



Safeguarding Policy

Quick Summary - What You're Agreeing To

- Everyone deserves dignity and respect. No abuse, bullying, or discrimination of any kind.
- Keep healthy boundaries — no pressuring others into personal, financial, or business arrangements.
- Confidentiality matters — don't share personal info or recordings without permission.
- The Empower Network may remove someone from spaces if safety could be at risk (this does not always mean wrongdoing).
- If you see or experience something unsafe, tell us: support@empower-network.org or use the [Report a Concern Form](#)

This summary is for convenience only. Please read the full policy below.

1. Introduction

The Empower Network, Inc. ("The Empower Network," "TEN," "we," "our," or "us") is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all participants, especially individuals living with chronic illness, disability, or other vulnerabilities.

This policy applies to all The Empower Network spaces and activities, including:

- In-person events and gatherings
- Online meetings, webinars, and group sessions
- The Empower Network-hosted social media groups and community platforms
- Email, chat, or direct messages related to The Empower Network activities

It outlines expectations for volunteers, staff, and members to prevent exploitation, abuse, or harm within our community.

2. Safeguarding Principles

- **Dignity & Respect** – Every person has the right to be treated with respect and without discrimination.
- **Boundaries** – Volunteers and members must maintain appropriate personal and professional boundaries at all times.
- **Zero Tolerance** – The Empower Network does not tolerate any form of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harassment.

- **Background Checks** – All employees and high-risk volunteers are subject to background checks and screening in line with the Background Check & Screening Policy.
- **Ongoing Disclosure** – All employees, board members, and volunteers complete the [Annual Conflict of Interest & Disclosures Form](#) to reaffirm compliance with the Community Standards, disclose any potential conflicts, and report any new legal or safeguarding concerns.
- **Duty to Act** – Volunteers and staff are responsible for reporting safeguarding concerns immediately to The Empower Network leadership.

3. Exploitative or Inappropriate Behaviors

The following behaviors are considered unacceptable and may result in removal from The Empower Network:

Abuse or Harassment

- Physical, emotional, sexual, or verbal abuse.
- Bullying, intimidation, or repeated unwelcome behavior.
- Hate speech, ableism, racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, xenophobia, or any form of discriminatory conduct.

Exploitation of Vulnerability

- Taking advantage of someone's disability, illness, or financial situation.
- Pressuring members into business, financial, or personal arrangements.
- Using a position of trust to manipulate, coerce, or control another participant.

Boundary Violations

- Requesting or sharing inappropriate personal details (e.g., medical records, financial information) without consent or relevance.
- Overstepping relational boundaries (e.g., initiating unwanted personal or romantic relationships within a power imbalance).
- Soliciting services, donations, or favors in ways that pressure or guilt participants.

Misuse of Role or Information

- Using volunteer or community roles to promote personal businesses, unless clearly approved by The Empower Network (e.g., directory listings).
- Sharing confidential member information outside of The Empower Network spaces.
- Recording, screenshotting, or distributing conversations without explicit permission.

4. Volunteer & Staff Responsibilities

All volunteers and staff must:

- Model respectful, inclusive, and disability-informed behavior
- Be alert to signs of distress, exploitation, or unsafe interactions
- Report safeguarding concerns immediately (see Section 6)
- Cooperate with The Empower Network's processes for addressing safeguarding issues and protecting community members, including but not limited to interviewing references and conducting background checks.
- Volunteers and staff must promptly disclose to The Empower Network any arrests, charges, or convictions that occur during their involvement.

5. The Empower Network's Responsibilities

The Empower Network will:

- Take all safeguarding concerns seriously.
- Respond promptly, fairly, and confidentially to reports.
- Provide appropriate support to individuals affected.
- Maintain confidential records of checks, disclosures, and safeguarding actions, accessible only to authorized leadership.
- Remove or restrict individuals (volunteers, staff, or members) whose behavior compromises, or could reasonably be perceived to compromise, the safety or wellbeing of the community. Such action may be taken out of an abundance of caution and does not in itself imply wrongdoing.
- The organization may need to adapt safeguarding responses to align with legal requirements in different jurisdictions, but our commitment to protecting participants remains the same.

6. Reporting Concerns

If you experience or witness behavior that violates this policy, please report it as soon as possible. All concerns will be documented and reviewed through the Incident Reporting & Response Process. Reports are handled confidentially. No one will face retaliation for raising a good-faith concern, even if the report is not substantiated.

Concerns may be raised by:

- Emailing support@empower-network.org
- Contacting the Executive Director or a member of The Empower Network's Board of Directors directly
- Fill out the [Report a Concern Form](#)

- Speaking with a designated safeguarding lead at an event or meeting (if present)

Concerns may be raised anonymously, though providing contact information helps The Empower Network follow up effectively.

7. Enforcement

Violations of this Safeguarding Policy may result in:

- Verbal or written warnings.
- Suspension or removal from volunteer roles.
- Revocation of membership or access to The Empower Network programs.
- Referral to external authorities if required by law.

The Empower Network will strive to resolve issues in a restorative and educational manner where possible, while always prioritizing the safety and wellbeing of the community.

8. Review & Updates

This policy will be reviewed and updated as needed to reflect best practices in safeguarding and community care.

9. Connection to Other Policies

This Safeguarding Policy is one part of The Empower Network's broader set of community policies, which together guide how we operate and protect our members. Volunteers, staff, and participants are expected to comply with all applicable policies, including (but not limited to):

- **Privacy Policy** – how we collect, use, and protect personal information.
- **Website Terms of Use** – conditions for accessing and using our site and online platforms.
- **Membership Agreement** – expectations and responsibilities for members.
- **Volunteer Agreement** – expectations and responsibilities for volunteers.
- **Community Standards** – day-to-day commitments to confidentiality, respect, inclusion, and conduct.

These documents are intended to work together. In the event of overlap or inconsistency, The Empower Network leadership will interpret and apply them in the manner that best protects the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of our community.

Contact Us

For questions, concerns, or to report a problem, please contact us.

The Empower Network, Inc.

Email: **support@empower-network.org**

Website: www.empower-network.org