

Our Code of Ethics

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Table of Contents

Mission Statement	3
Our Funding Partners.....	3
Glossary.....	3
What are the Centre’s values?.....	4
Why adopt a Code of Ethics?	5
Repercussions associated with failing to abide by the Code.....	5
Procedure for denouncing a failure to abide by the Code of Ethics	5
Following the procedure/Next steps	5
Who is the Centre?	5
Rights and Responsibilities to ensure healthy community living	6
Administrators’ duties	7
Responsibilities and Rights of the members and volunteers	8
Responsibilities of the Centre’s staff	8
Individual consultations	9
Declaration concerning acknowledgement of values and principles of the Code of Ethics	11

Mission Statement

Since 1978, the Centre offers a space for all women to meet, discuss and take action, with the aim of reducing their isolation. By means of a feminist perspective and in solidarity with all women, the Centre seeks to improve the social, economic and political conditions of women regardless of age, ethno cultural affiliation or sexual orientation.

In addition to this global approach and in keeping with its original mission, the Centre continues to be a forum for open discussion for women of Italian origin.

Our Funding Partners

Centraide of Greater Montreal and the **Ministry of Health and Social Services**, through **PSOC** (Programme de soutien aux organismes communautaires), are the main funders for the Centre's activities. Their funding mainly covers staff wages, services and activities provided, as well as administrative fees.

Glossary

Participant: Any person using and accessing services or participating with the Centre's activities.

Volunteer: Any person who provides volunteered, unpaid help and support at the Centre.

Member: Any person who renews the Centre's membership card annually. They are therefore an official member and retain voting rights at the Centre's Annual General Meeting.

Administrator: Any member of the Board of Directors elected by the Centre's members at the Annual General Meeting.

Board of Directors: The Centre's affairs are administrated by the Board of Directors, which is composed of seven (7) people; one Board member is a paid staff from the Centre, whom does not retain voting rights, and the rest are members, all of whom have voting rights. The Executive Committee is composed of the **President**, the **Vice President**, the **Secretary**, and the **Treasurer**. The other members are administrators.

Staff: Any person who receives financial payment for tasks completed, working full-time or part-time, who occupies a permanent position or during a specific limited period of time.

What are the Centre's values?

- ♥ **Feminism:** A social movement centering the women and their life experiences.
 - **Confidence in every and all women's potential**, valuing their knowledge and experiences;
 - Supporting women in their process of **empowerment**, allowing them to gain more agency over their lives; respecting their path and their choices;
 - Looking for **collective solutions** to their needs and interests.

The Centre's feminism is intersectional. Many women experience multiple oppressions simultaneously based on their gender, age, socio-economic class, race, sexual orientation, etc. which perpetuates social inequalities affecting their life and living conditions.

- ♥ **Solidarity and engagement:** The Centre works with and supports feminist groups and other social and community groups for the improvement and transformation of women's living conditions as well as their communities. Along with its members and participants, the Centre participates actively in different collective actions and is committed to fighting inequality and social injustices.
- ♥ **Social justice:** The Centre advocates for a society that takes care of marginalized communities, adopts fair social and economic policies, and proposes informed collective solutions to social issues based on the needs of the communities affected.
- ♥ **Democracy: Members** are allowed to participate, directly or indirectly, in the **decision-making process** of issues affecting them. They elect individuals to the Board of Directors whom they feel will represent them and will make decisions in their names. The Centre fosters an environment where **all women are to be heard and to be listened to**.
- ♥ **Confidentiality:** The anonymity of all participants is respected. Everything that happens and is said at the Centre does not leave its walls. Information shared through telephone calls and in individual or group conversations is only shared with those who have been authorised access. All personal information collected for research and statistical purposes is done with the individual's consent and is stored in secure and locked files.

All staff, members, participants, volunteers and administrators have a duty to acquaint themselves and respect this Code of Ethics and sign its declaration.

Why adopt a Code of Ethics?

- To respect the Centre's mission and goals in relation to L'R des Centres de femmes du Québec's Political Basis of Unity;
- To identify and to be aware of the values we hold which define and characterize the Centre's feminist mission;
- To identify the rights and responsibilities of all;
- To encourage commitment from the participants towards the Centre and from the Centre towards the participants;
- To ensure a better quality of life within the Centre;
- To foster and promote a positive public image of the Centre, at all times;
- To promote everyone's participation.

Repercussions associated with failing to abide by the Code

Failing to abide by the Code of Ethics can bring about a **warning** and lead to an **expulsion** of the person or persons concerned.

Procedure for denouncing a failure to abide by the Code of Ethics

- In order to denounce a situation in which a person or persons failed to abide by the Code of Ethics, one has to inform a staff member or an administrator of the Board of Directors. This can be done in person, by telephone, by mail or electronic mail. **Denunciations can remain anonymous and confidential at the request of the denouncer.**
- Following this first communication, a meeting will take place to review and evaluate the situation, draft a written account of the incident, the date it took place, and detail the nature of the failure to abide by the Code, the name of the person or the people it involves, and the names of witnesses if there are any. If warranted, a swift intervention will be conducted by a staff or a member of the Board of Directors.
- Staff members and the Board can investigate, hear from both parties, and recommend actions to be taken. Identifying a course of action and decision-making in relation to the application of that course of action are of the responsibility of the staff members and are approved by the Board.

Following the procedure/Next steps

Every person or persons having denounced a situation of failure to abide by the Code of Ethics, shall be informed of any and all decisions taken by the staff members and/or the Board concerning the case.

Who is the Centre?

1. An autonomous and feminist community organization working towards improving all women's lives, their living conditions, and eliminating all forms of discriminations and systems of oppression.
 - In order to fight inequalities and injustices, we recognize that oppressions can be based on age, gender identity and expression, socio-economic class, disability, religion, cultural background, etc.
2. An organization open to all women ages 18 and over.
3. An environment where all women should feel safe, heard, and respected.
4. A space that fosters women's ability to express themselves without infringing on another women's ability to do the same.
5. A non-partisan space that is free of political, religious or spiritual affiliation.

Rights and Responsibilities to ensure healthy community living

6. Respect the Centre's mission, goals, and values as well as this Code of Ethics.
7. Abstain from soliciting money donations, promotion, or selling products and services.
8. Respect staff members, their limited capacities, and the response time for individual consultations.
9. Respect and keep confidential individual's personal information.
10. Respect people's opinions, values, and choices.
11. The right to access resources and participate actively in the Centre's activities, while keeping in mind the Centre's procedures and internal protocols as well as this Code of Ethics.
12. Read and be familiar with the Centre's **Registration Policy**.
13. Respect the Centre's opening and closing hours as well as the start and end of activities or workshops.
14. To be in solidarity with the decisions and positions taken by the Centre.
15. Everyone is responsible for their own personal belongings and for respecting other people's belongings as well.

16. Respect the staff's offices and only enter these spaces if invited.
17. Only use the telephones when necessary because they are tools essential to staff's work.
18. **The use of violence is never justified. We do not tolerate:**
 - All forms of violence (physical, verbal, sexual, psychological, spiritual, religious or economic);
 - Psychological and sexual harassment;
 - Intimidation and bullying;
 - Discriminatory, heinous or harmful speech.

Administrators' duties

For the period of their mandates:

19. They have specific obligations, duties, and legal responsibilities as outlined by the ***Companies Act*** and the ***Quebec Civil Code***.
20. They must respect the Centre's rules and policies.
21. They must commit to promoting the Centre's mission, while also preserving the Centre's integrity and reputation.
22. They must act with care, diligence, and good faith in the interest of the Centre, following its mission, values, and goals.
23. They must act with honesty and loyalty in the Centre's best interests.
24. They must not take unilateral actions and have no decisional power on behalf of the Centre. They must avoid situations of conflict of interests when it comes to their personal beliefs and the mission and interests of the Centre, as outlined in the ***Quebec Civil Code***. The Centre's interests are the priority.
25. They must not use the Centre's property and resources for personal gain.
26. They must commit to ensuring the confidentiality of the content of the Centre's Board meetings.
27. They must ensure the proper management, financial planning, and the implementation of the Centre's activities with efficiency and transparency.

28. They must be available and take part in the Centre's decision-making process. They must commit to being present, punctual, prepared for meetings and respect decisions and commitments made.
29. They shall refrain from publicly expressing their personal opinions and political convictions when speaking on behalf of the Centre. (See 2.5)
30. They must commit by abiding to the Centre's Psychological and Sexual Harassment Policy.

Responsibilities and Rights of the members and volunteers

Responsibilities:

31. Renewing the member's card annually on April 1st and adhering to the Centre's mission, values, and goals.
32. Updating one's personal information if it has changed.
33. Volunteers commit to reading and signing the **Volunteer Policy** and the **Confidentiality Policy**.

Rights:

34. The participation in the Centre's community and democratic life by getting involved in its decision-making bodies (Board of Directors, working committees, Annual or Special General Meeting).
35. The right to vote in Annual and Special General Meetings.
36. Priority access to programs and activities.

Responsibilities of the Centre's staff

37. Preserving personal information concerning participants and other workers' professional and private lives, such as their home address, phone number, and email address. Only specific information can be filed for the operation and administration of the Centre, with the individual's consent.
38. Promoting the Centre's values and mission, as well as defending and advocating for women's rights by favoring popular education to foster a collective awareness, from the individual "I" to the collective "**We**".
39. Respecting the dignity, agency, opinions, and choices of all. All women have the right to a courteous and respectful welcome, free of judgement.

40. Ensuring a respectful environment between all participants during activities.
41. **Preserving the confidentiality** of all interventions involving participants, members, and volunteers. Staff members will only share pertinent information amongst themselves when they require support.
42. Refusing any type of payment (monetary, gifts or other) from participants. Donations can however be directed to the Centre.
43. Staff members avoid putting themselves in situations of conflict between their personal interests and the participants' interests within the Centre.
44. Active solidarity, support, and respect towards the other staff members. All staff must achieve their tasks in the spirit of cooperation. They must demonstrate discretion regarding the contents of staff meetings.
45. **Ensure the Centre's safety and security.** Staff members must not remain alone before or after the Centre's opening hours.
46. The obligation to call the appropriate resources in the event that a participant represents a danger to themselves or others.
47. When contacted outside of the Centre's opening hours, through email, social media, telephone call or text message, staff members are under no obligation to answer or intervene.
48. Respecting the nature and principles of the Centre's Policy on psychological and sexual harassment.

Individual consultations

49. In the context of a service and support providing relationship, participants collaborate with the staff by providing necessary information to issues that are brought up.
50. When a participant does not feel comfortable with a staff member they interact with, they can ask to have another staff member assigned to them. This change will be carried out based on the availability of the other staff members.
51. The Centre holds a strict position on **friendships between staff members and participants.**

The goal is to eliminate any ambiguity relating to interpersonal relationships. It is imperative that services provided be of quality and anonymous, offered in a confidential manner and with no confusion of the roles played by all parties.

We believe that preserving the integrity of the Centre be of the highest priority, based on a clear policy on relationships held and developed by staff members, participants, and volunteers.

To ensure objectivity and impartiality, our policy is that when women seek the services offered by the Centre, if she has any type of family, friendship, or romantic relationship with one of the staff members, the staff member in question must refrain from intervening in the situation, and must refer her to a colleague.

Declaration concerning acknowledgement of values and principles of the Code of Ethics

The administrators, the staff members, the volunteers, and the participants are responsible for reviewing this Code of Ethics and abiding by its principles during the entirety of their mandates, their work contract, their participation or volunteering in the Centre’s activities. They must all sign this declaration which will be kept in a secured file.

**I declare having read the Code of Ethics of the Centre des femmes solidaires et engagées and
I commit to abiding by it.**

Name: _____

Position (if applicable): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____