

From the President's Desk: Policies to protect and preserve

September 2018—CAP leadership presents a gamut of responsibilities, including the enforcement of policies adopted to protect members and staff. What I am about to discuss is relevant to all organizations and work settings. As you read on, I hope you will reflect on how tolerance for inappropriate behavior could have an impact on your own workplace and what steps you can take to protect yourself, your colleagues, and by extension your patients.



R. Bruce Williams, MD

Within the CAP, a positive work environment encourages productive engagement that enables successful collaboration between our members and professional staff. A healthy workplace enables us to achieve our mission. It drives our success in creating and continually refining tools and guidance that ensure excellence in patient care. CAP committee members and professional staff combine their knowledge and talent to continually improve the quality of practice in our laboratories. The many ways they do so is a reflection of our commitment to excellence and professionalism, which is codified in what we call our CAP PRIDE Principles: Partnership, Respect for Others, Individual Accountability, Direct Communication, and Excellence. The CAP Board of Governors supports the PRIDE Principles and enforces other policies, in part, to maintain a healthy and productive working environment free from sexual or other prohibited harassment.

All of us are exposed to stories in the media about proven and alleged sexual harassment. We can close our eyes to these stories or use them to prompt societal, organizational, and individual reflection and action. The sad reality is that harassment can happen anywhere and can have powerful personal and cultural impact. This is why the CAP Board of Governors is empowered to expel, suspend, or otherwise discipline any member found to be deficient in moral character or professional competence or guilty of professional misconduct. The procedures governing any such action are set forth in the CAP Fair Hearing Plan, which describes the procedures followed in any matter where a member is accused of professional misconduct.

The CAP stands firm in maintaining a professional environment free from sexual or other prohibited harassment, whether related to a CAP member or an employee. This is both policy and principle. As such, the CAP recently found a CAP member guilty of professional misconduct for engaging in sexual harassment in the workplace. Following an investigation and hearing in accordance with the Fair Hearing Plan, the Board of Governors denied membership to the member for a period of no less than 10 years and determined that the individual will be required to reapply for membership prior to any reinstatement. A specific review and vote by the Board will be

required should the individual reapply for membership.

The CAP recognizes the perception that organizations do not always do enough to either prevent harassing and discriminating behaviors or address them in a timely and effective manner. I am writing this column to assure you that the CAP is committed to ensuring that harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated and allegations of such behavior will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. We have robust policies prohibiting harassment, discrimination, and retaliation that pertain to all CAP staff, members, vendors, customers, and anyone else doing business with us. The CAP Board of Governors is vigilant about its duty to review and update those policies and procedures.

The PRIDE Principles and related policies pertain equally to 1) member-staff interactions, which may take place at committee meetings and the like, 2) member-member interactions, 3) staff-staff interactions, and 4) other member conduct that violates professional ethics or CAP policies. They are part of the CAP culture. I think they capture our shared purposes and beliefs about who we are and how everyone, in every context, should be treated.

Anyone who has experienced harassing or discriminatory behavior or witnessed it as a bystander is encouraged to report it to the CAP Board of Governors by writing to me (president@cap.org) or calling CAP headquarters (800-323-4040) and asking to speak with governance services or the office of the CEO. All allegations are handled confidentially to the extent possible and in a timely manner. Any such report will be investigated, and retaliation against anyone who makes a complaint or participates in an investigation is strictly prohibited.

Now that I have shared a bit about the CAP policies and procedures, are you familiar with the program, policies, and procedures where you work? Do you review them with your staff in a routine and focused way? I strongly encourage you to do so. As leaders in our laboratories, we have a responsibility to ensure a respectful, professional environment that is free of harassment and discrimination.

Each of us can help to protect the quality of daily life by holding everyone with whom we interact to the same high standards. The PRIDE Principles are a terrific starting point from which to reflect on and talk about our responsibilities as individuals and as CAP fellows. These are difficult topics, easily avoided. It is important to set aside time to address them.

Dr. Williams welcomes communication from CAP members. Write to him at president@cap.org.