

Temple Beth El Ethics Code

Adopted – June 28, 2023

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As a sacred community, we strive at all times to exemplify the interrelated values of holiness (*kedusha*), compassion (*rachamim*), justice (*tzedek*), decency and respect (*derech eretz*), kindness (*Hesed*), and honesty and integrity (*yosher*). The following code of ethics is built upon these values.

Temple Beth El has adopted an Ethics code and provides members of its community with a confidential avenue for addressing alleged breaches of that code. The synagogue is committed to promptly investigating any reported violations and taking appropriate steps to resolve the complaint. The following document codifies these ethical standards and delineates how allegations of unethical behavior based on the Ethics Code will be addressed. Certain types of complaints may require immediate reporting to law enforcement, depending on the nature of the allegations.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

SECTION A: PERSONAL INTERACTIONS

- 1) We welcome all who wish to engage with our sacred community without regard to religious background or degree of observance, age, ability, ancestry, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, marital or economic status. We strive to make all who participate in our community feel a sense of belonging with the expectation that their ideas can be openly, honestly, and appropriately stated and received with respect.
- 2) We conduct ourselves and treat others with respect, dignity, fairness, compassion, common courtesy, and good manners.
- 3) We refrain from derogatory speech, gossip, and speculation about others' personal situations. We recognize it is OK to criticize an idea, but it is not OK to criticize the person suggesting the idea.
- 4) We maintain appropriate personal confidences and do not disclose privileged or proprietary information about individuals or synagogue business without explicit permission.
- 5) We exercise good judgment and professionalism in all communications in all formats included spoken or written word or technologic media such as texting, email, or social media. We recognize we are only human and will make mistakes. And when those mistakes happen, we are quick to say: "I am sorry" and offer apology.
- 6) We recognize the need to uphold commitments made to the synagogue. If circumstances change in a way as to make these commitments unachievable, we will inform the appropriate parties as soon as possible.
- 7) We recognize that everyone entering our sacred space has the right to feel safe and respected. Therefore, we do not engage in or allow any act or behavior, even if it appears to be consensual, that exploits the vulnerability of another, takes advantage of a power imbalance, compromises one's moral integrity, or creates an intimidating, offensive, abusive or hostile environment, nor do we allow other partners or guests of the synagogue to do so. This includes both personal and electronic interactions.
- 8) If we become aware of a situation where a person's health or safety is endangered, we recognize the obligation to report this situation to the appropriate authorities.

SECTION B: LEADERSHIP

- 1) The term temple leadership is not limited to those who hold an elected or appointed role or committee chair but may include any person who takes on a leadership role on a limited or ad hoc basis.
- 2) All persons in positions of temple leadership agree to abide by all items listed in Section A, on Personal Interactions.
- 3) Those in positions of authority or influence must conduct all synagogue business in a manner that is legally, ethically, morally, and fiscally of the highest order and can bear public scrutiny at all times.
- 4) We make decisions regarding synagogue business based solely on the best interests of the synagogue even when they run counter to our own personal needs or desires. We refrain from using our synagogue position for personal advantage or benefit.
- 5) We strive to appropriately balance the need for transparency and accountability with the need to maintain confidentiality as the situation dictates.
- 6) We respect the efforts of others and do not take credit for their work.
- 7) We honestly represent our personal knowledge of issues upon which we will be influencing governance decisions so that the Board can make the most informed decisions with the best opportunity for successful outcome.
- 8) We strive to avoid conflicts of interest and any appearance of conflicts of interest or impropriety. We recognize that there are circumstances when such conflicts cannot be completely avoided, in which case they must be managed carefully.

SECTION C: PROCESSING A COMPLAINT

Once a complaint has been submitted, it will be forwarded to the Ethics Committee for investigation. The Committee will make every effort to maintain confidentiality to the greatest extent possible without compromising its investigation. The Board is also committed to making sure that no person who, in good faith, reports a potential Ethics violation or assists in the investigation of such shall suffer retaliation, harassment, or adverse employment consequences.

Composition of Committee: The Temple Beth El (TBE) Ethics Committee membership will be comprised of **no less than** three (3) TBE congregants', who are considered members "in good standing." The rabbi is an advisory (non-voting) member to this committee.

The current TBE BOD President, or his/her designate, will select the first ethics committee chairperson. When a complaint is filed, the selected chairperson, will then invite up to four additional serving members to the ethics committee. The additional members are selected to serve on a per complaint basis. To maximize congregational inclusiveness, at least one of the serving members will not presently be a member of the current TBE BOD. The Ethics committee must be comprised of not less than three members, and none of them can be mentioned in the complaint.

Role of Committee: The committee will operate as an ad hoc committee. The Committee chair will meet annually and/or as necessary to address concerns/complaints as they arise. The Committee shall investigate all concerns/complaints and submit a report to the Board, as outlined below.

Submitting a Complaint: Any person shall be able to submit a concern/complaint at any time to either the Rabbi, a temple employee, a Board member, or an Ethics Committee member. The concern/complaint must be in writing. If the issue was reported to the Rabbi, an employee, or a Board member, they shall convey the information to the Committee ASAP. If the complaint involves an act or threat of physical violence, or abuse of a minor or incapacitated person, the committee shall inform an appropriate law enforcement agency immediately.

Committee Process for Responding to Complaints: The Committee, as soon as possible, shall conduct interviews with all involved parties. That should include at least, the complainant, the subject of the complaint, any witnesses to the alleged inappropriate action, and any other people who can provide additional information or subject matter expertise.

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It is a requirement of all temple members to fully cooperate with any requests to assist in an Ethics Committee investigation.

If receiving input from outside experts is expected to incur monetary requirements, the Committee will need to receive prior approval of the Board before proceeding. For any reason during the course of the investigation, the Board may opt to consult outside legal counsel.

If the complaint involves a member of the Ethics Committee, that member shall be recused, and the Committee Chair shall appoint another temple member to fill the vacancy for the purposes of the investigation. If the complaint involves the Committee chair, then the President shall appoint the ad hoc member.

All Committee proceedings including interviews and deliberations shall require the presence of at least 2 Committee members.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Committee shall submit a report to the Board. The report should include the nature of the complaint, a list of the persons interviewed, summaries of those interviews, and the Committee's conclusion as to the veracity of the complaint. The Committee will recommend remedial action; however, the Board will ultimately be responsible for determining remedial action. This may include reporting the event to other governing bodies such as but not limited to the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the American College of Cantors, the Association of Reform Jewish Educators, the National Association of Temple Administrators, or the Union for Reform Judaism.

A final report will be given to both the party who raised the concern/complaint and the party who was the subject of the issue. In this copy, witness names may be redacted in order to preserve confidentiality.

The final report, all Committee notes, and work product will be kept in a locked, confidential file in the temple office.

All involved parties are expected to adhere to the final determination of the Board. Failure to do so may result in further action.

Appeals:

If any involved individuals are unsatisfied with the outcome, they may request reconsideration within 30 days of receiving the results by submitting a written request for reconsideration to the Board. The Board President reviews and addresses all appeals. The Board, at its discretion, may consult legal counsel.

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The Board determines the process for addressing the appeal and will include a review of the findings of the initial complaint. The person appealing may request an additional investigation or other discussions with the parties to the complaint; however, it will be the Board's prerogative whether or not to grant the additional investigations or discussions. A written final decision will be provided to the requesting party within 14 days after the final determination.

Conflict Resolution: *After a written final decision has been presented*, some alleged ethics violations may warrant or benefit from meetings to facilitate the healing of a breach between the involved individuals. The Ethics Committee Chairperson, the Board President, a committee member, or any of the three past Presidents may encourage and/or facilitate such a meeting if those individuals are interested and willing. This may include providing referral information for professional help.

Filing a Complaint:

***TO THE PERSON(S) FILING THE COMPLAINT** - Please be specific when writing about an alleged ethical violation(s). The Ethics Committee Chairperson will address all alleged ethical violations (s) and the matter(s) following the procedures previously outlined in this document.*

All complaints must be filed in writing, in an envelope marked CONFIDENTIAL, and addressed to the name of, or position of the person the complaint is being mailed to:

Mail complaint to:

**Temple Beth El
5150 Peridia Blvd. East
Bradenton, FL 34203**