

Code of Conduct

Introduction

Valley Forge 2017 is dedicated to providing a positive conference experience, free of harassment, for everyone. This policy applies equally to all members present at the convention, including (but not limited to) con staff, vendors, exhibitors, and guests.

We expect everybody to observe all the laws and regulations of this jurisdiction and venue while participating in this convention. That said, “I’m not doing anything illegal” is not a defense against any accusation of conduct contrary to this policy. Just because something is legal does not mean that we will tolerate it.

We are aware that there has never been a system that someone hasn’t tried to hack, be it jurisprudence, firewall security or Dungeons and Dragons. Any attempts to circumvent the intention or spirit of this code of conduct will be considered a violation of this code of conduct.

We do not anticipate that anyone will intentionally violate these guidelines, but we are also prepared to handle whatever situation may arise. We promise to evaluate situations covered by this code to the best of our judgement and resources. Keep in mind that this evaluation is not a jurisprudential procedure. “Beyond a reasonable doubt” does not apply here.

We expect participants to follow these rules at all convention venues and convention-related social activities.

Consent

We believe in creating a space where consent is proactively sought, where everyone feels comfortable asking about others’ boundaries and expressing their own. Consent is not only about potential sexual situations, but also includes other social interactions, such as “Can I

sit with you?” or “Do you mind if I take your photo?”

Silence is not consent. Cosplay is not consent. In order to give consent, a person should be a legal adult and not of impaired judgement. Judgement may be impaired by many things, such as intoxication or other physical states.

Agreement does not need to be verbal; it can also be written or given by a gesture such as a clear nod. Except for on-going consent established between parties beforehand, such as between spouses and close friends, we expect our members to establish clear and explicit consent before involving another party in other social interactions.

Consent can be revoked at any time. “Stop!” is a complete sentence.

If someone does not want to pursue personal interaction with you, do not try to start or continue such interaction.

If someone does not want their likeness to be recorded (still pictures or video), do not start or continue any such recording. We are aware that it is legal to record anyone in a public place regardless of consent. We may not be able to legally compel you to stop recording somebody who does not want to be recorded, but we can absolutely bar you from our event for that reason.

Be polite and ask permission before moving forward with any personal interaction.

No matter what type of interaction you are trying to pursue, stop if the other person or people involved say no, or otherwise withdraws their consent.

Enforcement

Anyone that we ask to stop any behavior in violation of this code is

expected to comply immediately.

We may take action to redress anything designed to, or with the clear impact of, disrupting the event or making the environment hostile for any participants.

In the process of assessing any complaint and deciding how best to address it, we will take into consideration all pertinent factors, including the first-hand account and wishes of the person issuing the complaint.

We have the right to sanction participants violating these rules, at our discretion, up to and including expelling offenders from our convention and any future conventions we may organize. In the case of expulsion, no membership refund should be expected.

If we decide the circumstances warrant it, we will request the involvement of venue staff and/or local law enforcement.

Harassment

Harassing behavior at our event is prohibited. Harassing behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- Disparaging or vulgar comments related to gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race/ethnicity, nationality, age, and religion.

We believe that it is possible to discuss controversial or sensitive issues critically without resorting to disparagement or vulgarity. We are also aware that sometimes this line can be blurry, and different people may have different ideas about what constitutes disparaging or vulgar language. When in doubt, we recommend compassion in word and deed.

- Inappropriate sexual behavior in public spaces
- Deliberate intimidation, stalking, or following

- Unwelcome or inappropriate photography or recording
- Sustained disruption of talks or other events
- Unsolicited physical contact
- Unwelcome sexual attention
- Advocating for, or encouraging, any of the above behavior

Remember that this is not an exhaustive list: other behaviors may be seen as harassing and dealt with by our staff as such. Harassment is mostly about action, not intention, and so it is primarily a person's actions we will consider in evaluating the situation and not whether or not they meant harm.

Reporting

If someone makes you or anyone else feel unsafe or unwelcome, we would encourage you to point out the unwelcome behavior to the person(s) involved. This may solve the problem immediately.

If you feel unsafe or are otherwise unwilling to engage directly with the person(s) involved, please report it to our staff as soon as possible.

Anonymous Report

You can make an anonymous report here [link TBD]. You will be asked for your badge number, but this is only for the purposes of preventing non-convention goers from accessing the reporting method. It will not be used for identification purposes.

Because of the anonymous nature of the report, we can't follow up with you directly, but we will fully investigate it and take whatever action is necessary to prevent a recurrence.

Personal Report

You can report harassing or other unsafe behavior by:

- Calling or messaging this phone number: [Phone number for reporting]. If a live person does not answer immediately, please

leave a message. This phone number will be continuously monitored for the duration of the event.

- Contacting a staff member, identified by STAFF badges, buttons, or shirts. If you can't find a staff member, one should be on duty 24/7 at the convention office, located at [location TBD].

When taking a personal report, our staff will ensure you are safe and cannot be overheard. They may involve other event staff to ensure your report is managed properly. If you would like to be accompanied while giving a report, that's fine too. Once safe, we will ask you to tell us about what happened. This can be upsetting, but we will attempt to handle it with compassion and respect.

You will not be asked to confront anyone and we will not tell anyone who you are if you ask us not to.

Our team will be happy to help you contact hotel/venue security, local law enforcement, local support services, provide escorts, or otherwise assist you to feel safe for the duration of the event.

[We are currently refining our code-of-conduct procedures, but many details are dependent on our finalized organizational structure. Additional details, such as reporting processes and a timeline for responses, will be linked to this document in the future.]

Other policies

Some of our panels or events may be recorded or streamed online for the benefit of our members. We will do our best to inform you when and where this happens at the start of each event. However, if being recorded is a serious concern for you, we encourage you to assume an event is being recorded until you can establish otherwise.

Any weapons or weapon-like objects such as replica swords or Airsoft replica firearms purchased in the dealer's room must remain boxed, bagged, or secured, and be transported immediately from

the dealer's room to your hotel room or vehicle.

You may not, as part of your costume or regular attire, display or carry any weapons or props easily mistaken for weapons except foam, resin, plastic or wooden props which are easily identifiable as toys or props and have no moving or working parts. For our purposes a chain or rope may be defined as a moving part.

Prop bows must be strung with zero tension.

Replica firearms must have a non-removable bright orange tip.

No live steel props are permitted outside of scheduled, specially authorized convention exhibitions such as swordsmanship demonstrations. Live steel is defined as any object functioning as, designed as or resembling a weapon which is made of metal that can take an edge. Live steel is live whether or not it is sharp. Live steel is live whether or not it is sheathed. If you sharpen a wooden or plastic or resin weapon prop so that it has a functional edge or tip, we're going to call that live steel too. Just don't do it.

Notwithstanding the above, we will not prohibit anyone with a valid Pennsylvania concealed carry permit from carrying a firearm in accordance with all relevant laws and statutes, so long as you keep the weapon concealed. If you brandish, flash, or otherwise display your firearm, you will be in violation of this code of conduct. We may ask law enforcement to become involved.

No roughhousing, fighting, or other physically unsafe behavior.

Examples

To help our attendees understand what we expect from them, here are some examples of acceptable and unacceptable behavior in the context of this code of conduct. These are examples that illustrate the principles and spirit of the Code of Conduct, and are not to be taken as prescriptive limits on what is acceptable.

Acceptable: Someone is standing in a doorway, facing away from you and blocking your path. This person does not respond to a verbal “excuse me”. You tap them on the shoulder and ask them to please move.

Unacceptable: Someone is standing in a line in front of you and looks tense. You start giving them a shoulder rub without first establishing consent.

Acceptable: You are at a party and you approach another person. You tell them that they have nice shoes.

Unacceptable: You are at a party and you approach someone. You tell them that they have nice shoes. They tell you that they do not want to talk to you. You continue to compliment their shoes.

Acceptable: You see a friend sitting in front of you at a panel. You make eye contact and smile.

Unacceptable: You are sitting behind a stranger at a panel. They see you, get up, and change seats. For no apparent reason, you also get up and change seats so that you are once again sitting behind them.

Acceptable: You see someone in a Storm cosplay and compliment her on the makeup and hair.

Unacceptable: You see someone in a Storm cosplay and compliment her on the makeup and hair. You then proceed to make lewd and lascivious comments to her.

Acceptable: Walking around with a resin replica of Gandalf’s staff.

Unacceptable: Walking around with a metal replica of Gandalf’s sword *Glamdring*, so named when it was forged by the Noldor smiths for Turgon, King of Gondolin in the First Age, wielded in the *Nirnaeth Arnoediad* and during the Fall of Gondolin, then lost until it was found by Gandalf in the goblin lairs under the Misty Mountains in the 2941st year of the Third Age, known as “*Foe-hammer*” in the tongue of Man, and to the Orcs as “*Beater*”.

Useful Contact Information

[Email address & phone number for convention operations]

[Phone number for hotel security]

If you need non-emergency medical care, counseling or victim services, that information is available at [link] or at our Ops office at [location TBD]

In case of emergency, please dial 911.