

Code of conduct against harassment and other degrading treatment

The code of conduct was established by the board of Posithiva Gruppen on September 18th 2023.

Background and purpose

Posithiva Gruppen (PG) is an organisation for everyone living with HIV. This means that everyone should feel welcome, safe, and respected within Posithiva Gruppen, regardless of for example:

- sex, gender identity, or gender expression
- ethnicity or ethnic background
- skin colour
- religion or other belief
- (dis)ability
- sexual orientation
- age

Harassment and other degrading treatment are actions that harm individuals. Such actions also affect Posithiva Gruppen negatively. Posithiva Gruppen has zero tolerance for harassment and other degrading treatment, and would therefore like to clarify which code of conduct (rules and guidelines for social interaction) applies in our activities and forums.

About the code of conduct and whom it concerns

This code of conduct states that harassment and other degrading treatment should not occur within Posithiva Gruppen. The code first clarifies which people it concerns or applies to. It then describes what is meant by harassment and other degrading treatment. Lastly, the code describes what you should do if you suspect, witness, or are subjected to harassment and/or other forms of degrading treatment.

The code of conduct applies to all members and participants in Posithiva Gruppen's activities and forums. This includes for example dinners, workshops, meetings, seminars, outings, travels, events, and support sessions. The code also applies to the board and staff at Posithiva Gruppen, including group leaders, project workers, volunteers, and temporary staff (such as external lecturers and instructors).

Regulations

1. Zero tolerance for harassment and other degrading treatment

Posithiva Gruppen does not accept harassment or other degrading treatment in its activities and forums.

Harassment

Harassment can be defined as words or actions that are unwanted and that violate someone's dignity. Words or actions that are unwanted are performed *without consent*, that is, someone does something to another person when the other person does not want them to. A 'no' can be expressed in many different ways. It does not have to be in words, but can be done with the body, for example through posture or gestures. If someone does not explicitly say or show a 'no', this is, however, *not* the same as consent. If the other person does not explicitly say yes, or show with their body that they want something, this should be interpreted as a 'no'.

It is the person subjected to harassment who decides if they feel mistreated – not the person harassing.

One form of harassment is **sexual harassment**, which is sexually charged words or actions that are unwanted and/or perceived as offensive or unpleasant by the recipient. It does not matter if the sender is of the opinion that they are flirting or joking. Sexual harassment can include touching, groping, or giving another person sexually charged looks without their consent. It can also include making sexual suggestions or showing/sending sexual images (for example 'dick pics') without consent.

Harassment can also be related to **gender identity and expression**. This can include questioning another person's pronouns, name, clothes or way of behaving. It can also include asking unwanted questions about someone's body or gender identity. To make fun of or question someone who uses gender neutral pronouns, such as singular 'they' or the Swedish pronoun 'hen', is also harassment. Both singular 'they' and the Swedish pronoun 'hen' are important words for many people who do not, or do not exclusively, identify as either a woman or a man. It can also be harassment to use someone as an 'information centre', that is, to ask general questions about gender identity and expression without consent to a person with experience of not conforming to prevailing gender norms.

Another form of harassment is harassment based on **ethnicity, background and/or skin colour**. Such harassment can include using the N-word or other racist and/or derogatory words, for example about Sámi people or other minority groups. It can also include attributing physical characteristics to other people, for example by expressing that people with a certain skin colour or from a certain part of the world have big or small penises, or that people of a certain origin have little or a lot of body hair. The same goes for imitating or making fun of someone's pronunciation or language skills in an insulting way.

To deliberately and/or repeatedly use the wrong name when addressing or talking about someone is also a form of harassment.

Other forms of degrading treatment

Degrading treatment is an umbrella term that can cover many forms of degrading actions in addition to harassment. Degrading treatment can include bullying, excluding, or defaming someone, expressing prejudice, spreading gossip or rumours, as well as name-calling. Degrading treatment can also include physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, and pushing. A person can subject others to degrading treatment both in physical and in digital spaces. There is zero tolerance for all forms of degrading treatment within Posithiva Gruppen.

How can I ensure that no one is harassed or degraded?

To deliberately harass or otherwise subject other people to degrading treatment is unacceptable within Posithiva Gruppen. However, people may sometimes feel harassed or degraded without the sender intending them to. To avoid accidentally offending someone, you need to make sure that your behaviour towards other people is welcome. You can do this by actively asking for consent (for example by asking “is it okay with you if I ask about your background?”) or by paying attention to how the other person reacts to your questions and comments. If you notice that the other person is uncomfortable with your questions or if they tell you that they do not want to talk about a certain topic, respect that without question. If a person withdraws physically, respect that.

In a group, it is important that all participants take responsibility for creating a safe and welcoming environment free from homophobia, sexism, transphobia, racism, and other attitudes that can create a sense of insecurity. This applies both to how you treat people in the room are treated and how you talk about people and groups who are not present in the room. A safe environment also makes it easier to speak up if you are subjected to harassment or any other form of treatment that you perceive as degrading.

2. Internal reporting

If you have seen, or suspect, that someone has been degraded

All of Posithiva Gruppen's board members, group leaders, and employees are required to report witnessed or suspected degrading behaviour, such as harassment and other forms of degrading treatment. Members and participants in activities are also strongly encouraged to report witnessed or suspected degrading treatment.

If you have been subjected to harassment or other degrading treatment

If you have been subjected to harassment or another form of degrading treatment, you can report this. Sometimes, things that feel good at first can become unpleasant after a while. Many people who have been subjected to (sexual) harassment minimise their experience and think that what happened was not that bad. Sometimes, the person who is subjected to degrading treatment can continue to be nice or laugh to make the situation less unpleasant. It is never your fault if someone harasses or otherwise degrades you, no matter what kind of relationship you have, or have had in the past, with that person.

Reporting procedure

Anyone who suspects, has witnessed, or has been subjected to harassment or other degrading treatment, should in the first instance report this to the operations manager at Posithiva Gruppen. If a report concerns the operations manager, or if you are not comfortable with reporting to the operations manager, you can instead report to the chair of the board, a board member, or another person in the office with whom you feel comfortable. Regardless of who you choose to report to, the person should handle the case quickly and discreetly.

- [Contact details of the operations manager and other staff members in the office](#)
- Email address of the chair of the board: ordforande@posithivagruppen.se

You can make a report orally or in writing. It is possible to submit a written report anonymously (for example via an anonymous email address), but it will be easier for Posithiva Gruppen to process and communicate about the case if you are not anonymous. The person receiving your report should ask you which other people are allowed to access the information in the report.

Your report should ideally answer the following questions:

- What has happened?
- When and where did it happen?
- Who were involved?
- Who else may have relevant information about what happened?
- What would you like Posithiva Gruppen to do with the case?
- Is there any other information that may be relevant or useful for investigating the case?

3. Investigation

Posithiva Gruppen is required to ensure that the organisation's activities and forums are safe for everyone. When a report about degrading treatment is received by Posithiva Gruppen, Posithiva Gruppen is therefore required to ensure that the case is investigated and offer support to the person who has been subjected to the degrading treatment. The information in the report determines who should investigate the case. If the case does not constitute a criminal offence, it is usually investigated internally by Posithiva Gruppen, but it is possible to conduct an external investigation by bringing in an external party, such as a trade union or a law firm. If the case may constitute a criminal offence, the investigator at Posithiva Gruppen will file a police report. If such a case is closed without action by the police, prosecutor, or similar institution, Posithiva Gruppen may then choose to also conduct an internal or external investigation.

Internal investigation

If the report does not concern the operations manager, the operation manager is responsible for ensuring that the case is investigated. In other cases, the chair of the board becomes the investigator. When the investigator learns that something has happened, the internal investigation starts with the investigator talking to the person who feels subjected to degrading treatment to get as accurate and detailed a picture as possible of what the person has experienced as degrading. Sometimes, it can be hard to remember all the details in time and space, but the more concrete details, the easier it gets for the investigator to move forward in the process. After talking to the person who feels subjected to degrading treatment, the investigator can proceed by gathering evidence and talking to witnesses and/or the person who allegedly is responsible for the degrading treatment. Nothing happens without the consent of the person subjected to the degrading treatment. An investigation can be quick if what happened is easy to sort out. In other cases, the process can be more complex and take more time.

An internal investigation is not a criminal investigation and therefore does not lead to punishment in the sense of fines or imprisonment. The investigation should aim to provide the investigator with sufficient information to take action so that the degrading behaviour stops. The circumstances of what has happened determine which actions are required.

In the vast majority of cases when the investigator concludes that degrading treatment has occurred, this leads to a conversation with the person responsible for the degrading treatment and/or structural changes such as clarifications of roles, procedures, and rules within Posithiva Gruppen. If the person responsible for the degrading treatment is a member of the organisation, measures such as exclusion may be considered under the rules that apply according to Posithiva Gruppen's statutes.

4. When someone's actions are illegal under the Swedish Criminal Code ('Brottsbalken')

Degrading treatment such as harassment can sometimes also be a criminal offence under the law. Several different offences are possible, such as **unlawful breach of privacy** ('olaga integritetsintrång', Brottsbalken chapter 4, section 6c), **molestation** ('ofredande', Brottsbalken chapter 4, section 7), **sexual molestation** ('sexuellt ofredande', Brottsbalken chapter 6, section 10, second paragraph), other **sexual offences** ('sexualbrott', Brottsbalken chapter 6). If what has happened is a criminal offence, you can report the incident to the police. Posithiva Gruppen can support you in filing the report.

It can be difficult to determine on your own what constitutes a criminal offence. You can consult Posithiva Gruppen's legal advisor or the police directly if you are unsure of what applies in your case. Posithiva Gruppen's legal advisor is bound by confidentiality, which means that they may not share what you tell them with anyone else. Neither will the legal advisor take action (neither file a police report nor start an internal investigation) unless you want them to.

Monitoring and validity

This code of conduct was first established on September 18th 2023 and will be reviewed at every statutory board meeting. The code of conduct is valid until further notice.

Questions about the code of conduct can be emailed to info@posithivagruppen.se