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SHAMBHALA

Dear Community Members,

We are writing you with information regarding our current Care and Conduct policy and a proposed replacement called the Shambhala Code of Ethics.

When we were seated in October a group of Shambhalian working in collaboration with The Olive Branch presented us with the Code of Ethics. [A webpage developed by the Kalapa Council](#) explains this process. We were asked to ratify the document and replace the existing Care and Conduct policy on Shambhala Day 2019 after a period of training. The working group proposed that the community would offer feedback on the Code of Ethics until Shambhala Day 2020 and at that time the Code could be revised.

After intensive consultation with leaders in the Dorje Kasung, Government, Practice and Education and other areas who would be instrumental in ensuring the success of this change in policy we will honor the request to release the code to the community for a period of feedback. But it is important to state clearly that *we wish to obtain the buy-in of the entire community before ratifying and implementing this change*. We acknowledge that this is different from what The Olive Branch and the Code of Ethics task force has asked of us in that they wanted the code to immediately replace our current policy. The Code of Ethics is a radically different approach to care and conduct and it may indeed, be an approach that the world-wide mandala opts to adopt. However, we feel that input and buy-in from Shambhala centers across the mandala is needed before it is ratified.

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We believe that the entire mandala needs to explore the Code of Ethics in terms of its view, practices, and feasibility. For this to occur we need a method of gathering systematic and far-reaching feedback. Therefore, we ask the Process Team, which we hope will soon be seated, to work with us on this critical task. **As soon as the Process Team takes its seat we will release the Code of Ethics to the community.** At that time we will immediately request that the Process Team join us in developing a method by which to collect and analyze the community response to the new code.

During this period of mandala-wide discussion, **the Care and Conduct policy will remain in place.** To strengthen our current policy we have asked the International Care and Conduct Panel to expand the policy in the following areas:

- 1) Instances of harm by an office holder prior to 2002 (when the policy came into effect) may be reported. This includes accepting cases involving current office holders who were not office holders at the time of the alleged offense.
- 2) We are currently exploring an online reporting structure that will allow for anonymous complaints; we are also exploring ways to disseminate findings of harm responsibly between city centers and land centers.
- 3) The Care and Conduct Panel is seeking to expand and diversify. Whereas positions on the Care and Conduct Panel have previously been done by appointment, the members of the panel have suggested that we could solicit an open call for new panelists. We are particularly in need of members outside of North America; [the call for applications can be found here](#). *(Since the others on the panel are Anglophones, the work itself, which is collaborative, needs to be in English. Applicants should, therefore, be proficient in English.)*
- 4) The appeals process was previously held by one individual. We are changing this process so that appeals are heard by a diverse group of professionally qualified Shambhala members.

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The revised Care and Conduct Policy is available to Shambhala members and [can be found here](#).

As the community considers our next steps forward, we wish to articulate a number of important gaps in our current structure of care. We do not yet have a clear process for adjudicating harm that has occurred among peers; the Care and Conduct policy applies only to office holders. The Care and Conduct panel also does not mediate community disputes, intimate partner violence, or harm related to structural violence such as racism or gender-based harm. As we work to develop stronger structures of care, equity, and justice across the mandala it will also be important to train community leaders about when to call the police, when and how to work with local community advocacy groups outside of Shambhala, and when to report and handle cases through internal reporting structures. We still have a great deal of work ahead of us.

We hope that this communication will be just the beginning of an unfolding dialogue around care and conduct between the Interim Board, the Process Team, and the sangha.

Yours in appreciation,

The Shambhala Interim Board

Veronika Bauer
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This message was delivered in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. Thank you to our translation team!

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