



**FIRSTMERIDIAN BUSINESS SERVICES LIMITED**

**Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Policy**

*(Approved and adopted by Board on 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2022)*

## **FirstMeridian Business Services Limited Restricted**

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### **1. Introduction:**

This Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy (POSH Policy) of FirstMeridian Business Services Limited (FirstMeridian/Company) is adopted by the Company to ensure that the work environment is conducive to fair, safe and harmonious relations between employees. Discrimination and harassment of any type/form is strictly prohibited. FirstMeridian places high importance in creating a discrimination free workplace and any violation of any form is not tolerated as part of our employee practices.

The Company also ensures that no employee is at disadvantage by the way of gender discrimination. This POSH Policy therefore enunciates the Company's approach to the issue of sexual harassment and the procedure for dealing with any incidence of the same.

### **2. Scope of POSH Policy:**

2.1 **POSH Policy** is applicable to all employees, regardless of their position and place of employment or engagement, including all regular employees, workmen, temporary employees, trainees, full-time consultants, ad hoc employees, daily wage earners, probationers, apprentices, at its workplace or at visit to partner organizations, whether such employees are working for remuneration or on a voluntary basis.

2.2 **POSH Policy** is not restricted to 'FirstMeridian' office premises only, but extends to all employees wherever such employees have occasion to interact with each other, including for example, in vehicles, third party premises, off site meetings, phone calls, parties and social functions and any place where the employees carry out their duties and responsibilities, **including work from home. POSH Policy** will also cover all acts that are not covered under the Policy on Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace i.e., all forms of alleged acts of sexual harassment of men by women or between the same sexes.

### **3. Objective of POSH Policy:**

The Company aims to totally prohibit any form of sexual harassment in the way employees behave with each other. This would also include complaints relating to instances outside of the workplace. This applies equally to all employees of FirstMeridian. Any incident of sexual harassment will be taken extremely serious and compliant of this nature will be immediately investigated and appropriate action will be taken against the offending employee/s. Such action will depend on the nature and seriousness of the offence and will include strict disciplinary action including and up to termination of services.

#### **4. Definition(s):**

**“Complainant”** means, in relation to a Workplace (as hereinafter defined), is a person whether employed or not, who alleges to have been subjected to any act of sexual harassment by the Respondent or has observed or is the recipient of a misconduct (as hereinafter defined).

**“Employee”** means an employee of FirstMeridian and includes all categories of employees of the Organization either working part-time or full time and including but not limited to regular employees, Temporary employees, ad-hoc employees, daily wage earners, probationers, apprentices, Trainees, Full-time consultants, Visiting Consultants; Employee includes but does not limit to Permanent employees; Temporary employees; Trainees; Contract Employees.

**“Employer”** means FirstMeridian Business Services Limited.

**“Grievance”** shall mean any communication by the Employee expressing dissatisfaction about an action or lack of action related to the benefits made available by FirstMeridian or related to the working condition or treatment at the workplace.

**“Internal Complaints Committee” or “ICC”** means a committee constituted by the Employer for the purpose.

**Member/s”** means a Member/s of the Internal Committee.

**“Misconduct”** shall include but not be limited to the following:

- (a) Behaving in a manner of willful insubordination or disobedience;
- (b) Smoking and/or consuming Alcohol in the workplace unless authorized by FirstMeridian;
- (c) Being rude, threatening fellow employee(s), fighting, indecent or disorderly behavior;
- (d) Theft, fraud, dishonesty;
- (e) Possessing any narcotic substances, weapons at the workplace
- (f) Taking bribes;
- (g) Tampering, destroying, and disclosing any confidential information to any unauthorized person;
- (h) Committing a nuisance at the workplace;
- (i) Behaving, acting, talking in an abusive manner; and
- (j) Any form of Sexual Harassment.

**“Respondent”** means an Employee against whom the Complainant has made a complaint of Sexual Harassment or Misconduct.

**“Retaliation”** means any negative employment action against an employee who has filed a complaint or cooperated in any investigation involving a reported case of sexual harassment or misconduct which can include but not be limited to any negative job action, such as demotion, discipline, firing, salary reduction, or job or shift reassignment or discontinuation of employment/engagement.

**“Sexual Harassment”**: A broad definition of sexual harassment consists of any physical or verbal behavior and any form of communication that has unnecessary, improper or unwelcome sexual connotations. Sexual harassment may vary in form depending on circumstances. It may consist of, but not be limited to, any of the following types of sexual harassment:

Verbal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Making sexually colored remarks</li><li>2. Telling sexist and/or smutty jokes causing embarrassment or offense, and the same being carried out after the offender has been advised that they are offensive or embarrassing or, even without such advice, when they are by their nature clearly embarrassing, offensive or vulgar</li><li>3. Unwelcome inquiries or comments about a person’s sex/marital life</li><li>4. Unwelcome sexual flirtation, advances, and propositions</li><li>5. Unwelcome phone calls with sexual overtones causing discomfort, embarrassment, offense or insult to thereceiver</li><li>6. Unsavory remarks about a person’s physical characteristics, dressing, attitude, etc.</li><li>7. Derogatory or degrading remarks or innuendoes directed toward the members of one sex, or one’s sexual orientation or used to describe a person</li><li>8. Using foul language with sexual overtones (either in English or any other language)</li></ol>
Physical	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Physical contact and advances</li><li>2. Surreptitiously looking or prolonged staring at a person, giving rise to gross discomfort to any person</li><li>3. Malicious leering or ogling</li><li>4. Making offensive hand or body gestures</li><li>5. Sexual assault</li><li>6. Malicious and/or unwanted touching or brushing against a person’s body</li></ol>

Psychological	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A demand or request for sexual favors</li> <li>2. Persistent unwanted attention with sexual overtones</li> <li>3. Compelling/insisting on giving lift to/from office even when the person concerned has said NO</li> <li>4. Insisting on extending any form of help to an individual even when the person has said NO</li> <li>5. <b>Quid Pro Quo</b> - Requesting for sexual favors in exchange for employment, promotion, local or foreign travels, favorable working conditions or assignments, a passing grade, the granting of honours or scholarship, or the grant of benefits or payment of a stipend or allowance;</li> <li>6. Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature where the complainant feels violated or offended</li> <li>7. Engaging in sexist/inappropriate conversation with colleagues about another colleague via in person / email / message / WhatsApp / social media platforms</li> </ol>
Visual	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Showing / sharing pornography in person or via email / WhatsApp or any other social media;</li> <li>2. Display of sexually offensive pictures, materials or graffiti in the workstation or via email / WhatsApp / social media platforms;</li> <li>3. Sharing sexist jokes/comments via email/ WhatsApp and any other social media platform causing embarrassment or offence or discomfort</li> </ol>

The following circumstances, among other circumstances, if occurs or is present in relation to or connected with any act or behaviour of sexual harassment, may amount to sexual harassment at the workplace:

- (a) Implied or explicit promise of preferential treatment in the Complainant's employment; or
- (b) Implied or explicit threat of detrimental treatment in the Complainant's employment; or
- (c) Implied or explicit threat about the Complainant's present or future employment status; or
- (d) Interference with the Complainant's work or creating an intimidating or offensive or hostile work environment for the Complainant; or
- (e) Humiliating treatment likely to affect the Complainant's health or safety;

As mentioned above, this is an indicative but not an exhaustive list of possible forms of sexual harassment.

**“Virtual Harassment”** means inappropriate visual, verbal and/or physical sexual harassment. Sexual harassment may involve unwanted virtual interactions during or outside of office hours using any platforms like social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) which will be termed as unwelcome virtual sexual harassment.

Virtual sexual harassment shall mean and include behaviours such as:

- A. Personal/inappropriate comments on a person on a video or audio call or on social media handles;
- B. Inappropriate emojis, memes, images or videos and messages; stalking, through virtual platforms;
- C. Threatening about performance ratings if not engaging in conversations other than work related
- D. Insisting on video calls at odd hours (beyond office hours)
- E. Inappropriate or sexist jokes, sexualized bullying through WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram

**“Workplace”** means and includes the offices of FirstMeridian as well as the premises of other third parties, where the Employees of FirstMeridian are required to perform work or that are visited by the Employees of FirstMeridian arising out of or during the course of employment and includes transportation provided by the Company for undertaking any journey, in connection with the business of the Company.

## **5. Complaints Handling Process**

The company has established the following process to ensure that any incidence of sexual harassment is dealt with appropriately, sensitively and expeditiously.

### **Process for dealing with incidents of sexual harassment:**

- Any employee who experiences sexual harassment can get in touch with any member of the ICC, within sixty days of experiencing sexual harassment. In addition to sharing the incident details with the IC member, the aggrieved employee **MUST** write to [.....@firstmeridian.com](mailto:.....@firstmeridian.com) with details of the incident for prompt and confidential redressal by the ICC within 60 days of the incident. In exceptional circumstances, the ICC Presiding Officer can relax the cap of sixty days as referred above. Contact details are provided in this POSH Policy for convenience and confidential access.
- On receipt of such a complaint, the ICC will immediately arrange to fully investigate all relevant details of the matter and ensure confidentiality of the legal proceedings. The complainant can choose to remain anonymous. It will do so with all possible care, sensitivity and discretion in protecting the sensibilities of the effected employee. The employee/s, who has allegedly committed the offence, would be given all reasonable

opportunities to be heard by the ICC. Principal of natural justice will be followed irrespective of gender bias.

- The result of this investigation will be formally recorded and communicated to the Management along with a recommendation from ICC for appropriate action.
- The ICC will normally complete this process within 30 days after receiving the complaint and make its formal recommendation within 10 days after completing the enquiry process, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- In the case of a multi-locational context, one of the ICC members will travel to the location in question as is required to ascertain the facts based on which the ICC would discuss and assess the complaint in question.
- Necessary action will then be initiated by management based on the recommendation of the ICC based on the circumstances and seriousness of the offence.
- Where the Company is legally advised that any such incident constitutes a criminal offence, the Company will inform the relevant authorities, provide full details and request appropriate action. If the aggrieved employee directly takes any action against the offending employee, either civil or criminal, the ICC, on becoming aware of such action by the aggrieved employee, shall be entitled to, suo moto, start the internal enquiry/investigation and recommend appropriate action.
- The Company will ensure that the career interests of the complainant are not adversely affected by virtue of the individual having drawn attention to such an offence.
- In order to ensure that this important matter is not trivialized, any complaint, which, in the opinion of the ICC, is blatantly false or frivolous or has been motivated by reasons that are clearly unconnected with gender issues, would be viewed very seriously by the Company and appropriate action taken against such malicious complainant/s.
- If the ICC receives an anonymous reference related to sexual harassment, it will draw the attention of the Location Senior Manager or Strategic Business Unit (SBU) Head concerned with the relevant SBU or location. The matter will be fully examined by the concerned senior management and its conclusions and plans for necessary action will be communicated to the Committee.
- SBU Heads and Location Senior Manager at all Company locations will also be expected to be sensitive to any circumstances or behaviour among their colleagues which appear to go against the Company POSG Policy on this matter. In case they become aware of any such incidence, they will immediately inform the head of the ICC and take appropriate action as advised.
- We believe in **No Retaliation** against those employees who have raised concerns of this nature in **Good Faith**, and the issues raised will be investigated with full conviction.
- **Corroborative material** - The complainant may also submit corroborative material with documentary proof to substantiate the complaint. It is hereby clarified that the lack of documentary proof or corroborative material shall not invalidate any complaint of sexual harassment or misconduct.

## **6. Protection against Retaliation**

If an Employee feels that he/she is experiencing any kind of retaliation, victimization or discrimination in the nature of intimidation, pressure to withdraw the complaint or threats for reporting, testifying or otherwise participating in the proceedings, he/she should immediately report the matter by sending an email to the dedicated email address applicable to the Employee and notified by the Employer.

All members of the ICC are mapped to / included in the applicable email id.

FirstMeridian prohibits retaliation against anyone for raising a complaint or helping in addressing the complaint. Any retaliation or reprisals are subject to immediate corrective action, up to and including termination of services. Alleged retaliation or reprisals are subject to the same complaint procedures and disciplinary action as complaints of Sexual Harassment or misconduct.

If so requested in writing, by the Complainant, pending completion of the Inquiry, the ICC may recommend to the Apex Committee to:

- (a) transfer the Complainant or the Respondent to any other Workplace; or
- (b) grant leave up to 3 (three) months to the Complainant; or
- (c) grant such other relief to the Complainant as maybe determined by the Apex Committee, including restraining the Respondent from reporting on the work performance of the Complainant or writing any confidential report and assign the same to another officer.

## **7. Appeals and Alternate Legal Remedies**

An employee who feels that his/her sexual harassment or misconduct complaint or a retaliation complaint did not receive prompt and fair response/resolution, may contact the ICC Presiding Officer and/or HR Head.

## **8. Reporting in Special Cases**

In the event the Complainant is unable to make a complaint on account of the Complainant's physical or mental incapacity or death or any other reason which prevents the Complainant from making a complaint, then the Complainant's legal heir or any other person as mentioned below may make the complaint on the Complainant's behalf under the Policy:

(i) In the event the Complainant is unable to make the complaint on account of the Complainant's physical incapacity, the complaint may be filed by:

- (a) the Complainant's relative or friend;
- (b) the Complainant's co-worker;
- (c) any person who has knowledge of the incident, with the written consent of the Complainant.

(ii) In the event the Complainant is unable to make the complaint on account of the Complainant's mental incapacity, the complaint may be filed by:

- (a) the Complainant's relative or friend;
- (b) a special educator;
- (c) a qualified psychiatrist or psychologist;
- (d) the guardian or authority under whose care the Complainant is receiving treatment or care; or
- (e) any person who has knowledge of the incident jointly with the Complainant's relative or friend, or a special educator or qualified psychiatrist or psychologist, or guardian or authority under whose care the Complainant is receiving treatment or care.

(iii) in the event the Complainant is unable to make the complaint for any other reason, the complaint may be filed by any person who has knowledge of the incident, with the Complainant's written consent.

(iv) in the event of the death of the Complainant, the complaint may be filed by any person who has knowledge of the incident, with the written consent of the Complainant's legal heir.

### **9. Third-Party Harassment**

Where sexual harassment or misconduct occurs as a result of an act or omission by any third party, FirstMeridian will take all necessary steps to assist the affected person in terms of providing support for initiating any preventive or remedial actions.

### **10. Malafide Complaints**

Wrongful allegations, forging or provided misleading documentary proof and publicizing of an incident of sexual harassment or misconduct will be viewed seriously at FirstMeridian. If after inquiry by ICC, it is found that the complaint was raised with malafide intent, FirstMeridian may consider this to be misconduct and appropriate disciplinary action will be initiated against the person found guilty of such malafide complaint. This disciplinary action could include termination of employment with FirstMeridian.

### **11. Confidentiality**

All inquiries, complaints and investigations are treated with sensitivity and utmost confidentiality at all times and any such information pertaining to any complaints of sexual harassment or misconduct and the proceedings and recommendations of ICC shall be revealed strictly on a need-to-know basis.

### **12. Discipline**

Employees who violate the terms of this POSH Policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action if an investigation results in a finding that the terms of this policy have been violated and

the mandatory minimum disciplinary action being a written reprimand which shall be recorded in the profile of such violator. The discipline for very serious or repeated violations may entail termination of employment of such violator.

### **13. Internal Complains Committee (ICC)**

The Company has established an Internal Complains Committee for Sexual Harassment consisting of thirty internal members and one external member. The names of the members of this ICC and their contact details are given below.

1. Presiding Officer: Ms. Dipti Vijaykumar
2. Member: Mr. Raghavendra Srinivas
3. Member: Mr. Anurag Gupta
4. Member: Ms. Jayasmita Deb
5. Member: Ms. Vasundhara Trivedi

#### **External Representative –**

Ms. Anju Sabharwal

Mr. Amitabh Sagar, (CHRO) FirstMeridian, will provide all necessary support to the work of this Committee.

### **14. Modifications and Amendments to this POSH Policy**

This POSH Policy is adopted and comes into effect from 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2022, and will stay in force unless superseded by another similar policy notified by FirstMeridian.

FirstMeridian reserves the right to modify and amend the provisions of this policy, to the extent deemed necessary by FirstMeridian, from time to time. Any change in this Policy shall be approved by the Board of Directors of the Company.

The Board of Directors shall have the right to withdraw and/or amend any part of this Policy or the entire Policy, at any time, as it deems fit, or from time to time, and the decision of the Board in this respect shall be final and binding.

### **15. Other Terms**

If any clarification is required on this POSH Policy, please feel free to contact the ICC. FirstMeridian shall provide all necessary assistance for the purpose of ensuring full, effective and speedy implementation of the terms of this policy.

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