

Readercon Procedures for Addressing Reported Violations of the Code of Conduct

These procedures are in effect as of 5/10/2023. Readercon's Safety Committee (safecom) and Conference Committee (concom) will annually review these procedures and amend them as needed. "We" and "Readercon" refer to the members of Readercon's committees and corporation.

Who receives reports?

Initial reports can be made to any concom member (identified by a red badge stripe) or directly to the reports number (617-544-0966). A report can also be made to the Info Desk or to Consuite staff. If the staffer who receives the report is not a concom member, they should immediately report it to a concom member; if a concom member is not in the immediate vicinity, the staffer should ask the person making the report to either wait for a concom member to arrive, accompany the staffer while he/she/they find a concom member, or obtain contact information so that the concom member can reach out to them.

How do we handle initial reports made at the conference?

If the **initial report is made directly to a concom member**, the concom member will:

1. Ask whether the person making the report needs medical care, and call 911 if they do. We cannot force medical care on anyone unless it's an emergency, but some emergencies are not immediately visible to laypeople.
2. Ask the person what can be done to help them feel safe in the moment. If appropriate, offer water.
3. Ask the person to relocate to a designated quiet space or to a quiet space of the person's choosing (such as their hotel room or a friend's room).
4. Invite the person to call a partner, friend, or other supporter, if they haven't already.
5. Tell the person that the concom member is going to make a call that will summon two responders to assist them: a Listener and a Procedures Person.
6. Call the reports number (see # above).
7. Wait with the person until both of the responders arrive.
8. When the responders arrive, the Procedures Person will ask whether the person making the report would rather the concom member stay or leave, and abide by those wishes.

If the **initial report is made through the reports number** (see # above), the call will reach the responders directly. The responders will begin with the above steps 1-4 over the phone and remain on the phone with the individual until they are all in the same space.

What happens when the responders meet the person making the report?

The two responders will:

1. Identify themselves and their roles (Listener and Procedures Person)
2. Make certain that the person making the report is comfortable with both individuals handling the report and vice versa. If there are concerns, summon alternates.

The Listener will:

1. Confirm that the person making the report has been offered any appropriate medical care or other urgent care, and help them get anything they still need. All other actions will be delayed until the person's immediate needs are met.
2. Explain that the Listener's job is to listen to, support, and advocate for the person making the report.
3. State that there will be no reprisals from Readercon for making or not making a report.
4. State that the responders may disclose the name of the person making the report or the nature of the report to the safecom, involved members of the concom, and any witnesses who are asked to provide information to Readercon regarding the report. In addition, if there is no way to take action regarding the report without revealing the person's name to the subject of the report, and if Readercon's Safety Chair(s) decide that taking action is necessary for the safety of conference attendees, the name of the person making the report may be disclosed to the subject of the report. Aside from these limitations, Readercon will protect the person's confidentiality
5. State that he/she/they are available to help the person making the report if they would like support with actions such as:
 - Involving hotel security and/or the police.
 - Calling the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC) hotline (800-841-8371).
 - Seeking medical treatment by calling 911 or going to a hospital.

The Procedures Person will:

1. Explain that the Procedures Person's job is to handle practical matters so the Listener can provide support without distraction.
2. Provide printed copies of Readercon's [Code of Conduct](#) and these procedures for handling reported Code of Conduct violations (which can always be found at readercon.org/procedures).
3. State that we only handle reports pertaining to Code of Conduct violations.
4. State that if the Procedures Person feels that the subject of the report poses an active danger to self or con-goers, they will need to take action.
5. Outline the following possible immediate actions, subject to ratification by the Safety Chair(s) or their designated alternate:
 - Summoning witnesses to obtain more information about what occurred.
 - Banning the subject of the report from the conference currently taking place.
 - Telling the subject of the report they are required to modify their behavior (e.g. stop doing a problematic thing, avoid a person or people).
 - Involving hotel security.
 - Involving local law enforcement.

6. State that after the conference, the Safety Chair(s) will convene a working group of 4-6 people that will include both of the responders present. That group will be responsible for determining whether to take any long-term action.
7. State that if action is going to be taken, the Procedures Person will have to disclose the identity of the person making the report, and provide a summary of the report, to the subject of the report. If this disclosure is made, we will instruct the subject of the report not to approach the person who has made the report.
8. If there is a safety concern about risk of retaliation, we can encourage the person who made the report to petition for an emergency order of protection (AKA restraining order). They can call BARCC or the courthouse for more information.

If, after these statements, the person wishes to continue with their report, the two responders will listen to the report with the Procedures Person taking notes. Both responders will follow **SEEK** guidelines:

1. **Safety:** Respond to immediate needs.
2. **Empowerment:** Respect the person's autonomy. Trust that the person is the expert on themselves.
3. **Empathy:** Actively listen without judgment. Provide emotional support.
4. **Knowledge:** Offer information about processes and resources without pushing any particular option.

What happens immediately after the initial report is made?

The Listener will:

1. Offer to let the person making the report stay in the quiet space for as long as they would like.
2. Ask the person if they would like to summon a supportive person (if they haven't already).
3. Ask the person for their phone number and email address.
4. Provide the Listener's own contact information, explain that they are welcome to call for support during the conference.
5. Remind the person making the report that at any point during the conference, they can call the listener or the BARCC hotline for help and support.

What will happen next if the person making the report is a witness?

If the person making the report witnessed the incident, but was not targeted or otherwise directly affected by it:

1. The Procedures Person should attempt to contact the person or people who were targeted or otherwise directly affected (asking the person making the report for help, if appropriate).
2. Once the person or people who were targeted or otherwise directly affected are contacted, the two responders should start these procedures from the top for each person, calling on alternates if there are more people involved than one Listener can support.

If the person making the report can identify other witness(es) to the incident:

1. The Procedures Person will attempt to contact them. It is up to the Procedures Person's discretion how many contact attempts will be made and how long to wait before moving on without that witness's contribution.
2. The Procedures Person will inform the witness(es) of the limitations of confidentiality, e.g., that their names and the information they provide will only be released to the safecom and involved members of the concom.
3. Both responders will interview any reachable witnesses in a designated quiet space. It is important that responders state this verbatim: "Someone has made a report about [person]'s behavior at [place and time]. I understand that you may have more information about this?" The person who made the report should not be present for these interviews. If it is necessary for the Listener to stay with the person who made the report, the interviews can be conducted by the Procedures Person alone.
4. The Procedures Person will ask the witnesses for contact information and ask whether they wish to be informed of Readercon's actions in connection with this report.

What happens after any witnesses have been interviewed?

The Procedures Person will summon a Safety Chair(s) or designated alternate and provide them with complete notes about the report and any witness interviews.

If the Procedures Person and the Safety Chair(s) or designated alternate believe that the subject of the report may pose an immediate threat to self or con-goers, they will:

1. Find the subject of the report and request that they move to a designated quiet space. Invite the person to call a partner, friend, or other supporter if they don't already have someone with them. That person may not interfere with the interview process.
2. Tell the subject of the report that a report has been made, provide a summary of the report, and ask how the incident unfolded.
3. Step aside and privately decide whether immediate action needs to be taken.
4. Inform the subject of the report of their decision, and enforce it.
5. Inform the conference chair(s) of the decision, as well as anyone else who needs to know (e.g. Registration if membership is being revoked; hotel security if someone is being asked to leave the premises and not come back).
6. Inform the Listener of the decision; the Listener will then inform the person who made the report and any witnesses who asked to be kept informed.

What takes place after the conference?

Everyone who contacted the safecom with concerns during the conference will be contacted after the event ends for a follow-up. The follow-up will be made by the Listener, if a formal report was taken, or by a safecom member who spoke with the person offering concerns, if a formal report was not taken. The purpose of the follow-up is to confirm that the safecom has an accurate understanding of the concerns raised and the action desired.

The Safety Chair(s) will assemble a working group of 4-6 representatives, including the Listener and Procedures Person who responded to the original incident, as well as members of the safecom, concom, officers, and board. The group will then review the incident. This review is not intended to revisit the fundamental questions of what happened and whose version of events is more credible because those determinations were already made based on first-hand observations at the time of the incident. It is simply to assist the group in making their determination regarding long-term actions, if any.

The group will:

1. Read the original notes taken by the Procedures Person.
2. Interview the responders and any other conference personnel who were involved in handling the original report.
3. Contact the person making the report, any (other) witnesses, and the subject of the report for more information as necessary.
4. Determine whether long-term actions are necessary. These may include:
 - Banning the subject of the report from the conference for one or more years, or permanently.
 - Requiring the subject of the report to change their behavior for one or more years, or permanently.
 - Instructing the safecom and concom to review and possibly amend parts of the Code of Conduct, Safety Policy, Accessibility Policy, or this set of procedures to handle previously unanticipated situations.
 - Making a public statement regarding Readercon's actions during or after the conference. If Readercon makes a public statement regarding actions taken in response to a report, the statement must safeguard confidentiality as much as possible.
5. Draft a statement on the group's decision. Simultaneously email the statement to the individual who filed the report, any witnesses who asked for updates, the concom, safecom, and Board (using BCC to obscure individual addresses). If the statement recommends that action be taken regarding an individual, the statement must also be sent to that individual. The email will request comments from all recipients, with a deadline of two weeks from the date that the statement is sent.
6. Provide the complete report, including any comments received during the two week period, along with recommendations for action, to the safecom.

The safecom and the non-committee members of the working group will determine a final course of action (if any) by consensus.

If long-term actions are required, the Safety Chair(s) will bring the decision to the board for ratification. (Board ratification is needed for all long-term action, since that is handled at the corporate level rather than the conference-year level.)

The concom, conchair(s), board president, or other Readercon representative or entity will take the actions determined by the safecom. If this includes a public statement, the Safety Chair(s) or

their designated representative will immediately inform all parties involved in the report about the statement, and will provide them with links to the statement on the Readercon website and/or any relevant posts to social media.

How do we handle reports made after the conference?

Reports should be made to safety@readercon.org. The Safety Chair(s) will approximate the at-con procedures as closely as possible, beginning with assigning two responders - a Listener and a Procedures Person - to read the emailed report and determine whether and how to investigate the incident. After these responders provide the results of the investigation to the Safety Chair(s), the chair(s) will convene a working group, which will proceed as described above.

If multiple reports (related or unrelated) are made immediately following the conference, the Safety Chair(s) may prioritize some investigations over others in order to address the most urgent matters first and distribute the workload among the safecom members and working group volunteers. However, no report should be permitted to linger longer than absolutely necessary.

What do we feel is an appropriate response to a particular type of incident?

This overview is not definitive; each individual situation will have nuances that cannot be captured in a one-size-fits-all set of procedures.

We will abide by our [Code of Conduct](#), our [Safety Policy](#), and these procedures when handling all reports. Readercon will always offer the person making the report as much support as we can, and will treat them and their report with respect (including safeguarding confidentiality). Our default is to treat all reports as if they are true.

Sample actions & reactions

- If someone has been physically or verbally assaulted and wants to call the police, we will assist them in doing so by involving hotel security and waiting with them until the police arrive.
- If we determine to our satisfaction that someone has committed physical or verbal assault, we will revoke their membership and ban them from conference premises.
- If we suspect, but are not certain that someone has committed physical or verbal assault, we will ask hotel security to monitor the individual's behavior closely and alert us if there is any cause for concern. We will also inform the individual that hotel security will be watching them, and remind them that they are required to abide by Readercon's Code of Conduct if they wish to remain at the conference.

- If we determine to our satisfaction that someone has misbehaved in a problematic, but not egregious way, we will remind them that they are required to abide by Readercon's Code of Conduct if they wish to remain at the conference.
- If a person's behavior is acceptable except when they are around a specific other person, and if their misbehavior is not sufficient to justify immediate eviction, we will ask them to keep their distance, as follows:
 - If the subject of the report is in a conference space (including a program room, the bookshop, or an open-door party at the hotel) and they realize that the other person is in that space, the subject of the report must immediately leave the space.
 - The subject of the report may not initiate interaction of any kind (including calls, texts, emails, and passing messages through third parties) with the other person while at the conference.
- If anyone about whom a report has been made declines to be interviewed, we will revoke their conference membership and ban them from conference premises.
- If we believe that an individual poses an active threat (physical or otherwise) to one or more people at the conference, we will revoke their conference membership and ban them from conference premises.