

## **SAFE SANGHA POLICY**

### **MEDITATION:**

Our “Sangha,” or congregation, is one of our Three Treasures as Buddhists. We come to our Sangha for guidance; we strive to become one with our Sangha. We join in the spirit of universal brother- and sisterhood.

Buddhism teaches a non-dualistic way of living. Life is one. The notion of “the other” contradicts Buddhist teaching. In our diversity, we are equal and one.

Through Buddhist teaching and practice, we recognize that we are deceived by dualistic perceptions of each other, such as Black/White, male/female, rich/poor, foreign/American, old/young, gay/straight, able/disabled. These distinctions are false mental abstractions. Rightly seen, we are equal; we are one in the Buddhist spirit of wisdom and compassion.

Under the teachings of Gautama Buddha, we commit ourselves to “right thought,” “right speech,” “right conduct,” and “right mindfulness.” We thus commit ourselves to maintaining a Sangha where all can study, worship and work together in an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion. Our Sangha shall be free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, retaliation and intimidation.

### **BASIC PRINCIPLES:**

1. Each member of the Sangha commits him- or herself against all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, retaliation and intimidation. We shall become progressively mindful of the many forms that such wrongful conduct may take, and avoid such transgressions against the unique personhood each member of the Sangha. We shall maintain a Sangha that is compassionate and understanding in its diversity.
2. We recognize that sexual misconduct is deeply injurious, whether through suggestive remarks, unwelcome touching, sexual harassment, physical violence, or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature.
3. The Sangha shall take steps to prevent discrimination and sexual misconduct, through education, training, leadership screening, and safety practices.
4. The Sangha shall maintain a complaint procedure to resolve allegations of discrimination and sexual misconduct, should they arise.

5. All allegations of discrimination and/or sexual misconduct shall be taken seriously. All parties shall be treated fairly. Where appropriate, independent third-party fact-finding shall be employed.
6. Where found to be substantiated, allegations of discrimination and/or sexual misconduct shall be remedied.
7. Remedies shall include, but not be limited to, such measures as mandatory counseling, remediation, rehabilitation, conciliation, no-contact directives, suspension and exclusion, in the sole discretion of the Resident Minister and the Board of Directors.
8. Where appropriate, outside authorities shall be involved, such as the Chicago Police Department and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

## **PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

Overcoming discrimination and preventing sexual misconduct are fundamental to the mission of the Buddhist Temple of Chicago. These are ways in which we express and live the Nembutsu, engaging in the oneness of life. Through the following, we will implement these principles.

**Education:** The study of the Dharma is integral to cultivating our understanding of non-discrimination, compassionate relationships, and our responsibilities as members of the Sangha. The ministers will continue their long-standing work in leading the Sangha to these understandings.

**Training:** BTC leadership will participate in additional training on discrimination, sexual harassment, abuse and its prevention, through workshops and sensitivity training led by professionals in appropriate fields, such as social workers, psychologists, educators and lawyers. BTC leadership shall participate in such an activity at least annually.

Volunteers who regularly work with children and youth will receive orientation training regarding this Interim Policy, and with non-discrimination, harassment, abuse and prevention.

**Leadership Screening:** BTC leadership will undergo criminal background checks within six months of implementation of this Interim Policy. Thereafter, new participants in leadership will have such checks within three months of assuming leadership positions. A registered sex offender review will be performed annually for all leadership.

**Safety Practices:** BTC leadership will develop recommendations and practices to protect the vulnerable among our Sangha, particularly children, to supplement this policy. It shall apply to all BTC activities, both on Temple grounds and during field trips.

## **COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS**

Complaints of violations of this Interim Policy may be made to the Resident Minister or to any member of the BTC Board of Directors.

Each year, the BTC Board of Directors shall appoint a subcommittee, called the Response Team, with at least two members, one male and one female.

Complaints of violations shall be referred immediately to the Response Team. Should the complaint implicate a member of the Response Team as a respondent, that member shall recuse her- or himself, and the Board of Directors shall appoint a replacement. Recusal may also be appropriate where a Response Team member is a material witness, has a close personal relationship with persons who are involved, or has other circumstances that may impair his or her objectivity.

Working closely with the Resident Minister, the Response Team shall receive complaints, direct any investigation needed, set a resolution procedure, and conduct a hearing where appropriate.

The Sangha shall be advised of this procedure through a brochure prominently displayed among the Temple's educational materials.