



GRIEVANCE/CONCERN POLICY

GENERAL PRINCIPALS:

Milarepa Center strives to prevent grievances and/or concerns from arising in the first place by creating a positive and inclusive environment. Milarepa Center and all those who offer service, stay with us, or come to programs are asked to follow the 5 lay precepts in order to help create this environment. Should a grievance and/or concern arise, we ask that you start by bringing your understanding of Dharma into reflection, considering bodhicitta and karma. Additionally, reading advice from Lama Zopa Rinpoche may be helpful. Milarepa Center practices an open-door policy and all are encouraged, first, to openly speak with the center director to see if a resolution can be found. The following policy applies to all those (including sangha members), who visit, live, or work at Milarepa Center.

Parties involved should first:

- Take time to clearly explain the problem from your side directly to the person and allow the person to have their turn to respond. This can often result in a harmonious resolution to the problem. This is the preferred first option.
- Avoid discussing the problem with other members of the community, including volunteers. This can be construed as gossip and slander and often only escalates the problem. People who become involved as “listeners” should encourage the aggrieved to follow the steps outlined above. These steps begin with discussing the problem with the person who is the source of the problem, rather than discussing it with others.
- Settle your mind before trying to discuss the problem with the other party and develop a good motivation for the discussion.
- Initiate any discussion in an appropriate setting. It will usually be inappropriate to have this conversation in a public part of the center or in the presence of other people whose minds may be negatively impacted by the discussion.
- Focus on the problem itself, rather than the person, in order to understand the causes and then look for solutions. Aim for long-term solutions that will reduce the chance of the problem recurring, rather than temporary solutions or merely trying to smooth the problem over.
- People who have a grievance but have not followed these procedures cannot expect to have it resolved formally and should be careful to avoid causing disharmony through their speech or actions.
- No center staff or volunteer will be retaliated against in any way for reporting in good faith any allegations of misconduct. Such retaliation in and of itself may lead to disciplinary action.

If an individual's attempts to resolve the grievance on their own are not successful:

If the concerned individual feels unable to communicate directly with the person concerned or has tried this and failed to solve the problem, the next step is to ask for assistance, as soon as possible, from the grievance steward that has been appointed by the Milarepa Board of Directors; time is of the essence, ideally within two weeks of the initial problem. From this point forward, the issue will be put in writing, with as much documentation and information as possible from all parties involved including witnesses, with all statements to the events initialed by the person writing them.

Based on equanimity, compassion and an understanding of cause and effect, the following steps will be taken by the Grievance Steward/Committee to resolve grievances that arise:

1. Identify the nature of the issue and first encourage the concerned individual to discuss the issue directly with the person concerned (if appropriate) as soon as possible.
2. If step #1 is unsuccessful, the Grievance Steward will then meet with each person involved in the dispute separately at first, in order to give each party a chance to air the grievance and speak openly and frankly about the issue. The Steward will then encourage the disputants to arrive at a resolution to the conflict themselves while working with them to empower them to come to a resolution that would be suitable and will work for both parties.

If the above process still does not end in a resolution, the following more formal process will begin:

If a member of any team involved in resolving the conflict is one of the parties involved in the grievance, they will not be involved in resolution discussion at this level.

1. The issue will be brought before Milarepa Center's full Board of Directors and/or management committee, where a team approach may be more effective.
2. If a resolution cannot be reached there the issue will be brought to the regional and/or national grievance committee. If there is no national or region grievance committee in place, an outside professional mediator and/or arbitrator may be brought in to try to reach a resolution.

The Grievance Steward Shall:

Identify the nature of the Issue
Work with all parties to seek resolution
Identify barriers to that resolution
Create a chronology of events
Submit grievance form to Management Team either with or without resolution
Keep complainants informed as to the process
Record on grievance record whether or not grievance procedure was successful

Milarepa Center Grievance Steward(s) shall consist of:

Center Director, Dawn Holtz – director@milarepacenter.org
Board member, Debra Thornburg – bod.dpp@milarepacenter.org