

# Complaint Procedure and Ethics Statement

## Gestalt Institute of Cleveland

### Complaint Procedure for Program Participants

The board of directors, staff, and faculty\*\* of the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland wish to support an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in our relationships with participants in our programs. Any event that disrupts this relationship will be addressed expeditiously, taken seriously, and investigated thoroughly. Participants are encouraged to make complaints known early so that any issues can be addressed in a timely manner and while people's memories are still fresh.

Our general philosophy about human relations at the Institute is that issues arising between individuals should be managed through a process of open and direct communication among the individuals involved. Given our systems perspective, we recognize that individuals involved in organizations and societal systems who find themselves caught up in conflicts are often actually reflecting conflicting forces within the system or operation. In such cases it is important to identify who else, beyond the immediate players, may have a role in the conflict. Thus, when problems arise at the Institute, we pay a great deal of attention to identifying the true arena of the problem and making appropriate choices about the level at which it needs to be addressed.

Complaints tend to be of two types: The first has to do with situations of a routine or procedural nature. The second involves ethical issues, generally a perceived violation of acceptable principles of conduct.

Complaints may be addressed through either an informal or formal process. The following guidelines have been adopted by the Board of Directors of the Institute to assist participants in addressing grievances with faculty.

*\*\* Faculty refers to Professional Staff and Associate Staff, Visiting Staff and any other professional providing leadership, teaching, or consulting under the auspices of the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland.*

### General Complaints

For any general issue you have with a faculty or staff member, the first step, consistent with our general philosophy about human relations, is for you to engage the faculty or staff member directly about your concern. If you feel the need for support in this process, you may want to ask another program participant, another faculty member, or the chairperson of your program to be present for the discussion.

If this process proves unsatisfactory, the next step is to contact your Program Chairperson(s), if you are in a Training Program, or the Executive Director.

Once a complaint has been addressed, all parties involved will be informed regarding the outcome of the process.

## **Ethics Complaints**

At the Institute we regard ethics complaints as having special significance. When considering a complaint about a faculty member, the Executive Director will take into account the welfare of:

1. The present complainant, as well as past complainants and potential future complainants regarding the same faculty member or issue;
2. The respondent or present faculty member about whom the complaint has been made, as well as past respondents and potential future respondents; and
3. The Gestalt Institute of Cleveland, including its public and internal image, its efficient functioning, and the principles it represents.

In order to be assured of special attention to complaints regarding faculty ethics, a participant in our programs should take the following steps to register the complaint.

### **The Informal Process**

Contact the Program Chairperson or the Executive Director to discuss your complaint. At this point, the complaint is informal. The Chairperson or Executive Director who has been approached will

1. Counsel the complainant as to his/her options;
2. Report the complaint to the Executive Director; and, at the request of the complainant,
3. Help the complainant to resolve the matter informally following a process of directly engaging the faculty member as described above.

### **The Formal Process**

1. Program Directors who receive a formal ethics complaint must report such complaint to the Executive Director.
2. The Executive Director will consider the credibility and veracity of the complaint. The Executive Director will promptly and confidentially initiate an investigation which may include some or all of the following steps:
  - a. The Executive Director or his or her designee will confer with the complainant in order to obtain a clear understanding of the facts surrounding the allegation of the ethics complaint.
  - b. The Executive Director or his or her designee will then give the accused person the opportunity to confer and obtain his or her version of the incident(s).
  - c. The Executive Director or his or her designee may hold as many meetings with the complainant and the accused as are necessary to investigate the complaint. In addition, the Executive Director or his or her designee may interview any witnesses of the alleged ethics violation.
  - d. In all cases, the complainant shall be informed of the general

- results of the investigation by the Executive Director or his or her designee.
3. If the evidence supports a finding of a violation, the Executive Director may do any or all of the following;
    - a. resolve the matter informally;
    - b. counsel, warn, or reprimand the respondent;
    - c. report the entire matter to the Board; and/or
    - d. recommend to the Board disciplinary action up to and including discharge.
  4. It is the responsibility of the Board to determine what further action should be taken on a complaint of an ethics complaint after receiving a recommendation for disciplinary action from the Executive Director. The Board may then do any or all of the following:
    - a. conduct an independent investigation;
    - b. resolve the matter informally;
    - c. report the entire matter to the appropriate agencies; and/or
    - d. recommend disciplinary action up to and including discharge from a program or employment.
  5. If an investigation results in a finding that the reporting individual falsely and maliciously accused another of an ethics violation, the reporting individual will be subject to appropriate sanctions up to and including discharge from either a program or employment.
  6. The Executive Director shall have this Complaint Procedure and Ethics Statement posted to inform participants, staff and faculty.