



ZEN CENTER OF LOS ANGELES

GRIEVANCE POLICY

The Zen Center's Wisdom Circle receives all complaints about any person at ZCLA or any member of ZCLA that occur at the Zen Center. A complaint may be verbal or in writing. When a complaint is received, the ZCWC Steward will assign someone to clarify the nature of the complaint.

The ZCWC member who vets the initial complaint will listen, help to assess and discern the situation, and explore with the complainant various ways to address it. The ZCWC member may need to speak to the other party(s) involved and consult with other ZCWC members. A good faith effort to respond within fourteen calendar days from the date initially contacted by the complainant will be made.

The ZCLA Statement of Right Conduct sets forth five categories of harmful conduct. These are:

1. Situations involving mundane misconduct that is not criminal in nature.
2. Situations in which conflicts are not being addressed and are affecting others.
3. Situations involving conduct of an egregious or criminal nature.
4. Situations in which a ZCLA Sangha member is in conflict with person(s) of another sangha.

5. Situations in which a change of teacher might result for an individual student.

The steps towards resolution are set forth in the following section.

THE STEPS TOWARDS RESOLUTION

1. The Procedure For Addressing Situations Involving Mundane Misconduct That Is Not Criminal In Nature.

A. STEP ONE: go directly to the person(s) involved.

(i) When a conflict arises, the person(s) who is involved should go directly to the person(s) in question and make every effort to work out the situation. (See Attachment A: Guidelines for Speaking Directly with a Person With Whom One is in Conflict.)

(ii) We encourage people to speak directly to each other. This is the practice of the Three Tenets: (1) not knowing, or being open and not fixing our position; (2) bearing witness by listening and speaking from the heart and being candid, open, and specific; and (3) arriving at a liberating action that serves all parties. It is our experience that many difficulties can be satisfactorily addressed in this way, even if it takes several meetings.

(iii) A good-faith effort should be made by the Sangha member to exercise this step within fourteen calendar days from the date of the incident, and for there to be a response from the other person(s) in question within fourteen calendar days from the date of request.

(iv) We recognize there may be situations where speaking directly to another person is not advisable. When speaking directly is inappropriate to the situation or when attempts at speaking directly are unsuccessful, the ZCWC member will guide the complainant to STEP TWO.

B. STEP TWO: Facilitated meeting.

(i) In a situation where a facilitator is advisable, the ZCWC member will help the parties to the conflict to choose an appropriate facilitator. All parties to the conflict should make every effort to agree to the choice of facilitator and method of facilitation (i.e., council, conversation, mediation, etc.) before proceeding. If the parties cannot come to agreement, the ZCWC will appoint a facilitator.

(ii) We understand that situations arise when a quick solution is not forthcoming. We commit to practicing with these situations by continuing to hold a space for introspection, deep listening, speaking our truth, and working towards action(s) that will serve all parties. Effort should be made by all parties to move forward to a satisfactory dissolution of the problem.

C. STEP THREE: A formal, written grievance.

(i) A formal, written grievance can be made against any person in the Sangha when STEPS ONE and TWO do not work, or when the offense is egregious.

(ii) A formal grievance is written, signed, and dated by the person filing the grievance. The written grievance will include all the pertinent details of the situation(s), what (if any) previous attempts have been made to resolve the issue(s), and why the previous attempts (if any) have not been satisfactory.

(iii) The written grievance is submitted to a member of the ZCWC. The member contacted will immediately forward the written grievance to the other members of the ZCWC. Upon receiving the written grievance, a minimum of three members of the ZCWC will convene and decide what the appropriate next steps should be. The ZCWC will make a good faith effort to respond to the member filing the written grievance within fourteen calendar days from the date it is initially submitted to inform

them of how the written grievance is being addressed. These next steps could include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Further investigation. A narrative timeline documenting incidents is created and verified by all parties involved in the dispute.
 - (b) The person being investigated may be placed on leave from teaching duties, a staff position, or have limited access to the Sangha.
 - (c) An arbitrated meeting between the parties.
 - (d) Referral of the issue to an independent party for investigation and recommendation. Independent parties may include White Plum Asanga teachers or someone with expertise in the subject area of the grievance.
 - (e) When conflicts are referred to an outside investigator, the ZCWC Steward will contact legal counsel for advice and to assess potential liability to the Zen Center.
- (iv) A response in writing will be submitted from the ZCWC within a mutually agreed-upon time limit. The ZCWC should make a good faith effort to respond to a written grievance within sixty calendar days from the date the written grievance is initially received.

2. The Procedure For Addressing Situations In Which Conflicts Are Not Being Addressed.

- A. Any Sangha member may step forward to bring to the attention of the ZCWC any issues or conflicts ongoing in the community that are not being attended to by those involved. Ongoing unaddressed issues or conflicts can seriously undermine the harmony of the Sangha.
- B. Examples of such conflicts include ongoing acting out emotionally or psychologically unstable behaviors, addictions, the spreading of

gossip or rumors, triangulating, and behaving in ways that are not in alignment with Zen Center practices or policies.

- C. The ZCWC will determine an appropriate response after a thorough investigation of the situation.

3. The Procedure For Addressing Situations Involving Egregious Or Criminal Offenses.

- A. Examples of egregious offenses include malicious gossip, written, verbal or electronic abuse, bullying, and sexual harassment. Examples of criminal actions include theft, physical violence, sexual violence such as rape, threats of violence, stalking, and embezzlement. Crimes will be reported to the appropriate legal authorities.
- B. Anyone who is aware of such conduct should contact a member of the ZCWC and the ZCWC will determine an appropriate response depending on the situation.

4. The Procedure for ZCLA Sangha Member Conflict with A Member of Another Sangha.

Where a problem occurs between a ZCLA Sangha member and a member of another Sangha, the problem-solving process will defer to the policies and practices in place with the Sangha of the person that the complaint is about. The ZCLA Abbot and Teachers Circle will be informed about the situation. The situation shall be discussed with the ZCLA Sangha only where there is a bona fide need to know.

5. The Procedure for Change of Teacher for an Individual Student.

For Senior Students (shuso or head trainee) or Ordained Priests (tokudo), if the parties deem it necessary and/or desirable, the procedure for changing to a teacher in another Sangha or Lineage as outlined by the White Plum

Asanga (See Attachment: Procedure for Changing Teachers Within the White Plum Sangha) will be followed.

This Grievance Policy has been adopted by the Abbot, Board of Directors, and Sangha on November 4, 2012.

(This statement was first issued as part of the ZCLA Statement of Right Conduct in 2011.)

ATTACHMENT. Procedure for Changing Teachers Within the White Plum Sangha

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PROCEDURE FOR CHANGING TEACHERS WITHIN THE WHITE PLUM SANGHA

Policy of the White Plum Asanga, Inc.

Recommended procedure for handling situations where senior students change teachers within the White Plum.

When a senior student (Shuso or above), or an ordained priest, makes a request to change teachers within the White Plum, the first and simplest procedure is for the teachers involved to speak with each other. Ideally, the first teacher would advise the second of any perceived difficulties in the student's training, state what needs to be done to appropriately transition the relationship (if this is still outstanding) and give his or her blessing.

Ideally, the departing student would take an honorable leave from the first teacher by requesting such a leave and also performing any leave-taking ritual established by the teacher or Center. Each teacher / Center can establish its own leave-taking procedures. The new teacher will consider his or her own terms for accepting the new student for a trial period. It would be helpful for the student to have timelines and guidelines for the transition and for establishing a relationship with the new teacher and sangha.

Some thought should be given as to how the student is integrated or presented to the new sangha as well as to how the student is spoken of by the former teacher to the sangha they are leaving. The practice of right speech is particularly important at such times on the part of the teachers, the student and the members of both sanghas.

If there is some ill-will or difficulty between the student and the first teacher, efforts can be made to resolve it through the use of a facilitator, and if that is not possible, some form of forgiveness practice may be helpful. Moreover, teachers are encouraged to involve their senior disciples, if any, to help work through the issues.

It is recommended that the first teacher be included, and invited to empowerment services conducted by the second teacher. Both the first and second teacher involved are encouraged to work together for the student's benefit.

NB: This recommendation is intended for senior students, and for permanent changes of status, not for those who travel, explore, and follow the peripatetic life-style of ancient monks or contemporary transients.

Adopted by the White Plum Asanga 2010.

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