KTC Dallas Ethical Conduct Policy

&

Protocol for Maintaining a Harmonious Environment for Spiritual Practice

I. Policy Statement.
Karma Thegsum Choling Dallas (KTC) is an associated church under the direction and control of Karma Triyana Dharmachakra, Inc. (KTD) and is a community within the Kagyu Lineage of Vajrayana Tibetan Buddhism. Its primary goal is to preserve the authenticity and continuity of the three vehicles of the Buddha’s teachings in the contemporary world in order to benefit all sentient beings, and to make these available to all who are interested. The KTC community is made up of both ordained and lay practitioners.

KTC shares with all traditions of Buddhism the three principal refuges and the commitment to avoid the ten negative actions. All teachers and residents are expected to take these to heart.

The three principal refuges: We take refuge in the three jewels: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and we take refuge in the three roots: the Lama, Yidam, and the Dharma Protectors.

The ten negative actions: We vow to refrain from: 1) killing, 2) taking what is not given, 3) inappropriate sexual conduct, 4) false speech, 5) harsh speech, 6) divisive speech, 7) gossip/idle speech 8) covetousness, 9) ill will, and 10) wrong view.

All teachers and residents who have taken formal vows hold a greater level of commitment and are expected to adhere at all times to the specific vows they have taken. Those who hold any level of formal ordination are expected to keep all the vows of ordination. Lay practitioners who have taken one or more of the five lay (genyen) vows are expected to keep the vow(s) they hold by refraining from: 1) killing, 2) taking what is not given, 3) inappropriate sexual conduct, 4) false speech, and 5) intoxicants of any kind.

II. Prohibited Conduct
A. Abuse of Power and Position

While it is the mutual responsibility of teacher and student to honor the deep trust and respect on which their relationship is founded, the teacher is responsible for recognizing the authority implicit in this role and refraining from any use of this authority to secure special privileges or to inappropriately influence others, or for any other personal ends; and to refrain from any situation or action that might result in harm to a student or the community. This would be considered a breach of the fiduciary relationship between teacher and student given the power differential between the two parties.
Additionally, all ordained teachers are subject to the specific laws of Texas regarding sexual assault:

Chapter 5. (22.011)

Title 5. Offenses against the person.

Chapter 22. Assaultive Offenses.

Sec. 22.011. Sexual assault.

A sexual assault under Subsection (A.1) B. is without the consent of the other person if:

(10) the actor is a clergyman who causes the other person to submit or participate by exploiting the other person's emotional dependency on the clergyman in the clergyman's professional character as spiritual adviser...

C. "Mental health services provider" means an individual, licensed or unlicensed, who performs or purports to perform mental health services, including a:

(E) member of the clergy;

Teachers are also subject to the current By-laws of KTD, with specific attention to all paragraphs in Sections 2 and 3.

B. Breach of Confidentiality

Matters discussed in meetings between teacher and student are to be kept in confidence when confidentiality is requested and agreed to, except as may be required by law. If it is necessary for a teacher to disclose confidential information in the context of a professional legal or psychological consultation, this consultation will also be kept in confidence.

C. Breach of Fiduciary Responsibility

It is incumbent upon any teacher or resident entrusted with handling funds or assets on behalf of practitioners to act solely in the best interest of the community, to serve with accountable and transparent stewardship, and never to use or receive funds or assets that belong to the sangha without prior notification to and authorization from the KTC Board.

D. Sexual Misconduct

Teachers and residents are expected to uphold the highest standards of integrity in all personal relationships. In particular, with regard to teacher-student relationships, responsibility for maintaining appropriate and clear boundaries between teacher and student always rests with the teacher. A sexual or romantic relationship between any student and teacher is prohibited. A teacher who feels unable to uphold this standard will seek guidance and counsel from the KTC Board of Directors and will advise the student to seek independent guidance as well.

If, after receiving guidance, the teacher and student still wish to pursue a romantic or sexual relationship, the teacher must notify the KTC Board of Directors and the teacher-student relationship
must be clearly and consciously ended before a more personal relationship begins. The KTC Board may require disclosure to the community and KTD.

E. Venue for Counseling and Spiritual Guidance

Counseling and one-on-one interviews will be conducted either (1) out of earshot, but in plain view of the community, such as utilizing a visible space at the back of the community meeting hall; (2) or, with a neutral third-party in the room such as an apprentice lama or disinterested third-party witness. At no time is a spiritual teacher, counselor, clergy (resident or visiting), to hold an audience with a member or visitor of KTC in a private room or space on the physical grounds of KTC.

F. Use of Drugs or Alcohol

Violation of the precepts regarding drugs, alcohol and other intoxicants is an ethical violation. Lay teachers and residents who have not taken the vow to refrain from intoxicants are prohibited from using intoxicants while wearing robes or while on the property of KTC. Likewise, teachers and residents are prohibited from being on KTC property while in an intoxicated state, and also from engaging in idle talk with students or visitors about the use of intoxicants while in robes or on the property of KTC.

An exception to this policy will be made to allow the use of alcohol in traditional ritual offerings such as a tsok. In this instance, no alcohol will be consumed or implemented for the purposes of becoming intoxicated.

G. Discrimination or Harassment

KTC’s teachers and residents are expected to treat each other with respect and kindness both physically and verbally. At KTC we will maintain an environment free of discrimination of any kind based on race, color, age, ethnicity or national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

In addition, unwelcome and unauthorized incidents and/or patterns of conduct and/or speech towards any other person or group that are unkind, persistent or pervasive shall be considered harassment.

III. KTC Ethics Complaints

Any complaints or concerns regarding ethical issues in the community can be submitted to the KTC Board Member-At-Large at any time by writing to memberatlarge@ktcdallas.org.

IV. Grievance Procedure

Persons who experience inappropriate conduct from any member of the KTC sangha (or themselves practice such conduct) should be aware that these actions violate the spirit and practice of right
conduct and seriously undermine the harmony of the sangha. In the event of a concern arising in the sangha, either by complaint or perception, the sequence of actions outlined below is recommended.

The purpose of these steps is to facilitate communication and bring the problem to resolution in as honest, simple, and straightforward a manner as possible. We acknowledge that there is no perfect solution to any problem between people, but we will endeavor to help all parties arrive at the best possible solution given the situation. If a person in the sangha has a problem with an individual, teacher, board member, or entity within the sangha, that person should work to resolve the problem by following these steps in order:

1. Meet with the person about whom the concern has arisen, one-on-one and discuss the problem. If this does not bring a resolution, or if either person, using his or her individual judgment, does not wish, or is too uncomfortable, to meet one-on-one, that person should:

2. Ask for one mutually acceptable person from the KTC Board to witness and/or mediate the discussion of the problem. If that does not bring about a resolution, either party may:

3. Submit a written statement describing the problem to memberatlarge@ktcdallas.org with a request that the KTC Board as a whole meet with the parties to assist with or mediate the issue. If the problem still persists, either party may:

4. Request a formal hearing by submitting an issue in writing to memberatlarge@ktcdallas.org. At a hearing, which will be conducted by the KTC Board as a whole, either party may present his or her version of the dispute, call witnesses, and ask questions of the other party and of the witnesses. A hearing will result in a formal recommendation by the KTC Board.

5. After hearing from all parties and reviewing the recommendation of the KTC Board of Directors, the Board may issue a binding decision, or, at their discretion, may consult with an outside mediator or seek advice from other experts and professionals and/or submit a report to KTD.

KTC will endeavor to maintain confidentiality in all informal and formal proceedings. All related documents will be maintained as confidential. All participants will be instructed to maintain confidentiality.

Addendum to KTC Ethics Policy and Protocol for Resolving Concerns

Examples of resolutions that may be reached in an issue resolution:

This is a list of some possible resolutions intended as a partial, not a comprehensive, guideline. As it is not possible to anticipate every kind of situation that might require resolution, other additional types of resolutions may be reached as well.

- Finding of no ethical breach.
• Finding of no ethical breach while acknowledging the existence of a problem that needs resolution by another means.

• Reversal of an administrative decision or action.

• Direct or mediated private apology.

• Apology to the community.

• Follow-up meetings with one or more members of the KTC Board or other party.

• Recommended education, training or intervention program (e.g., therapy or relevant 12-step program).

• Private reprimand.

• Public censure (in which the findings and action of the KTC Board are made public to the sangha).

• Period of probation, with probationary terms set by the KTC Board.

• Suspension or dismissal from a position of responsibility in the sangha.

• Suspension from teaching for a period of time, with stipulation of conditions under which teaching may be recommenced.

• Request that teacher, member or resident leave KTC Dallas.

• Decision limited simply to whether or not an ethical transgression has occurred.

Thank you for reading the KTC Ethics Policy and Protocol. These are the guidelines everyone at KTC is expected to uphold.

Please acknowledge receipt of the policy by signing below.

**Statement of Obligation:**

I, as a teacher, member or resident of Karma Thegsum Choling Dallas, understand and agree to be bound by the above ethics policy and protocol. I understand that I will be asked to renew this commitment periodically.

____________________________________________

Printed name

____________________________________________

Date