

AFS-USA Bias Response Policy

Introduction:

Welcome to the AFS-USA Bias Response Policy. The mission of AFS-USA is to work toward *a more just and peaceful world by providing international and intercultural learning experiences to individuals, families, schools, and communities.* The work we do to fulfill our mission can only be accomplished by bringing together persons of diverse backgrounds spanning the human experience. In the United States, more so than in many nations, we live across many diverse spectrums: we have peoples of all classes, races, ethnicities, sexualities, cultures, religions, and more. To truly fulfill our mission AFS-USA must strive to be inclusive of and reflective of that American experience throughout our staff, volunteer, participant, host family, sending family, school, and staff networks. As we work to break down barriers between cultures and increase understanding of and appreciation for a wide diversity of perspectives through facilitated intercultural learning experiences, we also have a great responsibility for both celebrating and protecting the individual identities of all constituents. The AFS-USA Bias Response Policy is one way we can better ensure that as an organization committed to diversity and inclusion, we actively address any reported situations or incidents of bias or discrimination against any individuals or groups associated with AFS-USA.

Bias Response Policy:

AFS-USA prohibits all forms of prohibited discrimination and protected-status harassment, and expects that all individuals and volunteers refrain from committing acts of bias and discrimination within AFS-USA's network. In compliance with applicable federal, state, and local legislation, law and AFS-USA's policy, AFS-USA maintains processes to provide redress and remediation to individuals or groups who believe they have been the victims of these acts, including the identification of the Bias Incident Response Team, and takes steps to identify and address any patterns or systemic problems that arise during the review of such complaints. AFS-USA Departments, Area Teams, National Council, Board of Directors, and more may be advised to have additional internal processes addressing these matters and are advised to consult with the Bias Incident Response Team to make sure their processes are consistent with AFS-USA's policy.

Members of the AFS-USA community who have relevant information must cooperate with AFS-USA's investigations into prohibited discrimination, protected-status harassment, or bias activity.

All employees and volunteers have a duty to report any conduct which they believes violates this policy. Further, every employee and volunteer has a duty to cooperate with any investigation regarding allegations of this conducted whether the investigation is being conducted by AFS-USA officials or outside parties retained by AFS-USA for this purpose. Individuals who believe they have experienced conduct that they believe is contrary to AFS-USA's policy or who have concerns about such matters should file their complaints using this form,

with the National Council, to the Director of Human Resources, or any member of the Human Resources and/or Volunteer Development department before the conduct becomes severe or pervasive. This policy applies to all incidents of alleged bias and discrimination, including those that occur off-premises or off-hours, where the alleged offender is a supervisor, coworker, or even a non-employee with whom the employee is involved, directly or indirectly, in a business or potential business relationship. Should the alleged harassment occur at a time other than your normal business hours, your complaint should be filed as early as possible.

If AFS-USA determines that an employee or volunteer has violated this policy, appropriate education will be provided and/or disciplinary action will be taken up to and including an unpaid suspension or the termination of employment and/or volunteer contract.

AFS-USA prohibits any forms of retaliation against any employee for reporting a violation of this policy, filing a complaint under this policy or assisting in complaint investigation.

Any reported allegations of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation will be investigated promptly, thoroughly, and impartially. All complaints will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible. If an employee or volunteer making a complaint does not agree with its resolution, the employee may appeal to AFS-USA Partner Director or National Council.

If you have any questions about this policy, please email facingourbiases@afsusa.org and a member of AFS-USA will respond within 24 hours. If this is a participant emergency, please dial 1-800-876- 2376 Option 9.

How To Utilize The Bias Response Policy

What is bias, what is equity and inclusion?

AFS-USA Definition of Bias:

A behavior or act – verbal, written, or physical – whether intended or not, which targets an individual or group based on perceived or actual characteristics, such as but not limited to: race; ethnic, national, or regional origin; predisposing genetic characteristics; color; alienage, or citizenship status; creed, or religious belief; partnership, or marital status; sexual orientation; sex, gender identity or expression; disability; age; status as a victim of domestic violence; or veteran, education, class, unemployment or socioeconomic status.

AFS-USA Equity and Inclusion Statement:

The mission of AFS-USA is dependent on the quality of our volunteer and participant network. The mission and the preservation and growth of this network requires that AFS-USA strive to extend opportunities to volunteers, participants, and staff regardless of their gender, race, sex, age, creed, sexual orientation, religion, veteran or marital status, national or ethnic origin, political opinion, economic and social standing or disability.

AFS-USA is committed to providing international and intercultural learning experiences for individuals from diverse backgrounds and communities through a global volunteer partnership. We believe an inclusionary and equitable approach enriches our ability to draw from all voices, perspectives and methods. To this end, we are involved in a number of initiatives to make this a reality and further advance our mission.

AFS-USA affirms its commitment to volunteer and staff equity and inclusion as an asset that enriches individuals, organizations, and society. We believe that international education and exchange deepens our appreciation of the complex contributions of human society as well as our understanding of the consequences of social division. We solicit and encourage each individual's contribution to a collaborative organization that welcomes diversity of opinion and positions in its pursuit of shared goals.

As an intercultural exchange organization, we seek in principle and in practice to make AFS-USA increasingly equitable and inclusive, to encourage participation by underrepresented groups at all levels of our organization, and to explore new opportunities to use our inclusiveness as a resource for strengthening our organization and advancing its mission. We pledge to hold ourselves accountable for the pursuit of these goals.

What Happens When I Report an Incident?

When the Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) receives a report, the content is reviewed to determine if factors of race; ethnic, national, or regional origin; color; religious belief; marital status; sexual orientation; sex, gender identity or expression; disability; age; or veteran, education, class, or socioeconomic status are present and if there is evidence or information pointing to possible bias. BIRT also considers the impact of a behavior and spoken or written expression on individuals, groups or the AFS-USA community that may not reach the level of a bias incident, but has an impact or

potential impact on organizational climate. AFS-USA protects an individual's right to free speech and open expression. However, free speech does not justify discrimination, harassment or speech that may be biased or hateful. Lastly, we report information such as general descriptions and location of the incident when relevant, but we do not report personal identifying information.

What Happens Following a Report?

BIRT thoroughly reviews each report and reaches out to both affected person(s) and alleged offenders when known. Resources, support and educational interventions are primary response steps. The response team meets regularly and as needed for emergencies, as per our protocols. BIRT is responsible for initially investigating and adjudicating alleged incidents of bias or hate crimes. The BIRT will readily call upon AFS-USA-USA Human Resources and/or Volunteer Development Departments as needed, including corrective action educational programs to respond to incidents of Bias in accordance with this policy, and the Equity and Inclusion clauses of the Volunteer Agreement and the Employee Handbook. When there is a potential hate crime, the BIRT will involve local law enforcement to investigate in cooperation with AFS-USA-USA.

How is Privacy Protected?

BIRT recognizes the importance of balancing an individual's rights to confidentiality and privacy with the community's need to know how the organization is responding to an incident. All incidents reported to the Bias Incident Response Team shall be handled with privacy and discretion. Any personal information obtained during the response process will be subject to disclosure only to the extent required by law, or as required for the Organization to respond appropriately.

We have the right to determine whether or not we make the reported incident known to other areas of the AFS USA organization.

Confidentiality Vs. Transparency

All information regarding alleged incidents will be kept confidential to the extent possible. Occasionally, an individual may request anonymity or that information regarding a particular incident not be shared publicly. The organization reserves the right, depending on the circumstances, to keep confidential or communicate publicly the incident.