

UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM

FACT SHEET ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICIES

As Announced By URJ President Rabbi Rick Jacobs
at the URJ Biennial General Assembly

December 7, 2017

During its largest ever Biennial, the Union for Reform Judaism announced a series of proactive steps to ensure that sexual harassment and assault do not occur in its workplace or in its congregations and that its leaders – lay and professional – are trained and committed to making sure everyone is safe.

URJ President Rabbi Rick Jacobs announced these steps, saying, “As religious leaders, it’s necessary to voice outrage and pain at the ubiquity of sexual harassment and assault, making clear that sexual harassment and assault are not just illegal. They are immoral. They are repugnant in every way. They are in direct opposition to Reform Judaism’s values and the URJ’s commitment to create a world of wholeness, justice, and compassion.”

Expanding and Enhancing URJ’s Internal Processes

- The URJ is proud of the working environment employees enjoy, and continues to strive to make it even better, including strong and clear sexual harassment policy and training. Going forward, this required training will be expanded to include all employees and all North American Board members.

Offering Sexual Harassment and Assault Training to URJ Congregations

- The URJ will make its policy available to all URJ congregations.
- The URJ will make training available on a regular basis to all URJ congregations, with no charge to member congregations.



Creation of a Movement-Wide Ethics Code

- The URJ is proud to have an outstanding ethics code, as do other Reform Movement professional organizations including the CCAR, ACC, and NATA. However, there is as yet no Movement-wide code to which URJ synagogues can ascribe. There should be, and there will be.
- A high-level Ethics Council, chaired by URJ Vice Chair Dr. Steve Weitz, an outstanding URJ leader and a psychologist, is currently at work creating such a code, and the URJ will begin sharing it in the coming months.

Focusing on, and Learning from, the Movement's Youth

- When it comes to sexual harassment and assault, the entire organization is responsible for making sure that those whose lives the URJ is honored to help shape can never say, "I didn't know." Those values helped produce the proposed [Resolution on Student-on-Student Sexual Violence in Schools](#) being voted on during the 2017 URJ Biennial General Assembly. Its adoption will make the URJ's commitment to this issue even clearer, and hopefully encourage other religious denominations to express a similar commitment.
- All URJ camps, all NFTY regions, and all other youth programs provide age-appropriate materials about sexual harassment and assault. NFTY teens are leading on this issue, having committed earlier this year to "eliminating systems or games that encourage and objectify sexual content" and, critically, asking every senior to uphold consent on campus by signing a pledge at their final event.