

Section:	GO-2 Governance	Approval Date:	2/3/2023
Policy:	GO-2.9 Code of Conduct for ACWA Events, Conferences, and Meetings	Latest Revision:	11/21/2025

GO-2.9 Code of Conduct for ACWA Events, Conferences, and Meetings

2.9.1 Introduction

ACWA is proud to be the organization that people turn to for the latest and best information about water policy in California. Whether individuals are policymakers, journalists, local leaders, or concerned citizens, ACWA offers them accurate, relevant analyses of the issues surrounding the reliable delivery of safe water to millions of Californians. To fulfill this mission, however, it is imperative that all attendees, ACWA staff, and other participants at ACWA's events comport themselves in a respectful and courteous manner. Accordingly, all attendees, ACWA staff, and event participants at ACWA's events ("Persons") must adhere to the standards of behavior set forth in this Code of Conduct Policy ("Policy"). For this Policy, ACWA conferences, meetings, workgroups, task forces, workshops, symposia, and other forums organized and hosted by ACWA held at any venue, including virtual environments, shall be defined and referred to as "Events". For the sole purposes of applying this Policy, a "Private Event" shall be included in the definition of "Events." A "Private Event" is an event that (i) is held during an ACWA conference at a nearby location, (ii) is hosted by a professional services firm or ACWA member agency, and (iii) for which invitations are distributed in advance, whether or not included in ACWA-published materials. In the case of an alleged violation of this Policy at a Private Event, ACWA may provide the complaint or report to the host of the Private Event and may rely on the investigation and any recommendation of the host of the Private Event when determining any appropriate level of discipline under this Policy. In applying the Policy to Private Events, ACWA is not assuming any duty to protect, creating a special relationship between ACWA and any attendee of a Private Event, or giving rise to a reasonable expectation of compliance with the Policy at a Private Event.

2.9.2 Code of Conduct

To ensure Events are informative and enjoyable for all Persons, all Persons attending or staffing an Event are expected to conduct themselves with integrity and in a manner that is professional, respectful, tolerant, and responsible. ACWA will not tolerate discriminatory, disrespectful, or abusive conduct at any Event toward any Person. Specific examples of conduct that is prohibited by this Policy and toward which ACWA adopts a "zero-tolerance" approach, include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Conduct that is discriminatory or harassing toward other Persons based on their race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, physical disability, mental disability, reproductive health decision making, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, sexual orientation, veteran or military status or other legally protected class or characteristic.

2. Conduct that is abusive toward other persons. For purposes of this Policy, the term “abusive conduct” shall carry the same meaning as found in Government Code section 12950.1 and shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, conduct which a reasonable person would find hostile, offensive, or unrelated to ACWA’s legitimate interests related to the Event. Abusive conduct may consist of repeated infliction of verbal abuse, such as derogatory remarks, insults, and epithets; verbal or physical conduct that a reasonable person would find threatening, intimidating, or humiliating, or attempts to sabotage or undermine the work of other persons.
3. Conduct involving unwelcome sexual attention toward other persons, including sexualized comments or jokes, or sexual advances.
4. Conduct that disrupts live or virtual Events during talks or presentations.
5. The unauthorized copying, distribution, or alteration of ACWA's proprietary or confidential resources, which are marked as such.
6. Any other conduct not covered above deemed inappropriate and/or that may jeopardize the success of an Event, conference or meeting, or may jeopardize ACWA reputation and goodwill.

2.9.3 Enforcement of the Code of Conduct

Any Person asked to stop unacceptable behavior is expected to comply immediately. By participating or attending an ACWA Event all Persons agree to abide by this Policy and understand they may be subject to the following actions if they violate the requirements of this policy.

1. Verbal Warning;
2. Immediate removal from, or denial of admission to, a specific ACWA Event without refund;
3. Temporary suspension from participating or attending Events for one year unless determined otherwise due to the severity of the violation; and
4. Permanent ban from participating or attending future ACWA Events. Persons may apply for reinstatement to the Board after one year. If the person agreed to the discipline without Board action being taken, the President and Vice President will review and consider the request for reinstatement.

The enforcement steps set forth above should not be viewed as, and are not intended as, being progressive in nature. ACWA shall have the discretion to utilize any one of the above-referenced enforcement mechanisms in the first instance depending upon the nature and severity of the conduct at issue. Threats, intimidation, or any other form of retaliation against a Person who has made a complaint or provided information in support of a complaint are prohibited and subject to enforcements actions outlined in Board Policy 2.1A.

2.9.4 Investigation of Reports

All reported concerns will be treated seriously and investigated promptly. All Persons are expected to cooperate fully and honestly with any investigation. The process for investigating alleged violations of this Policy are as follows:

1. All complaints involving violations of this Policy shall be made to the ACWA President, Vice-President, and/or Executive Director. Upon receipt of a complaint, the ACWA President, Vice-President, Executive Director, and General Counsel shall be informed of the complaint and the underlying facts and circumstances. A copy of the complaint will not be provided to the subject of a complaint.
2. The ACWA Executive Director shall immediately inform the subject of the complaint, while not disclosing the complainant or their agency to guard against potential retaliation, that a complaint has been filed against them and shall inform that Person of the general nature of the complaint.
3. The ACWA Executive Director will have the discretion to take any interim action necessary to protect the safety of any persons and/or to ensure the least amount of disruption to an Event. The discretion to take interim action includes, but is not limited to, a directive that the Person be removed from an on-going Event or disinvited from future Events during the pendency of the investigation. In the case of removal from an Event as an interim measure, the Board will consider whether to uphold this decision or refund the Person's fees for such Event as part of its consideration of the complaint.
4. The ACWA Executive Director, in consultation with the Board President (or Board Vice President in cases in which the Board President is the Person accused of violating this Policy) will determine whether an investigation of the complaint is warranted. If the ACWA Executive Director, in consultation with the Board President or Vice President, as the case may be, determines that an investigation is warranted, the ACWA Executive Director will undertake such an investigation immediately. The ACWA Executive Director shall retain a qualified third party (e.g., licensed investigator or attorney) to conduct the investigation unless determined to be unnecessary by the Board President (or Board Vice President in cases in which the Board President is the person alleged of violating this Policy) and General Counsel. The investigation should include discussions and interviews with witnesses as applicable.
5. Upon completion of the investigation, a report of the findings and conclusions of the investigation will be provided by the ACWA Executive Director to the Board President, Vice President, and the ACWA General Counsel, assuming none of those individuals are the subject of the investigation. Those individuals collectively will determine the recommended enforcement action to take in light of the findings, if any, and recommendations rendered following the investigation of the complaint. If no action is recommended, the complaint will be dismissed.
6. Once a determination of the recommended enforcement action has been made, the accused Person will be notified of the intended action. If the recommended enforcement action involves

more than a verbal warning (i.e., temporary or permanent suspension or expulsion from an ACWA Event(s)) and unless the person alleged to have violated this Policy agrees to the recommended enforcement action, the Board of Directors will consider the matter in closed session at the next scheduled Board meeting. Board members will be provided with the recommended enforcement action and investigation summary as part of the closed session materials. At the meeting, during closed session, the accused person will have the opportunity to present to the Board reasons why the accused person believes they should not be subjected to the intended disciplinary action. The accused person is not entitled to call witnesses, but may present documentary evidence, to be included in the closed session materials, to the Board in support of their position. The Board will determine the appropriate disciplinary action, if any. If the person alleged to have violated this Policy agrees to the recommended enforcement action, the agreed disciplinary action shall be imposed.

References:

Board agenda item V.A.3. on 2/3/2023; Board agenda item VI.A.1. on 11/17/2023.

See Administrative Procedure: To be determined.

Revision History:

Revision Date	Description of Changes	Requested By
2/3/2023	Initial Release	ACWA Staff
11/17/2023	Revised to expand coverage and enforcement language.	Board & Code of Conduct Task Force
11/21/2025	Revised policy to streamline future implementation and enforcement based on staff's review of policy since its initial approval in November 2023.	Required by Board's action when initially approved on 11/17/2023