



## **Meals on Wheels of Takoma Park/Silver Spring Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Policy for Volunteers**

### **1. Policy Statement and Scope**

#### **1.1. Statement of Commitment**

Meals on Wheels Takoma Park/Silver Spring maintains a strict zero-tolerance policy toward all forms of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, and abuse. The organization is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and non-hostile environment for all volunteers, staff, and especially for our clients, including seniors and disabled individuals who may be considered vulnerable adults.

#### **1.2. Scope of Policy**

This policy applies to all individuals providing services to or on behalf of Meals on Wheels Takoma Park/Silver Spring without compensation (Volunteers), including Board Members and interns. It applies to conduct that occurs during any activity connected with the volunteer's duties, such as home delivery or through any communication related to volunteer activities (including electronic communications and social media).

### **2. Definitions of Prohibited Conduct**

Prohibited conduct under this policy is categorized as follows:

#### **2.1. Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, physical, or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature when:

- **Quid Pro Quo:** Submission to or rejection of the conduct is made, explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of volunteer service, advancement, or benefit (e.g., promising a better volunteer position in exchange for a sexual favor).
- **Hostile Environment:** The conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's participation in the organization's mission or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

**Examples of Harassment:** Unwanted touching, pinching, or hugging; leering or suggestive gestures; sexually explicit jokes or comments; sending sexually suggestive emails or texts; and the display of offensive sexual material.

## **2.2. Sexual Misconduct**

Sexual misconduct includes, but is not limited to, physical sexual acts or attempts to commit such acts where consent is absent or incapable of being given (e.g., due to age, intoxication, or disability).

## **2.3. Abuse of Clients**

Abuse includes any physical, sexual, or mental injury, neglect, or exploitation involving a minor (under 18 years old) or a Vulnerable Adult. This conduct is strictly prohibited and, under Maryland law, requires immediate external reporting to the appropriate authorities. A Vulnerable Adult is generally defined in Maryland as an adult who lacks the physical or mental capacity to provide for their own daily needs.

## **3. Mandatory Reporting Requirements (Maryland Law: Minors and Vulnerable Adults)**

### **3.1. Obligation to Report**

Under Maryland law, any person, including every Volunteer, who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect (Family Law Article § 5-701 et seq.) or that a Vulnerable Adult is suffering from abuse, neglect, or self-neglect (Human Services Article, Title 14), **MUST** report their suspicion to the appropriate external authorities immediately.

This legal requirement supersedes all internal organizational procedures and confidentiality agreements.

### **3.2. External Reporting Procedure**

If a Volunteer suspects or is told of abuse or neglect involving a child or a Vulnerable Adult by anyone (staff, other volunteers, clients, or third parties), they must take the following steps immediately:

1. **IMMEDIATE ORAL REPORT (For Minors):** Contact the local Department of Social Services (Child Protective Services) at **1-800-91-PREVENT (1-800-917-7383)**, or local law enforcement agency (e.g., 911 or local police non-emergency line).
2. **IMMEDIATE ORAL REPORT (For Vulnerable Adults):** Contact the local Adult Protective Services (APS) at **240-777-3000 or 1-800-91-PREVENT** or local law enforcement agency (e.g., 911 or local police non-emergency line).
3. **WRITTEN FOLLOW-UP:** Submit a written report within 48 hours to the same agency contacted orally, using the appropriate state form.

4. **INTERNAL NOTIFICATION (After External Report):** Immediately notify the Volunteer Coordinator or Executive Director that an external report has been made. Only provide necessary details to the internal contact (who was reported to, and the victim's name if known), but do not delay the external legal report.

**Note:** Individuals who report suspected abuse in good faith, as required by Maryland law, are immune from civil liability or criminal prosecution.

## **4. Internal Reporting and Investigation Procedure**

### **4.1. Internal Reporting Avenues**

Any individual (Volunteer, Staff, or Client) who believes they have been subjected to, or have witnessed, a violation of this policy should report the incident immediately through one of the following confidential channels:

- The Director of Communications and Engagement: Matt Mulkey, [matt@mowtakoma.org](mailto:matt@mowtakoma.org), 301-434-1922
- The Executive Director: Javonte McDonald, [javonte@mowtakoma.org](mailto:javonte@mowtakoma.org), 301-434-1922
- The Board Chair: Daniel Adams, [djadams@gmail.com](mailto:djadams@gmail.com), 301-935-4777

If the complaint involves the individual normally responsible for receiving reports, the report should be made to one of the other designated parties.

### **4.2. Investigation Process**

Meals on Wheels Takoma Park/ Silver Spring will ensure a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation of all complaints of sexual misconduct or harassment.

- The identity of the complainant, the alleged perpetrator, and witnesses will be kept confidential to the extent possible and only shared on a need-to-know basis to conduct the investigation and take corrective action.
- If the alleged conduct involves a minor or vulnerable adult, the organization will cooperate fully with law enforcement and the relevant Protective Services agency (CPS or APS).

### **4.3. Interim Measures**

During an investigation, the organization reserves the right to immediately suspend or reassign the accused Volunteer from duties involving contact with the alleged victim or clients until the investigation is complete.

## **5. Non-Retaliation and Disciplinary Action**

### **5.1. Prohibition Against Retaliation**

Retaliation against any individual who makes a good faith report of a violation, or who assists in an investigation, is strictly prohibited. Any Volunteer found to have engaged in retaliation will be subject to immediate termination of their volunteer relationship.

### **5.2. Disciplinary Action**

Any Volunteer found to have violated this policy will be subject to disciplinary action proportional to the severity of the offense, up to and including:

- Verbal or written warning.
- Suspension of volunteer duties.
- Immediate and permanent termination of the volunteer relationship.
- In cases involving abuse or other illegal activity, the organization will report the incident to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

### **5.3. False Allegations**

Knowingly making a false or malicious accusation under this policy is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of the volunteer relationship.