TACOMA AIKIKAI CODE OF CONDUCT

To prevent and address discrimination, abuse, and sexual misconduct

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I. Introduction

Tacoma Aikikai strives to create a trustworthy and supportive environment where students can learn, create, and prosper in their personal development through training in Aikido. The intent of this Code of Conduct is to support the agency of our community members by defining relevant language and outlining related policies and procedures for identifying, reporting, and addressing sexual misconduct, abuse, or discrimination. Additionally, this Code of Conduct describes disciplinary or accountability measures to be taken in the event of discrimination and abuse. This Code of Conduct emphasizes awareness of positionality and power differentials, stresses the importance of communication, and strives to empower dojo members to challenge discrimination and abuse in all forms.

Objectives

1) Define abuse, harassment, sexual misconduct, discrimination, and other related language.
2) Clarify expectations for ethical behavior for both general members and teachers.
3) Outline specific guidelines for interacting with minors.
4) Explain procedures for filing complaints, investigating claims, and issuing appropriate disciplinary measures in the case of violations.
5) Provide resources to support survivors and empower the dojo community in identifying and challenging sexual misconduct, abuse, or discrimination (Appendix A).

Scope

This policy applies to all members, teachers, and visitors at Tacoma Aikikai at all locations, including the home dojo and events. Reports of misconduct outside of the dojo or dojo-sponsored events may also be considered on a case-by-case basis if they affect the dojo community or the training environment.

II. Ethical Guidelines/Policies

Tacoma Aikikai believes that everyone has the right to practice Aikido free from discrimination, harassment and abuse. As a community, we share a commitment to actively address ableism, classism, ageism, homophobia, racism, sexism, transphobia, and/or xenophobia, and all forms of misconduct as outlined in this document. Dojo members and teachers are expected to act with integrity, treat each other with mutual respect, honor the dignity of others, and hold themselves to the highest level of ethical behavior.

A Note about Dojo Communication

Every dojo member has the right to feel comfortable on and off the mat. To foster a trustworthy and supportive environment, Tacoma Aikikai is committed to open and non-hierarchical communication between community members and across ranks. Dojo community members are welcomed to share feedback about the dojo atmosphere or any behaviors, institutional structures, or activities that affect their comfort in the dojo. Feedback includes comments, suggestions, notification, questions, or concerns, and can take the form of anonymous or signed notes in the dojo donation dropbox or a conversation with other dojo members or an instructor. Community dialogue helps make the dojo a better environment for everyone.

Definitions

We recognize that each individual brings their unique identities, perspectives, and experiences to the dojo, and that it is essential to be aware of how we show up in relationship to each other both on and off the mat. The terms below are foundational to our collective responsibility in creating a harmonious training environment.

- **AGENCY**[5]**.** Agency is the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices and is influenced and/or determined by access to systemic power.

- **CONSENT**[2,4,9]**.** Knowing, voluntary, and clear permission in response to another person's proposition. A person's capacity, or ability, to legally consent is based on a number of factors, such as age, ability, consciousness, vulnerability, and positionality. Consent requires the absence of duress, fear, coercion, fraud, or misrepresentation.

- **HIERARCHY.** Classifying or ranking people by ability or economic, social, or professional standing.
    - Hierarchies in martial arts dojos are rooted in traditional cultural values of respect, discipline, and order. Hierarchies are often evident in how dojo leadership and teaching staff are organized and in how instructors and students interact. Belt and kyu ranking systems also create hierarchies in the dojo. Although hierarchies are not inherently negative and they can encourage self-regulation, honor, progression, and intensive study of techniques, these systems can also create unhealthy competition and power structures. To avoid potential harm, hierarchical systems must be continually examined through a critical lens that recognizes the role power, positionality, and context play in relationships between members of a dojo community.

- **POSITIONALITY**[5]**.** The systemic ways in which social position and access to power shape identities, agency, and access to resources.

- **POWER**[5]**.** The ability to decide, direct, or influence behaviors and outcomes for oneself or others. Power is relational and reinforced by conventions, history, institutions, positions, access to resources, and other societal structures and allows dominant groups greater access and control over resources. Some examples of key social mechanisms through which power operates include wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education.

Prohibited Behavior

The following terms identify behaviors prohibited at Tacoma Aikikai under this Code of Conduct.

- **DISCRIMINATION**[5]**.** The unequal treatment of members of groups based on race, social class, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, physical ability, religion, and other categories. Discrimination happens at the individual, institutional, and societal levels. It is often associated with abuse of power and positionality. Discrimination often takes the form of ableism, classism, homophobia, racism, sexism, ageism, transphobia, and/or xenophobia.

- **BLATANT DISCRIMINATION**[5]**.** Discrimination that consists of unequal and harmful treatment that is typically intentional, quite visible, and easily documented.

- **COVERT DISCRIMINATION**[5]**.** Unequal and harmful treatment that is hidden, purposeful, and often maliciously motivated, stemming from conscious attempts to assure failure.

- **CULTURAL DISCRIMINATION**[5]**.** Within a culture, one group retains the power to define cultural values as well as the form those values take by maintaining dominance over other groups, rewarding those values that correspond to its views, and punishing those values that do not by marginalizing minority or ethnic groups and their cultural heritage. As a result, the characteristics and contributions of the systemically dominant group are valued over those of minority or ethnic groups.

- **INSTITUTIONALIZED DISCRIMINATION**[5]**.** The unjust and discriminatory mistreatment of an individual or group of individuals by organizations such as governments and corporations, financial institutions (e.g., banks, investment firms, money markets),public institutions (e.g., schools, police forces, healthcare centers), and other societal entities.

- **INTERPERSONAL DISCRIMINATION**[5]**.** A person treating another individually unfairly because of the person's group membership due to stereotypic beliefs and evaluations.

- **ORGANIZATIONAL DISCRIMINATION**[5]**.** The manifestation of institutional discrimination in the context of a particular organization.

- **ABUSE**[1,6,13,15]**.** An action that intentionally causes harm or injures another person. This includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual misconduct, or child abuse.

  - **PHYSICAL ABUSE**[1,6,13,15]**.** Acts or incidents which may result in bodily injury. Examples of physical abuse in a dojo include using overly aggressive techniques, not stepping back or stopping when asked by a partner.
    - **ASSAULT**[14]**.** (1) An attempt to inflict bodily injury upon another; (2) an unlawful touching with criminal intent; and (3) putting another in apprehension of harm whether or not the actor actually intends to inflict or is incapable of it.

  - **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**[1,6,13,15]**.** Verbal behavior, harassment, or other actions which may result in emotional or behavioral stress or injury.
    - **HARASSMENT**[7,9,11]**.** Enduring unwelcome conduct that is severe or pervasive enough to create a hostile or offensive environment.

  - **SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**[9,12,13,17,18]**.** Includes all prohibited sex and gender-based discrimination and harassment violations (sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, stalking, fondling, invading another person's sexual privacy, and all other sexual offenses as outlined by WAC 504-26-221). Sexual Misconduct is a type of violence that uses power, control, and/or intimidation to harm another. It occurs in the absence of consent.

    - **SEXUAL ASSAULT**[4,6,9,12,16,17]**.** Sexual contact with another person without, or that exceeds, that person's consent including intentional touching of the

intimate parts of another person's clothed or unclothed body, causing another person to touch their own or another's body without consent of all parties, or penetration, no matter how slight, with anybody part or object.

- **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**[8,9,12]**.** A form of illegal sex discrimination involving unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct that is based on sex and creates an offensive, uncomfortable, and/or unsafe environment.

- **CHILD ABUSE**[1,15]**.** Abuse and neglect as injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by any person under circumstances which indicate that the child's health, welfare, and safety is harmed.

- **BULLYING**[9,11]**.**Negative actions which are intentional, repeated, show a lack of empathy, and a power imbalance. Bullying includes actions such as making threats/intimidation, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Ethical Expectations of Teachers

Teachers at Tacoma Aikikai are expected to uphold the ethical guidelines and Code of Conduct outlined in this document, without exception. Teachers must hold the highest level of awareness of the perceived or actual power imbalance in the teacher-student relationship. Teachers shall not exploit the trust and dependency of students, and they shall be aware of conflicts that may arise due to dual relationships with students that could impair their professional judgment, compromise the integrity of their instruction, and/or use the relationship for their own gain. Teachers shall not make comments, gestures, or physical contact of a sexual nature with their students. Sexual misconduct will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Additionally, teachers at Tacoma Aikikai are expected to recognize their unique responsibility as dojo leaders to uphold the highest standards of ethical behavior. Teachers shall make every effort to lead classes and create a dojo environment free of discrimination; create an inclusive environment, in which diversity is respected; and take action to halt prohibited conduct.

Teachers are not above accountability. If a member feels that a teacher has violated this Code of Conduct or if they feel that a teacher is not sufficiently holding others accountable, they may take action, as outlined in the Grievance Section in this document.

Minors in the Dojo

Behavior with respect to minors deserves special mention due to the legal, emotional, and physical dependency of youth that puts them at higher risk of exploitation and abuse. Abuse, or discrimination, or sexual misconduct towards minors will not be tolerated under any circumstances and will be treated with the highest level of severity, with appropriate action including suspension or expulsion of the dojo member.

The following expectations will be upheld with respect to minors in the dojo and apply to all members, teachers, and visitors at Tacoma Aikikai.

- All Tacoma Aikikai instructors and youth program assistants over the age of 18 will undergo a background check via the Washington State Police WATCH portal at the dojo's expense. This requirement applies to all recognized instructors, senior students

who regularly teach classes, and anyone assisting with the kids' program. Instructors and assistants are expected to provide their full legal name, birthday, and any alias or previous names for the purpose of background checks.

- Any person who witnesses or suspects sexual misconduct, abuse, discrimination and harassment with respect to minors in the dojo must immediately report it to one of the Chief Instructors or the Ethics Committee. Grievances with respect to minors in the dojo will be handled with the utmost seriousness and timeliness, including prompt reporting to parents and/or law enforcement if criminal activity is suspected.
- Bullying is a highly concerning behavior affecting minors and will not be tolerated. Such behavior will be stopped immediately if witnessed by the supervising teacher. Bullying of a child by an adult will be reported to the Ethics Committee for prompt resolution. If repeated bullying of youth by youth is witnessed, parents will be contacted and the youth exhibiting the behavior may be asked to leave the dojo.
- Behavior considered appropriate between adults may not be appropriate in the presence of a minor. Examples of this include using offensive or foul language, discussing sex or adult topics, or being inebriated in the presence of minors. If these behaviors are witnessed, the adult witness(es) are strongly encouraged to address the conduct with the adult(s) exhibiting the behavior(s) so that the behavior(s) cease(s) as soon as practicable, or if this is not an option, promptly report the conduct to the Chief instructor or a Dojo Ethics Committee member. In any case, the behavior should be reported to the Dojo Ethics Committee.
- Inappropriate contact with minors is prohibited. This includes casual touching of a minor without their consent and asking minors to participate in social activities with an adult outside of the dojo.
- An individual adult being alone with an individual or a group of minors in the dressing rooms is prohibited. Multiple adults with multiple minors is allowable if the situation occurs, such as with mixed level classes and seminars, but members are discouraged from using the dressing rooms immediately before and after youth classes when minors are present. (The all-gender bathroom changing room can be used to avoid these situations.)

III. Guidance for Reporting Code of Conduct Complaints and Grievances

Dojo Ethics Committee

Purpose/Role of Ethics Committee

The main purpose of the Ethics Committee is to hear and advise with respect to concerns related to Tacoma Aikikai's Code of Conduct and to follow the procedures outlined therein in the instance of grievances or complaints of abuse, discrimination, or sexual misconduct reported by any member of Tacoma Aikikai. The committee will hear representations by the persons directly involved in grievances, mediate voluntary actions by the parties, and make recommendations for resolving the conflict. The Dojo Ethics Committee understands the sensitive nature of reporting misconduct and respects the emotional and physical safety of survivors. Members of the committee are committed to impartiality and all deliberations on any grievance, whether active or

not, will be held in the strictest of confidence. The Committee consists of one of the dojo Chief Instructors and three to five appointed members of the dojo community.

Ethics Committee Member Duties

- Serve as a trusted dojo liaison for communication, guidance, and grievance reporting.
- Notify the full Ethics Committee in cases of reported or suspected Code of Conduct violations.
- Participate in Grievance Investigation and Resolution Procedures
- Participate in an annual review of the Code of Conduct Policy
- In the absence of grievances, meet twice a year to discuss dojo ethics.
- Take the online Safesport training.
- Support transition of new members to the committee.

The contact information for the current members of the Dojo Ethics Committee can be found posted in the dojo and in the Code of Conduct. Issues, concerns, and grievances may be addressed to any individual on the Ethics Committee, who will then bring the complaint to the full Committee. To reduce real or perceived conflict of interest, when a grievance involves instructional authority, dojo leadership, or a member of the Ethics Committee, that Chief instructor and/or Committee member will recuse themselves from the committee and the investigation, and will not participate in intake, investigation, deliberation, or resolution of that grievance.

Confidentiality

Except in cases of criminal activity or in grievances involving a minor, notifications and reports will be kept confidential and treated with sensitivity at the direction of the notifier or reporter. Confidentiality means that information will be shared only with those who have a need to know in order to investigate and resolve the grievance.

Retaliation

Retaliation of one dojo member against another because of a Code of Conduct grievance or reporting to the Ethics Committee will not be tolerated. If retaliation is reported and substantiated by the Ethics Committee, the perpetrator will be suspended from the dojo until the Grievance Resolution Process is complete.

Reporting Options

If a dojo member feels that they are or may be experiencing abuse, discrimination, or sexual misconduct at any level, they are encouraged to contact the Ethics Committee. Even if a formal report is not submitted, notification of potential Code of Conduct violations helps the dojo leadership act positively. The flow chart below outlines the possible courses of actions initiated after the Ethics Committee is contacted. Except in cases of suspected criminal activities, notifications involving minors, or when patterns of concern develop, the actions taken by the Ethics Committee are at the direction of the notifier or reporter.

The following are examples of actions supported under this Code of Conduct that a person experiencing abuse, discrimination, or sexual misconduct may take:

1. They may speak out about the unwanted behavior at the time.
2. They may speak to the teacher if the incident happens during class time.

3. They may contact Dojo Chief Instructors verbally or in writing.
4. They may contact the Dojo Ethics Committee for guidance, discussion, or to report a grievance – see below flow chart and process notes.

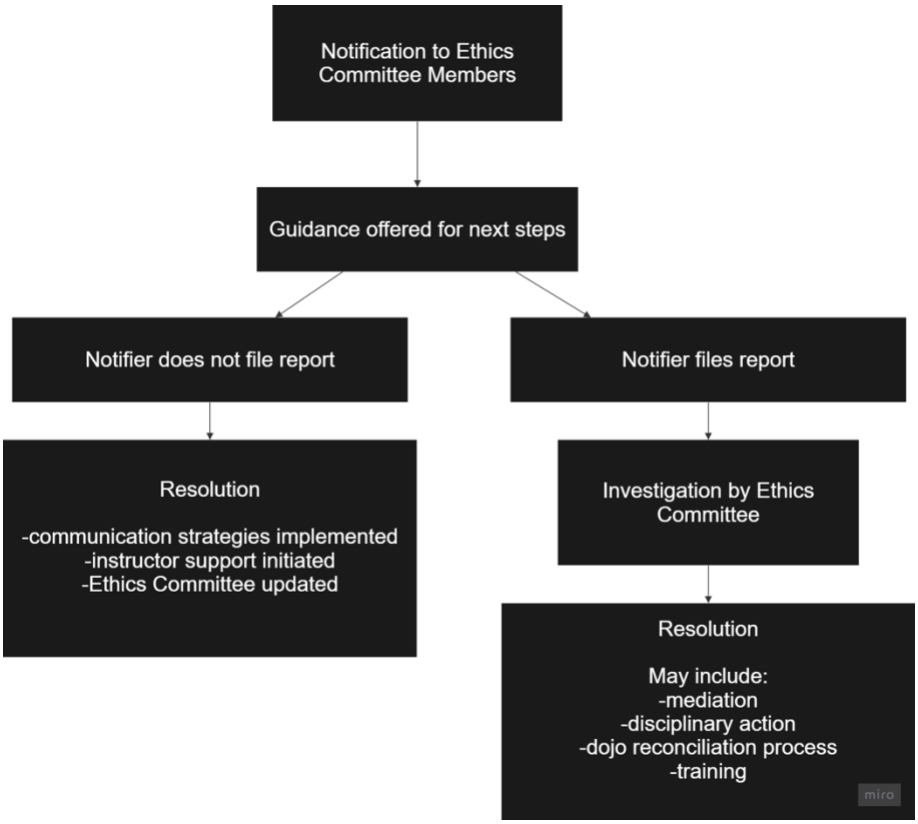

Figure 1. Ethics Committee Notification Flow Chart

Reporting, Investigation and Resolution Process

A Grievance Report can be made verbally or in writing to an individual Ethics Committee member or to the committee as a body. Grievance reports, both verbal and written, will initiate the below-described investigation and resolution processes directed by the Ethics Committee.

A grievance report will collect the following details:

- time and date of the incident(s)
- description of the incident(s)
- people involved in the incident(s)
- names of any witnesses

The Grievance Report form can be found online, in the dojo, and in Appendix C.

The investigation process will:

- discuss the reported grievance separately with both the notifier and the person(s) accused.

- collect relevant details from the reporter (i.e., time, date, and nature of the incident(s) and the names of any witnesses)
- collect information from all other involved parties.
- review the Code of Conduct to evaluate potential misconduct.
- provide regular, weekly or bimonthly updates by email or other preferred communication to the involved parties until the matter is resolved.
- if necessary, provide temporary interventions for both accused and notifier/reporter to continue dojo participation, such as a schedule of separate classes.
- contact and utilize an outside expert, such as a non-profit mediation or conflict resolution service, for advice and consultation if the scope of the issue exceeds the abilities of the Ethics Committee

The resolution process will:

- Provide an investigation and accountability report to all parties, without disclosing confidential witness statements or unnecessary personal information.
- Recommend action based on the results of the investigation. These actions should be commensurate and scalable to the severity of the misconduct and could include the following:
    - Warning issued by dojo leadership.
    - Interventions to allow continued practice for one or more parties.
    - Require training at the accused's expense.
    - Disciplinary action, such as being barred from the dojo for an appropriate period of time, or indefinite expulsion.
    - Mediation/reconciliation process between involved parties
    - Reconciliation process for dojo community

The investigating committee may also decide to elevate a grievance to the level of Birankai North America's Ethics Committee either for guidance or for final investigation and resolution.

The procedures available under this policy do not preempt or supersede any legal procedures or remedies otherwise available to a victim of (sexual) harassment under local, state or federal law.

IV. Code of Conduct Administration

To reinforce this Code of Conduct, Tacoma Aikikai will

- Make this policy available to the entire membership via the website
- Include the policy in welcome materials emailed to new members.
- Require all instructors, including visiting instructors, and assistant instructors to read and sign agreement to adhere to this code of conduct.
- Require all instructors to take Safesport online training.
- Require all instructors in the children's program to pass criminal background checks.
- Post Dojo Ethics Committee purpose and contact information in changing rooms.
- Review and update this policy on a yearly basis.

V. References

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4. Seattle Police Department. (2023). *Understanding sexual assault and consent*. City of Seattle. https://www.seattle.gov/police/need-help/crimes-against-persons/sexual-assault/when-is-it-sexual-assault

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14. Washington State Legislature. (2023). *Assault—Physical Harm (RCW 9A.36)*. https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=9a.36&full=true#9A.36.011

15. Washington State Legislature. (2023). *Definitions (WAC 246-320-010)*. https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=246-320-010#:~:text=(b)%20%22Emotional%20abuse%22,or%20behavioral%20stress%20or%20injury

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17. Washington State Legislature. (2023). *Sexual assault (WAC 478-121-150)*. https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=478-121-150#:~:text=Sexual%20assault.,that%20exceeds%2C%20that%20person%27s%20consent

18. Washington State Legislature. (2023) *Sexual Misconduct (WAC 504-26-221)*. https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=504-26-221#:~:text=Sexual%20misconduct%20is%20defined%20as,Rape%20(except%20statutory%20rape)

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Appendix A. Resources

Resources for people who have experienced sexual assault:

- Rebuilding Hope the Sexual Assault Center for Pierce County
  24-hour crisis, information, and referral line: 800-756-7273
  Phone: 253-474-7273
  Address: 101 East 26th St. Suite 200, Tacoma, WA 98421
  Website: https://sexualassaultcenter.com/
- YWCA of Pierce County https://www.ywcapiercecounty.org/
  24-hour crisis line: 253-383-2593
- Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs https://www.wcsap.org/
- Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Organization https://www.rainn.org/resources
- Washington's Victim Support Services 24-Hour Crisis Hotline: 1-800-346-7555

Local shelters and resources for people experiencing domestic violence

- https://www.domesticshelters.org/help/wa/tacoma
- https://www.ywcapiercecounty.org/emergency-shelter
- https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/neighborhood_and_community_services/domestic_violence

Legal

- City of Tacoma: How to Report a Crime
  https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/police/report_a_crime
- The Crystal Judson Family Justice Center https://www.familyjusticecenter.us/98/Resources
  Speak with an advocate: 253-798-4166
- https://legalvoice.org/

Healthcare

- Planned Parenthood, Tacoma Health Center https://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-center/washington/tacoma/98405/tacoma-health-center-4106-91810?utm_campaign=tacoma-health-center&utm_medium=organic&utm_source=local-listing

Resources for LGBTQ+ community

- Rainbow Center https://www.rainbowcntr.org/
- Oasis Youth Center https://www.lgbtqcenters.org/LGBTCenters/Center/6824/Oasis-Youth-Center
- Trans Lifeline: 877-565-8860, https://translifeline.org/
- Trevor Project: 866-488-7386, https://www.thetrevorproject.org/

Resources addressing racism and microaggressions

- https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/
- https://www.npr.org/2020/06/08/872371063/microaggressions-are-a-big-deal-how-to-talk-them-out-and-when-to-walk-away

Resources for bystander intervention

- https://www.apa.org/pi/health-equity/bystander-intervention
- https://righttobe.org/

Appendix B. Tacoma Aikikai Grievance Report Form

Name of Notifier _____

Date of Notification _____

Verbal or Written Notification?

- **Verbal:**
  If verbal complaint/notification, please provide name of Ethics Committee Member completing report on notifier's behalf: _____
- **Written:**
  If written complaint/notification, please complete below.

Does Notifier Request Anonymity and/or Confidentiality*?

- **Yes**
- **No**

Time and Date of Incident: _____

Location where incident occurred (e.g. at dojo, event outside of dojo)
_____

Description of Incident

_____
_____
_____

Name(s) of Person(s) Involved in Incident

_____
_____

Name(s) of Any Witness(es) to Incident

_____
_____

*Requests for anonymity and/or confidentiality will be respected and provided to the extent practicable and will be evaluated based on the circumstances of the reported incident.

How to file this form: 1.) Email a copy to taethicscommittee@gmail.com2.) Email a copy to any dojo Ethics Committee member (contact info posted in dojo); 3.) Submit a verbal or written report to any dojo Ethics Committee member (contact info posted in dojo); 4.) Submit a hard copy by placing it in the dojo cash box; 5.) Submit using the online google form.

Appendix C. Ethic Committee Member Contact Information

2026 Ethic Committee Members and Contact Information

Charley Emlet
- *caemlet53@gmail.com*

Dean Ikemoto
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Allison Muir
- *allisonbethmuir@gmail.com*

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Ea Murphy
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All Members
- *taethicscommittee@gmail.com*