but the VHK finds that no violation occurred, all involved are still protected from retaliation.

Complaints that are filed in an effort to harass, intimidate, or maintain control over a rabbi are not considered in good faith and are a violation of the Code.

SECTION 3: STANDARDS REGARDING NON DISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS (“NDA”)

Non Disclosure Agreements (“NDA”) have been used to avoid addressing issues of real malfeasance and harm, and in many situations, they can be used to weaponize a vulnerable person receiving severance or silencing a pattern of behavior or wrongdoing. When used appropriately, they may provide the opportunity for both parties to part with integrity, however, NDA's are not always appropriately applied.

Therefore, any NDA signed by an RA member must have a clause with a provision that either party is allowed to disclose to the VHK if there is an inquiry made by the VHK, or a requirement to report something to the VHK.

SECTION 4: STANDARDS REGARDING FAMILY PRACTICE

Jewish laws and values inspire us to build family systems of safety, love, honor, and respect. RA members are expected to adhere to all laws and ethical boundaries of their own and others' familial relationships and may not engage in abusive behaviors towards their own family members, nor violate the boundaries of another family by engaging in adultery and/or extramarital affair.

In any situation where an RA member abuses or is alleged to have engaged in abuse of a spouse, partner, child, or individual residing in their home, the determination of a Code violation is not dependent on law enforcement involvement.

The following violates the Code:

- Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence: An RA member must not engage in any form of domestic violence towards a spouse or partner. This includes physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse.
- Abuse in the Home: An RA member must not engage in any form of abuse or neglect of any member of their household. This includes but is not limited to physical, sexual and emotional abuse of a minor, adult or adult with a disability.
- Elder Abuse: An RA member must not engage in any form of elder abuse or neglect, whether physical, financial, sexual or emotional abuse.
- Divorce/*Get*: In the event that a rabbi and their spouse decide to divorce, a rabbi must promptly give or accept a get or other form of halakhic divorce. A rabbi must never withhold, threaten to withhold, or not accept a get or other form of halakhic divorce for any reason.
- Adultery: An RA member must not engage in any form of adultery which is defined as extramarital sexual conduct and is not limited to only physical contact.

SECTION 5: STANDARDS REGARDING MINORS

Sexual Abuse and Grooming of Minors:

RA members are committed to the health and safety of all children. This core value requires a deep understanding of our obligations and responsibilities to the youth that we serve.

RA members must never engage in any form of sexual abuse or grooming of a minor. If any RA member has reasonable cause to suspect that a colleague or fellow RA member is sexually abusing or grooming a minor, they are required to report the suspected conduct to law enforcement and the VHK.

Mandated Reporting:¹

- Many states and countries have requirements that allow for clergy confidentiality. However, in a situation of suspected child abuse or maltreatment (of any form) where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a minor is being abused, all RA members must report suspected abuse to the appropriate child protection or law enforcement agency.

¹ Chaplains serving in the Military must follow all military instructions on confidential/privileged communication. The VHK is aware that Military codes of conduct may differ regarding Mandatory Reporting.

- In a state or country where the rabbi has a legal concern about the parameters of confidentiality, the rabbi is **required** to consult with a licensed legal professional who has subject matter expertise for the purpose of making a report to law enforcement.
- If a rabbi learns of historical abuse of a minor/minors within their organization, they must immediately confer with a licensed legal professional who has subject matter expertise to advise as to the requirements in that state/country and assess how to report the historical abuse. Many states/countries require reports to law enforcement, even if the alleged perpetrator is deceased and the minor is now an adult.
- All rabbis dealing with a situation of possible abuse within their congregation, community or workplace, must recognize the limitation of their training and pastoral role. Therefore, the RA requires any rabbi, who is acting as a pastoral counselor to any family where child abuse is suspected, to consult with a licensed mental health professional and legal professional who has subject matter expertise and follow all directives from law enforcement and/or a courts protective order.
- All rabbis must adhere to a court or military tribunal's protective order, even in a situation of a child's simcha.

Boundaries with Non-Familial Minors:

Rabbis are examples modeling healthy boundaries and relationships. Recognizing the importance of connection and mentoring with minors, creating healthy boundaries also avoids creating the appearance of impropriety with a minor and allows for people to recognize when someone is crossing a boundary.

The following section of the Code delineates appropriate boundaries with non-familial minors for all RA members.

RA members must never engage in any abuse, sexual or physical, grooming behavior, harassment, sexual harassment, hazing, cyberbullying or bullying of a minor.

“Peer- Like” Behavioral Boundaries with Minors:

- RA members may never engage in “peer like” behavior with a minor. This is defined as:
 - “Hanging out” with a minor for a non-rabbinic or non-employment specific reason
 - Confiding in a minor about their own private life, especially anything pertaining to their sexual or romantic life
 - Flirting with a minor. Flirting is explained as the verbal or nonverbal behaviors that appear to signal interest or attraction towards the minor.

Conversational and 1:1 Boundaries with Minors:

- RA members must always interact with minors in a manner that is observable and interruptible by others. For example, when spending time with a minor 1:1, RA members must meet at a time and location where others are present and can view or interrupt the interaction. In a virtual meeting, the meeting should be documented on a calendar and a

parent/guardian or another staff member should have access to the meeting (e.g. link to join). That meeting should not take place late at night.

- RA members must never make sexual jokes, comments or engage in any conversation that has sexual innuendo or contains sexual stories with a minor.
- RA members must never direct a minor to keep a secret from or withhold information from parents, guardians, or other adults.
- RA members may not engage in disparagement of any minor's family, faith, or political beliefs.
- RA members must never speak in an abusive or derogatory manner to a minor.
- RA members may not promise a minor complete confidentiality for any information shared.

Physical and Sexual Boundaries with Minors:

- RA members must never discuss their own sexual or romantic experiences with a minor, nor expose a minor to pornography, sexually explicit material or any sexual activity – even if it does not involve touching or contact.
- RA members must not discipline a minor in any physical manner nor engage in any violent behavior such as (but not limited to) punching, hitting, biting, slapping and kicking. However, they may engage in physical contact to protect a child from harming themselves or another.
- RA members may not have extended physical contact, such as a lingering touch, with a minor. Any contact should be limited to a supportive or congratulatory quick hug, arm squeeze, or pat on the back and should be initiated by the minor.
- All physical contact should only take place in an observable space.
- RA members may not engage in physical behavior that is or could be interpreted as sexual in nature, including, but not limited to frontal hugging in private, kissing, stroking, lap sitting, massaging, tickling, rubbing, touching genitals, wrestling, physical horseplay or swatting buttocks with towel or object.

Emotional and Behavioral Boundaries with Minors:

- RA members may not provide, show, or share information on accessing alcohol, drugs, vaping tools, cigarettes or pornographic materials.
 - This boundary does not include conversations that are with parent/guardian involvement due to a health or addiction concern with the minor.
- RA members must not cultivate or encourage a relationship based on hero worship and should be mindful to not knowingly allow a minor to engage in “hero worship” with them.

Boundaries Involving the Home and Transportation with Minors:

- RA members must never invite a minor to their home unless there are other adults present the entire time and permission has been granted by the parent/guardian.
- RA members must never visit a minor's home without the presence of the minor's parent or guardian.
- It is recommended that RA members not ride alone in a car with a minor.

Electronic Communication Boundaries with Minors:

- RA members must be aware that any electronic communication with a minor one on one, whether late at night or during the day, especially if not related to their work-parameters, may cross boundaries.
- RA members must be aware that there is an inherent difference between personal and professional social media accounts. For any professional social media account where there is communication with minors, another staff member must have access to the account and the direct messages.
- The following best practice guidelines are highly recommended for communication with minors and should be followed:
 - Gain explicit permission from a parent/guardian before texting with a minor, and consider having a parent or fellow staff member on that text.
 - Use professional email addresses to communicate with minors.
 - Use only professional social media accounts - if connecting with a minor on social media. For a professional social media account, someone within the workplace should have access to the account username and password.
 - If using a personal social media account, be certain that all content visible to minors is appropriate.
 - Don't game on any personal account on a gaming platform with minors.
 - If initiating a social media conversation with a minor on a professional social media account, clarify explicitly that the purpose is for work-related parameters.
 - In cases of a minor's mental health crisis, seek advice/counsel from a licensed mental health counselor to advise next steps and keep a record of the interaction and the reasons for it.
 - Don't post pictures/videos of minors on social media without the proper legal consent from parents or guardians.
 - If work related photos are needed, these should either be on a shared work platform or deleted immediately after posting.

Hotels, Overnights and Shabbatons with Minors:

For any community shabbaton or overnight experience where minors are involved:

- **Hotel, Motel or Bedrooms:**
 - RA members may not be the only adult alone with a minor in their room;
 - must sleep in a separate room and bed;
 - may not invite a minor to sleep in their room and;
 - may not be inside a minor's room when the minor is changing, showering or sleeping.
- **In a camp, bunk or retreat setting:**
 - RA members may not share a tent, bunk bed or bed with a minor.
- RA members may not appear unclothed or in their underwear in front of minors.
- RA members may not stay in an adjoining room with a minor.
- Any hotel or shabbaton "sick room" should not adjoin an RA member's bedroom.

SECTION 6: STANDARDS REGARDING SEXUAL CONDUCT

As Rabbis, the concept of “*K’vod Haberiyot*” interpreted by many as human dignity or honor due to God’s creation, is a guiding principle illuminating how RA members should engage with both themselves and others in navigating romantic and sexual relationships. Intimacy in a consensual romantic and sexual relationship **must differ** from the professional intensity of care given to a constituent. Therefore, adhering to boundaries with constituents and understanding Code standards in engaging in a healthy romantic or sexual relationship with another are the building blocks of how we ensure honor and human dignity.

Boundaries

All RA members must avoid even the appearance of impropriety. All non-emergency meetings with an individual occurring in a private space, must be in a space where they are both observable and interruptible. This includes pastoral meetings, lifecycle meetings, and more. While confidentiality for constituents is essential to rabbinic work, this can be achieved while also ensuring that the interaction is observable and interruptible, by considering the following:

- The time of day and whether others are around in that space during that time.
- Using a public or accessible location.
- Keeping appointments on a shared calendar so that other staff are aware the meeting is taking place (this can be done while still anonymizing names for confidentiality).
- If in a closed room with windows, ensuring that the rabbi is visible to those outside the room.
- Setting up the room so that the rabbi is visible with the door slightly ajar (a white noise machine can be used to protect privacy).
- Prioritizing using spaces where others, such as security or additional staff might walk by or are present.
- If an online meeting, ensuring another staff member has both the video conferencing room code to access and is aware the meeting is taking place.

Sexual Relationships

All RA members who engage in sexual relationships with another, must seek to engage in healthy sexual interactions. Healthy sexual interactions should include an adherence to sexual boundaries. This means that all sexual interactions should:

- be consensual
- never publicly humiliate or degrade another
- never coerce someone into something they do not want to do
- prioritize safety for both sexual partners
- never knowingly put someone at risk, including by knowingly exposing another to a sexually transmitted disease, or tampering with birth control

Dating a Constituent

As human beings, rabbis are in need of love and companionship and should express their sexuality in healthy ways through consensual relationships. Consent can occur only when two people are relatively equal in power and when fear, coercion or manipulation is completely absent from their relationship. For this reason, many believe that there can never be consent between clergy and constituents as the power dynamics are too great. Others believe that prohibiting such relationships entirely discounts the realities of life and ultimately promotes secrecy.

The RA is invested in supporting RA rabbis who are seeking healthy partnerships. The section that follows outlines a process by which rabbis who find a romantic connection within their community can ethically pursue that connection with organizational transparency. When enacting any policy or protocol, no provision will successfully prevent or account for all abuses of power. Even when a consensual, mutually agreed upon relationship or sexual interaction is not legally prohibited, nor prohibited by organizational policy, there are additional ethical concerns to be raised. For clarity on questions of dating or sexual relationships please call the RA EIC, Professional Liaison to the VHK or the chair of the VHK.

Additionally, as stated in the introduction, many RA members belong to other professional associations that adhere to a code of conduct. The expectation of the RA is that if a member violates their associations' Code of Conduct that is a per se violation of the RA Code of Conduct; therefore, if your professional code requires more stringent adherence than the RA Code, an RA member **MUST** adhere to their professional organizational standard.

Rabbis, by nature of their position and title, are in a position of power and spiritual authority. This means that certain romantic and sexual interactions and relationships will automatically violate the Code. Even when legally allowed, RA Members may **NOT** propose, request, accept, or otherwise engage in a romantic or sexual interactions or relationship with the following until there has been a one year moratorium on the relationship:

- Anyone to whom they are actively offering or providing pastoral counseling
 - There is a one-year moratorium² on transitioning from a pastoral relationship with a constituent to a romantic or sexual one, due to the power imbalance, and possibility of **transference**, which typically involves developing romantic feelings for someone providing counseling or therapy.
- Any individual with whom they are in a supervisor-supervisee relationship.
 - There is a one year moratorium on transitioning from a supervisor-supervisee relationship to a romantic or sexual one, due to the initial power imbalance.
- Any individual with whom you are preparing for conversion.
 - There is a one year moratorium that begins at the conclusion of the conversion. This is due to the inherent vulnerability that exists between someone converting and the person who may be guiding or determining their conversion status.

² The one-year moratorium was established based on a variety of factors including a review of other clergy association Codes and other Professional Association Codes; specifically the APA (American Psychological Association) which acknowledges dating as a possibility following the cessation of therapy. The goal of the one-year moratorium is to build in sufficient guardrails to remove the power imbalance and avoid overly strict rules regarding adult consensual relationships post alleviating the power imbalance. (See above caution that overly strict rules lead to secrecy.)

- Any adult student where the rabbi has any form of academic supervision or influence upon funding and/or academic progress, and/or otherwise occupying a position of influence or power over a student's academic program or professional placement and opportunity .
 - There is a one year moratorium that begins at the conclusion of the academic supervision or influence. This is due to the inherent influence and power that someone in this position may hold over a student.

When a rabbi intends to pursue a consensual romantic, sexual, or otherwise physically intimate relationship with a constituent, employee, volunteer, adult student, program participant, or community member connected to the rabbi's workplace who does not meet the criteria above, the RA member **must (for clarity, following the one-year moratorium rabbis meeting the criteria above then must follow the procedure below):**

- Notify the RA (either the EIC, Professional Liaison to the VHK, or the VHK chair) by phone or in writing when the RA member becomes aware of their own romantic or sexual interest in order to receive guidance and for the sake of transparency.
- Inform the individual, in writing, that the RA has a trained professional available to speak to each of them to discuss the power dynamics of a relationship with a rabbi.³
- Notify their place of employment when the RA member becomes aware of their own romantic or sexual interest. This can be in writing to their HR professional and/or to two individuals on the board, including the board president; in cases where the RA member's workplace policies are more stringent, the member should follow those policies.
- Ensure that the person and that person's family has someone who serves as their rabbi especially if the person has children who are members of the congregation, or are connected to the organization or workplace. This can be achieved by ensuring the constituent has a direct referral to pastoral counseling from another rabbi on staff, in the local community, or via video conferencing which the RA office can help connect them to.

In certain extenuating circumstances, the rabbi must inquire from the VHK if it is acceptable for them to conduct a lifecycle event. If this relationship results in marriage or long-term partnership, the rabbi may conduct lifecycle events for their extended family.

If the romantic or sexual relationship ends, the RA and employer must be notified and the Rabbi may not reenter a pastoral relationship with the former partner or their immediate family.

SECTION 7: STANDARDS REGARDING KNOWINGLY ELEVATING/HONORING THOSE WHO COMMIT HEINOUS ACTS

³ Though this requirement may feel awkward and uncomfortable, in order to protect BOTH parties, it is a requirement in the interest of everyone's safety. The RA has a model email available for this purpose please see <Forthcoming>

Rabbis are responsible for upholding the sanctity and integrity of their communities. In exercising their leadership, rabbis have the power to make ritual and organizational decisions that uphold and celebrate certain voices over others, which may have a significant impact over their constituents.

RA members must be aware that offering honors, both ritual and non-ritual, which elevate individuals in the congregation who have been convicted of heinous crimes **as an adult** (i.e. murder, rape, abuse and sexual abuse), may convey tacit approval or support for the crimes once committed. Therefore, RA members must not knowingly facilitate or authorize such an individual to receive an honor in a public setting.

It is **strongly recommended** that RA members consider withholding communal honors to those who have been convicted of crimes that have significantly impacted others, such as crimes that have led to the financial ruin of others.

It is also **recommended** that if someone is under active investigation for any of the above referenced crimes, RA members should consider withholding communal honors from such an individual in any public setting.⁴

In the event that such a person is part of a significant Jewish lifecycle event (e.g. shiva minyan, Bar Mitzvah, etc.), the rabbi may consider a private invitation-only ceremony to meet the needs of family members while maintaining safety and dignity in the larger community. **(In the event of a sex crime against a minor, section 8 below supersedes this clause).**

For all the above cases, it is **strongly recommended** that in such a scenario, the rabbi seek professional guidance from a professional trained in trauma-informed care to advise on the ceremony, communications, and pastoral care to all involved.

SECTION 8: STANDARDS REGARDING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSERS

An RA member must not knowingly allow anyone, whether a minor or adult, who has been convicted or is under active investigation for a sex crime against a child, into their synagogue or organization, if there are any children who may be present.

SECTION 9: STANDARDS REGARDING BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

The biblical prohibition of “*Lo ta’amod al dam re’echa*” (do not stand idly by the spilling of another's blood) privileges RA members to engage in the ethical application of what it means to not stand idly

⁴ This does not mean that an RA member must actively stop a constituent from honoring a family member if it is a private family event such as a bris in a families home however the RA member should consider the impact of officiating or participating in such an event.

by when something requires intervention. The RA applies this concept to how we engage with others when learning of a Code violation or a violation of law.

Keeping in mind that anonymous complaints are welcomed by the VHK, RA members who witness or have definitive knowledge of a violation of the Code must consult with the EIC or chair of the VHK.

RA member who become aware of any employee in their workplace violating the law, must

- 1) See Mandated Reporting Section 5 for any suspicion of abuse.
- 2) For any violation of the law, whether covered under Mandated Reporting Section 5 or not, RA members must consult with legal counsel and notify the VHK.⁵

SECTION 10: STANDARDS REGARDING COURT PROCEEDINGS

Rabbis wield high power and authority and are given deference by public trust. At the same time, rabbis do not have legal training on issues of court proceedings. Therefore, the appropriate role for rabbis in a court proceeding is to provide pastoral support.

All RA members must be aware that when testifying for someone, whether as a character witness or in another capacity, the impact of that testimony may cause tremendous damage, leading to a concern about the RA member's ability to give pastoral care to other survivors, or to the individuals and families involved in the case, or to other survivors of similar circumstances, and should be avoided whenever possible.

If aware of or summoned by a court order, all RA members must follow them, including a court order mandating limitations upon certain guests at lifecycle events.

RA members must not provide character testimony for a constituent or colleague where the character reference is meant to ask the court for leniency in sentencing once someone has been convicted of a heinous crime (see those mentioned in Section 7).

If a rabbi has a question of whether it is appropriate to testify, the rabbi must call the EIC or VHK chair before providing testimony.

SECTION 11: STANDARDS REGARDING ARREST OR LAW ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATION OF AN RA MEMBER

It is expected that any RA member who is made aware of a pending law enforcement investigation, and/or is in the process of being indicted or arrested, must self-report and notify the VHK. An investigation, indictment, arrest and/or conviction is not per se a Code violation. Self-reporting allows for transparency and communication as to whether there is a current Code violation at issue. In addition, RA members who become aware of any RA member's illegal misconduct, that has not

⁵ Active Military Chaplains must follow the Military Code of Conduct.

already been made public via reporting or published articles, must report to the VHK and law enforcement, when applicable.

RA members have an affirmative duty to make a personal disclosure to the VHK if they are:

- Informed they are being investigated or are under suspicion for any criminal offenses;
- Dismissed from any place of employment due to misconduct; or
- Facing or have received disciplinary action by another professional association with which they are affiliated.

SECTION 12: STANDARDS REGARDING INTEGRITY WITH COLLEAGUES

Members of the RA are expected to uphold this Code by acting with integrity towards one another. This includes supporting, honoring and respecting colleagues whether in communal or private spaces. Rabbinic interactions occur within congregations, organizations, hospitals, and many other kinds of communities, including those that exist beyond the scope of geography.

- **Within a Professional Setting**

- Rabbis who are members of a congregation or organization, access programming, volunteer, work at, or participate in any other way with an organization led by an RA member, must respect the policies and religious authority of the rabbi who has been engaged to lead in that organizational or professional setting.
- In any organizational setting, unless otherwise identified and predetermined, within a particular job description, the senior rabbi is considered to be the Mara D'Atra and must be in the position to decide all matters affecting an organization's halakhic and rabbinic policies.
 - In any organization setting, it must be made clear in writing, if there is another clergy determining administrative or religious policies due to an extenuating circumstance such as illness or leave of absence.
- In any organization where there are co-rabbis, and neither rabbi is senior, and where this is applicable, all matters regarding *halakhab* (Jewish law), rabbinic and administration policies, must be either co-determined, or a predetermined organizational policy must identify which rabbi makes the final determination.
- Senior rabbis must work to promote the growth of all clergy working within the organization, on their chosen career path. For more details on supervisor/supervisee relationship see ethical supervision and emotional abuse/misconduct below (Ethical Supervision).

- **Emeritus/Emerita⁶ Relationship:**

⁶The Code was carefully written to avoid gendered language. In the case of Emeritus/Emerita, there currently exists a lack of gender neutral language. As we continue to look for a non-gendered way to reference this position, please note that the intent of this section is to include all rabbis of any gender and identity.

- For the sake of the community, in a congregational setting, the emeritus and incumbent rabbi must demonstrate mutual support and respect towards one another. A roadmap for mutual respect may include:
 - An agreement on shared responsibilities during the transition period and beyond.
 - Honoring each other in words and actions throughout the time they are in the community together.
 - Having a predetermined joint response to questions about duties.
- The emeritus/emera will recognize that the incumbent rabbi is now the Mara D'Atra.
- Neither the emeritus/emera nor the incumbent rabbi will engage in any harassment, discrimination, or abuse, including undermining, verbal disparagement or any form of emotional abuse of the other.
 - If the emeritus/emera rabbi is approached by a congregant for a lifecycle officiation, the emeritus/emera will be responsible for first speaking directly with the incumbent rabbi and asking for their permission/decision.

For the sake of the community, the incumbent rabbi should acknowledge the long-standing pastoral relationships which an emeritus/emera may have with their community members. The incumbent rabbi should make every effort to honor and prioritize the emotional/spiritual needs of congregants.

- An emeritus/emera must be forthcoming with the incumbent rabbi as to communal knowledge.
- An emeritus/emera must inform the incumbent of any knowledge of historical or current abuse or harassment that involved the organization, community, congregation or individuals who have access, that the emeritus/emera knows of.

- **Rabbis in a Volunteer or Lay Leadership Role**

- For the sake of the community, an RA member who belongs to/participates in a congregation or organization by which they are not employed, must not disparage any rabbi who is employed by the congregation or organization.
- A rabbi who is a member of a congregation or organization may serve in a governance role such as an officer, a member of the board of directors, the ritual committee, or personnel committee, programming committee engagement committee, outreach committee, fundraising development so long as they limit their service to that specific leadership role and do not infringe on the rabbi's role in the following three areas:
 - **Lifecycle events:** Officiate lifecycle events without the permission and/or consent of the senior rabbi
 - **Mara D'Atra:** Make any Halakhic decisions for that congregation or organization

- **Employment Decisions:** Engage in any process or conversation that evaluates or determines the employment of the rabbi/s within the organization.

- **Among Jewish Communal Professionals**

- We celebrate the diversity of opportunities for engagement in Jewish life and experiences, and we encourage RA members who live and work in the same community to strive for collaboration and mutual respect.
- When an RA member seeks to launch a new initiative in a place with established Jewish communal organizations, they should initiate open dialogue with extant colleagues, at the earliest possible opportunity, to introduce their new venture and invite open relationships.
- For the sake of the community, independent, or self-employed RA rabbis must not disparage a fellow rabbi, organization, or congregation.
- Disparagement is not disagreement, rather it is defined as belittling the value or worth of the RA member or calling the RA member derogatory names.
- RA members are not allowed to solicit **exclusive** membership to their organizational entity.
- When an RA member is asked to officiate a lifecycle event for a family/individual who affiliates with multiple institutions, the individual/family may be best served in their simcha/sorrow by receiving support from all of the organizations to which they belong. Therefore, the RA member is encouraged to ask permission from the individual/family to openly share the information with the other rabbi(s) in the individual/family's life.

- **Ethical Supervision and Emotional Abuse/Misconduct**

- Healthy and safe ethical supervision allows for constructive criticism and feedback. Constructive criticism, though not always pleasant, **is not a code violation.**
- The purpose of constructive criticism is results-oriented. It is designed to benefit the person on the receiving end and allow that individual to learn skills that will help them better/improve their work and the organization. Disagreement is also a natural part of any workplace. Healthy supervision allows for disagreement where there is a focus on different viewpoints but collaboration on that difference.
- RA members may not engage in emotional abuse or misconduct toward another RA member or non RA staff member at their organization. It is especially egregious to engage in emotional abuse of an individual under an RA member's supervision.
- Emotional abuse includes verbal, physical and electronic communication. Emotionally abusive supervision may include:

- Verbal attacks against another in a personal manner
- Screaming, yelling, and berating
- Public humiliation
- Throwing, breaking, or slamming objects or body parts, or destruction of property
- Use of physically aggressive or offensive body language or hand gestures to intimidate or humiliate
- Ignoring or isolating an individual from professional meetings and conversations
- Creating a dynamic of gaslighting, coercion or manipulation
- Offering feedback based solely on a person's gender, sexuality, race, age, ability status, pregnancy/parental status/aging parents, or other identities/ personal status.

SECTION 13: STANDARDS REGARDING SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

RA members must be mindful that whether their social media presence is accessible on a public or private account or listserv, there is no such thing as “privacy” online. Therefore, RA members must conduct themselves on social media with the utmost integrity. Even if conducted on a private platform, or on a “personal page,” RA members can be reported to VHK for violation of the Code.

All social media posts, messages, comments and communications, whether on a public or private account, are subject to the Code. Examples may include:

- Comments or private messages on posts that violate the bullying, cyberbullying and Sexual Harassment standards in Section 1
- Anything that violates Section 5

SECTION 14: STANDARDS REGARDING FRAUDULENT CONDUCT

RA members must ensure that they are beyond reproach in their work product and financial affairs, both in their personal and professional lives. RA members must not engage in unethical business dealings as well as behaviors that are fraudulent or deceptive in practice. Therefore, the Code prohibits any form of fraud. Fraud occurs when a rabbi engages in purposeful deceit that gives the rabbi unlawful gain or denies a right to another.

The following actions are a form of fraud and violate the Code:

- Making statements that are false, deceptive, or untrue, whether in a public forum or in a private meeting with an individual.
- Misrepresenting professional credentials and experiences.
- Taking credit for ideas, materials, sermons, articles or books that are not their own.
- Plagiarizing another's work whether in public speaking or in writing.⁷
- Claiming the intellectual property of another, especially a subordinate.

⁷ As Artificial Intelligence becomes more commonly utilized there will be further ethical clarification from the RA about the ways in which this technology becomes a form of plagiarism.

RA members are also prohibited from engaging in financial misappropriation. Given the role of rabbinic authority within synagogues and organizations, rabbis often control aspects of their organizations' finances, especially when they include tzedakah (charity) as well as discretionary, scholarship, endowments and operations funds. Therefore, to properly dispense or disburse funds from any of the work-related accounts, RA members must engage in the following practices:

- Have an additional signatory, who is known to the board and who is instructed by the board and the rabbi as to the requirement of confidentiality in disbursement or have a biannual audit system in place.
- Ensure that their place of work has a method for reviewing the distribution history on a yearly basis that protects the dignity of the recipients, while ensuring transparency that protects all involved.

Misappropriating funds is a violation of the code. Therefore, the following general protocols must be adhered to:

- All donations collected and earmarked for a particular fund must go to that fund and all local and national law requirements must be met.
- Any change in direction of funds must be agreed to in writing by the donor or be approved by the governance authority of the organization. The board must be notified in writing and all local and national law requirements must be adhered to.

RA members must adhere to the following Code guidelines regarding their discretionary funds:

- RA members must ensure compliance with all state, local, national, provincial or governmental laws.
- RA members must establish an accountable and transparent audit system that ensures the confidentiality of the receiver and allows for an additional individual to have access to the records.
- RA members must have an additional signatory, who is known to the board and who is instructed by the board and the rabbi as to the requirement of confidentiality in disbursement or have a biannual audit system in place.
- RA members must ensure that any signatory keeps the identity of the recipient confidential and may not share their names or personal information with anyone outside of the identified individuals tasked with auditing the discretionary fund.
- RA members must ensure that disbursement does not personally benefit the rabbi. Funds may not be used to finance the rabbi for personal or familial expenses. Rabbis must ensure that there is a transparent and agreed up protocol for the use of discretionary funds for professional expenses.
 - RA members' children **are** eligible for any discretionary funding provided to all children within the congregation, such as funding a teen trip to Israel.
- RA members must be available to provide a summary or report to the board on a yearly basis, that keeps all identifying information of the receiver confidential.
- The following are acceptable way to maintain confidentiality of the reports
 - De-identifying the recipients in reports.
 - Prepare an executive summary of the distributions.

- Have another appropriate party, also bound by confidentiality, review the distribution history and report to the Board.

RA members must adhere to ethical financial transparency:

- An RA member may not act as an investment manager for any communal fund.
- An RA member may not knowingly agree to receive a donation from an individual who is under public suspicion of unethical dealings or illegal activity, even if the donation is anonymous.

RA members must adhere to ethical personal financial conduct:

- RA members must strive to conduct their financial affairs with integrity
- RA members must not enter into financial conflict of interest, which is defined as a financial arrangement that has potential for monetary gain or loss, with a constituent or person with whom they are in a pastoral or work relationship.
- RA members must not invest in a business or fund of a constituent or person with whom they are in a pastoral or work relationship.
- RA members must adhere to all legal financial requirements including proper reporting of income (subject to parsonage provisions), paying taxes and repaying debts.
- RA members may not engage in embezzlement, soliciting personal financial funds from constituents or those with whom they are in a pastoral or work relationship, knowingly participate or engage others to participate in a financial fraud such as a Ponzi scheme, or serve as a reference for another investment fund.
- RA members may not elicit any personal financial favors from an individual connected to the Rabbi's workplace or work.
- RA members must not accept professional services from constituents or people with whom they are in a pastoral or work relationship, without paying for said services.
 - RA members may agree to a discounted fee or a donation in lieu of fees as long as there is no quid pro quo involved in the service provided.
 - RA members may not manipulate, demand, extort or expect discounted or free services.

SECTION 15: STANDARDS REGARDING MISCONDUCT RELATED TO ADDICTION

It is expected that every RA member who suffers from an addiction will seek licensed expert advice regarding recovery and rehabilitation. The RA is committed to assisting members who are struggling with addiction. If assistance is needed, members should contact the RA COO if financial support is required or the EIC if specific guidance is needed for recovery. An addiction is not a per se violation of the Code. If the addiction leads to misconduct or a Code violation, the addiction will not mitigate the seriousness of the violation.

- RA members must not knowingly put an individual in harm's way due to any addiction or use of a restricted substance.
- Therefore the following are examples of Code violations connected to an addiction:
 - Driving while intoxicated or high.
 - Knowingly putting someone at risk of receiving a sexually transmitted disease.

- Borrowing or stealing money to use for their addiction.

SECTION 16: STANDARDS REGARDING COMPLIANCE WITH THE VHK

An RA member who refuses to cooperate with an investigation by the VHK of a complaint against them, or who refuses to follow through on a VHK determination and requirements, is subject to suspension or expulsion.

An RA member who resigns from the RA in the following situations will be expelled from the Rabbinical Assembly for non-cooperation and will be subject to all the conditions of expulsion as detailed in the Code.

Specifically, if an RA member resigns during or subsequent to:

- A notice of VHK complaint
- The VHK fact finding and complaint review process
- After receiving the finding where the complaint was founded and/or consequences imparted

Additionally, once expelled, the RA member's name will appear on the RA public facing website citing both the expulsion under Section 16 for non-compliance, and the Section involved in the underlying alleged violation.

SECTION 17: STANDARDS REGARDING STANDARDS OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

The RA grants each rabbi the responsibility to determine *halakhic* parameters for their congregation or organization. However, the rulings of the RA and of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, "Standards of Religious Practice," must be adhered to. It is an RA member's ethical duty to uphold the standards of religious practice.

Members of the RA are required to fulfill the responsibilities of membership and fulfill the halakhic and administrative policies established by the Assembly. The signing of the membership application serves as an agreement to abide by these policies and to abide by the Assembly's code of professional conduct. Thus, while the rights and status of *mara d'atra* are strongly upheld by the RA, granting to each rabbi the responsibility to determine halakhic parameters for their congregation, institution or organization, it is expected that the rulings of the RA and of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards will serve as a *halakhic* guide for members of the Assembly and their communities. "Standards of Religious Practice" are binding upon all members of the RA. Such standards are established through the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards with approval of the Assembly at an annual meeting. Current Standards of Religious Practice include:

- **Jewish Status and Conversion:** Clergy of the Conservative/Masorti Movement may grant formal Jewish status only to a person who is either born to a Jewish woman or converted with *tevilah* and (if male) brit milah as approved by a Beit Din, it being understood that any member of the RA shall continue to possess the right to petition the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards for an opinion on any case of extraordinary circumstances.

- **Wedding Officiation - Get/Divorce Decree:** Clergy of the Conservative/Masorti Movement may officiate in any aspect of any manner of wedding ceremony for a person previously married to a Jew only if the previous marriage was dissolved by the death of the spouse or by a divorce in both civil law and in Jewish law, the latter by a get, by another form of dissolution approved by the CJLS, or by the action of the Joint Bet Din.
- **Wedding Officiation:** Clergy of the Conservative/Masorti movement may officiate at weddings only if both parties are Jewish. Officiation means signing documents or verbal participation of any kind. Attendance as a guest at a wedding where only one party is Jewish is not included in this Standard of Religious Practice. Violations of Standards of Religious Practice usually result in expulsion from the RA.

SECTION 18: STANDARDS OF MEMBERSHIP REGARDING INTEGRITY WITH THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY

Administrative policies and halakhic practice parameters are promulgated by the Executive Council and are binding upon the membership of the RA. These currently include:

- **Records:** Keeping the RA informed of current address and place of employment, if any. The RA makes every effort to maintain contact with members of the Assembly. Should such contact not be possible due to a member's failure to inform the Assembly of a current address, after one year, membership in the Assembly will end and reinstatement may only occur by application through the Membership Committee.
- **Membership Dues:** The filing of dues forms and timely payment of dues. Failure to file annual dues forms and complete payment of dues may result in suspension or expulsion from membership. It is also expected that all other financial obligations such as payments related to convention or attendance at seminars will also be paid when due.
- **RA Policies:** Abiding by the policies established by committees of the RA as approved by the Executive Council, such as those of the Placement Commission, Membership Committee, Va'ad HaKavod, Joint Beit Din, etc.
- **Regional Policies:** Abiding by regional practices in order to strengthen rabbinic cooperation and promote communal cohesiveness. Regional policies must conform to those of the RA and are subject to review and approval by the Executive Council. Rabbis resident in or working temporarily in a region must abide by regional policies.
- **Private Ordination:** RA members may not privately ordain individuals. The RA firmly opposes private ordination as undermining the high standards of rabbinic education and training, and as demeaning the trust and respect of the rabbinic profession.

- **Civil Marriage**⁸: RA members may not officiate at any civil marriage ceremonies. Colleagues may only function in rabbinic roles and may not serve in civil capacities for marriages or other ceremonies and rites. Rabbis may not officiate when a required civil marriage license has not been previously obtained. In the case of same sex marriages, a civil license must be obtained unless the State or Country does not issue a marriage license for same sex couples.
- **Administration of Gittin/Divorce Decrees**: It is Executive Council policy that *Gittin* must be arranged through certified *Mesadrei Gittin* who participate in the divorce Registration Projects of the Joint Bet Din.

Failure to abide by RA policies and/or this Code of Professional Conduct may result in disciplinary action. Administrative policy violations such as a placement violation or a failure to remit dues as required will be reviewed by the appropriate committee of the RA (e.g., Placement Commission, Administrative Committee) and disciplinary action, if any recommended. Violations of an ethical, moral or religious nature will be referred to the Va'ad HaKavod. If necessary, a recommendation for disciplinary action will be reported to the Administrative Committee, and then voted upon by the Executive Council to become effective.

⁸ The CJLS and RA Israel are working on adding a clause for the specific circumstances of wedding officiation in Israel. Completion is expected prior to the adoption of this Code.