



**Ethics Policy
April 2024**

Policy Owner – FVJC-Emek Shalom Board of Directors

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

The Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation – Emek Shalom (FVJC-Emek Shalom) is a Reform Jewish community that exists to perpetuate the tradition of Judaism in consonance with its principles, and to promote Judaism in all aspects of life. It is the center of Jewish life in the Farmington Valley and beyond, offering a warm, inclusive, intergenerational community for all who seek it.

We come together to engage in worship, Jewish learning, social events, and social action initiatives, all designed to foster a sense of community and connection. We offer a full spectrum of meaningful worship opportunities, life-cycle events, an engaging religious school, and fulfilling social and educational programming, in a warm and welcoming environment. Across generations, we learn together (*Torah*), search for holiness (*Avodah*), and participate in acts of kindness (*G'milut Chasadim*). These pursuits allow us to create wholeness, fulfillment, and a pathway to peace (*Shalom*) for ourselves, our community, Israel, and our world.

We embrace diversity in all its forms and are inspired by the wisdom of Jewish tradition to welcome the stranger and seek to make all who enter our sacred space a part of the FVJC-Emek Shalom family. Our religious school, worship opportunities, and educational and social programs create a community based on inclusiveness where everyone feels truly welcome.

This values-based code of ethics sets forth the principles and expectations for adherence to standards of conduct for our clergy, congregants, staff, visitors, and guests, whether participating in a FVJC-Emek Shalom activity in our building, online, or offsite.



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PART 2: CODE OF ETHICS

a) EXEMPLIFY HOLINESS (*K'DUSHAH*)

FVJC-Emek Shalom welcomes all who wish to engage with our sacred community and welcomes all who wish to be members of our congregation in accordance with our bylaws.

- i. We embrace everyone without regard to religious background, age, ability, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, or socioeconomic status.
- ii. We strive to ensure all who participate in our community feel a sense of belonging with the expectation that their ideas and concerns can be openly and thoughtfully shared and responded to with respect and dignity.

b) INTEGRITY (YOSHER)

FVJC-Emek Shalom expects all who engage in our community to conduct themselves in an honest manner.

- i. We promote open and honest communication that allows for addressing differences constructively.
- ii. We protect the confidentiality of privileged information, either about an individual or the synagogue, and do not disclose it without permission. For example, this includes personnel information, such as employment status, compensation, and performance reviews, as well as personal information about an individual's health, financial status, or family matters.
- iii. We respect the efforts of others, do not take credit for their work, and attribute where appropriate.



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- iv. We recognize, respect, and protect the intellectual property rights of our synagogue and others. We obey copyright laws governing the use and distribution of published materials.
- v. We make decisions regarding synagogue-related matters with transparency, openness and accountability, unless confidentiality dictates otherwise.

c) RESPECT (KAVOD)

FVJC-Emek Shalom values acting with integrity.

- i. We act solely according to the community's best interests when acting on its behalf.
- ii. We refrain from using one's synagogue position for personal advantage or benefit. For example, we refrain from hiring or firing, rewarding or punishing staff or volunteers, and awarding or denying contracts based solely on personal considerations such as favoritism, nepotism, or bribery.
- iii. We conduct financial matters related to synagogue involvement with complete honesty. For example, we refrain from financial impropriety in decisions regarding restricted, committed, and discretionary funds.
- iv. We are bound by sacred obligation to uphold financial agreements made with the synagogue. If a change in personal circumstances occurs, we will inform those charged with managing synagogue finances and make appropriate arrangements.
- v. We conduct employment practices and related decision-making in an ethical and legal manner.



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d) COMPASSION (RACHAMIM)

FVJC-Emek Shalom embraces the fundamental value of performing acts of lovingkindness (g'milut chasadim).

- i. We treat others with respect, dignity, fairness, and compassion.
- ii. We refrain from derogatory speech, negative talk, gossip, and slander, whether in person or on social media.
- iii. We oppose bullying, including any unwanted behavior that degrades, humiliates, or oppresses another. Verbal, physical, or cyberbullying is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.

e) JUSTICE (TZEDEK)

FVJC-Emek Shalom believes everyone entering our sacred space has the right to feel safe and respected, and that we are morally and ethically responsible for one another.

- i. We do not tolerate sexual harassment, including unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, physical, written, or visual conduct of a sexual nature.
- ii. We do not tolerate acts or behaviors that exploit the vulnerability of another, take advantage of a power imbalance, compromise one's moral integrity, or create an intimidating, offensive, abusive, or hostile environment.
- iii. We strive to protect victims of abuse or neglect, including spousal abuse, child abuse, verbal abuse, physical abuse, and other types of domestic violence.



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PART 3: ADDRESSING ALLEGATIONS OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

FVJC-Emek Shalom Ethics Code will be made available to all congregants, staff, and clergy. The Code will also be published on the FVJC-Emek Shalom website. The Code, and Addressing Allegations of Unethical Behavior document, will be updated as appropriate. Examples contained in the Code are not all-inclusive and additional elements may be added as necessary.

The following procedures delineate how allegations of unethical behavior based on this FVJC-Emek Shalom Ethics Code will be addressed:

- i. The synagogue president or Executive Board delegate will appoint a congregant to chair an Ethics Task Force for receiving and addressing allegations of unethical behavior. They will also select a minimum of three committee members based on the following qualities: integrity, leadership, impartiality and ability to handle challenging situations. A member of the FVJC-Emek Shalom Executive Board shall be an ex-officio member of the Ethics Task Force. Members of the Ethics Task Force must recuse themselves if an allegation pertains to them in any way.
- ii. An allegation of unethical behavior, oral or in writing, should be directed to the Ethics Task Force chair, FVJC-Emek Shalom Executive Board, and Rabbi. In order to initiate an Ethics Task Force process, the allegation will be shared with the members of the Task Force. If the allegation pertains to any one of the three, that person or persons must recuse themselves.



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- iii. If an allegation of unethical behavior pertains to a member of a professional organization with its own code of ethics such as the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), American Conference of Cantors (ACC), Association of Reform Jewish Educators (ARJE), National Association for Temple Administration (NATA), or Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), the Ethics Task Force will determine whether to handle the allegation or refer it to the appropriate organization, including consulting with the ethics committee chair of that organization to coordinate the congregations process with that of the professional organization, balancing the needs of the congregation and those of the professional body.
- iv. When an allegation of unethical behavior is made to the Ethics Task Force, the chair will decide with the FVJC-Emek Shalom Executive Board whether they should consult independent legal counsel representing the synagogue.
- v. Where an allegation raises the possibility of the occurrence of harm, or imminent and substantial harm to the person(s) of concern, legal obligations will take precedence and supersede any procedures otherwise delineated by this Code. The FVJC-Emek Shalom Executive Board in consultation with the Ethics Task Force chair and the Rabbi(s), may take such action as deemed appropriate.
- vi. The Ethics Task Force will decide on a process that includes information gathering, deliberation, and resolution based on the particularities of each allegation that is received. All efforts will be made to resolve matters as promptly and with as much compassion as possible.
- vii. Everyone involved in an Ethics Task Force process is expected to comply with all Ethics Task Force requests to assist in information gathering. All members and staff are expected to cooperate with any request to assist in an investigation. Failure to do so is itself an ethical violation and may



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- lead to sanctions as the Ethics Task Force may deem appropriate, subject to review by the Board upon request of the person sanctioned.
- viii. All steps, from an initial allegation of unethical conduct to ultimate resolution, will be documented in writing by the Ethics Task Force.
 - ix. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout any Ethics Task Force process to the extent practicable and consistent with thorough assessment and restoration of the matter to protect all those involved.
 - x. Harassment or taking adverse action affecting the employment or volunteer status of anyone who makes a good-faith report of unethical conduct under the code is itself unethical conduct and violates the Code. Good-faith reporters and participants in any part of the complaint and investigation process should expect to endure no form of retaliation for their participation.
 - xi. Ethics Task Force processes will balance the Jewish principles of judgment (din) and compassion (rachamim). All allegations will be responded to with sensitivity and compassion. Judgment will be withheld pending completion of a full evaluation. During information gathering and/or consideration of a resolution for an ethics violation, the committee shall bear in mind that, as a sacred community, healing and reconciliation are important goals to achieve.

Note: This Code of Ethics Policy was adopted by the FVJC-ES Board of Directors in April 2024.