Formal Complaint & Concern Policy

Effective: September 2026

1. Purpose

This policy establishes a clear, consistent, and confidential way for members & volunteers to raise concerns or complaints and sets forth a process by which Protohaven staff and Protohaven's Board of Directors are to respond. It is intended to ensure that serious matters involving policy violations, member conduct, and safety are swiftly brought to the attention of Staff and the Board of Directors and resolved as soon as possible. This policy replaces informal reporting with a single, trackable intake channel.

2. Formal Complaint Definition

A formal complaint is a written, official notification submitted by a Protohaven member alleging a specific breach of our bylaws, code of conduct, standards or policies. Formal complaints are intended to address significant concerns about a person, policy, safety issue or process. This is different from day-to-day feedback or suggestions, which are welcomed through informal conversation or Shop Tech shift reports.

- **Examples of matters that should be raised through this channel**: conflicts with another member, observations of unsafe actions in the shop, interactions in which you have been made to feel unsafe or disrespected, disagreement with a decision that has directly affected you, or observations of a policy that is not being followed consistently.
- Examples of concerns that should be raised through other, more conventional channels: general facility suggestions, general complaints about administrative processes and shop upkeep, and other one-off matters unrelated to policy and safety. These matters may be raised through ShopTech shift notes, Discord, or brought up in person with staff and Directors.

3. How to Submit a Complaint

All formal complaints are to be submitted via the Formal Complaint & Concern Form (see Section 7). This is the only channel that guarantees a tracked, timely response.

Confidential (not anonymous): Members/volunteers may request that Protohaven staff and directors keep their name confidential.

4. What Happens to Informal Complaints

If a concern meriting a formal complaint is raised in a shift report, Discord, or through informal conversation, staff will:

- Thank the volunteer for raising it, and
- Ask them to submit it through the Volunteer Concern Form so it can be formally tracked and addressed.

Protohaven staff and directors will not discuss complaints or share resolutions in Discord or shift reports, even informally. This keeps the process fair, consistent, and confidential for everyone involved, and ensures issues are not being overlooked.

5. Response Timeline

Each submitted complaint shall follow the timeline below, regardless of outcome:

Step	Who	Timeframe
Complaint submitted via form	Member/Volunteer	Any time
Acknowledgment sent	Staff	Within 3 business days of submission
Initial review & routing (staff-only vs. board-level)	Staff + Board Chair	Within 5 business days of submission
Status update to submitter (even if unresolved)	Staff	Within 10 business days of submission
Resolution or documented next steps	Staff + Board (if escalated)	Within 30 days, or a revised timeline is communicated

If a complaint requires longer to resolve (e.g., it involves board action or involvement of external parties), the submitter will be told this explicitly, along with a revised expected timeframe.

6. What Members & Volunteers Are Told vs. What Stays With Staff & Board

Complaint resolution is the responsibility of Protohaven staff and the board of directors. Protohaven staff and directors will make a good-faith effort to be transparent about the status of a complaint investigation and its resolution. However, staff and directors may be bound by confidentiality requirements of other policies. Information sharing will be based on what the organization can share and what it cannot share.

What CAN be shared:

- General status updates on the complaint process.
- The outcome as it directly affects the submitter or the program.
- Any resulting process or policy changes.

What CANNOT be shared:

- Advice of legal counsel or other professionals
- Executive session discussions.
- Confidential details regarding another individual.
- Disciplinary actions taken against another person.

If a volunteer's complaint names another individual, that individual will not be told who filed the complaint unless the submitter explicitly agrees to be identified or revealing the identity becomes necessary for a fair, formal process (e.g., a formal HR-style investigation).

7. The Concern Form

A Google Form titled "Protohaven Formal Complaint & Concern Form" is used as the official intake point. It notifies staff and Board Chair immediately upon submission. Your concern will be reviewed promptly. A Protohaven representative will respond within 72 business hours and follow up on next steps.

8. Roles & Responsibilities

- Designated staff members acknowledge submissions, provide an initial assessment of the complaint, and adjudicate matters within normal operational scope.
- The board liaison (typically the board chair or their designee) is informed of any complaint involving staff conduct, safety, or any matter escalated by staff. The board designee helps ensure timelines are met if Protohaven staff are unavailable.
- Board (as a body): reviews escalated complaints, particularly those involving policy changes, repeated issues, or staff members.

9. Reviewing This Policy

This policy will be reviewed and re-approved annually by the Board of Directors, or sooner if deficiencies become apparent. Members/volunteers may suggest changes to this process itself through the same Protohaven Formal Concern Form.

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