

SYLVIA RIVERA COOPERATIVE HOUSE CONSTITUTION

Revised 9 November 2022, to be effective Winter 2023

PREAMBLE

The idea for this house is inspired by the work of Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson towards Queer liberation and providing a home for Queer young people. Rivera House is a response to the unique challenges we see faced by Queer and trans people of color in the Ann Arbor area trying to find housing and community spaces where we feel we belong. While the house's goal is to create and maintain space for these needs and experiences, Rivera House is open to anyone who would like to live there.

Within this house, you are expected to have an understanding of and respect for the following:

Pronouns

Pronouns are words we use to refer to people without using their name. When you meet someone for the first time, you can ask them their pronouns. Use a person's preferred pronouns, even if the words are unfamiliar to you. If you ever refer to someone with the wrong pronouns on accident, apologize and move on. Don't make a scene with your apology—it can be uncomfortable for the person who was misgendered.

Assumptions

Don't make assumptions about someone's identity. Be aware of your position and any privileges you may have, which could be in regards to your race, your socioeconomic status, your gender identity, your sexual orientation, your religion, your ability, or your age. Think about the ways that other people with different or intersectional identities may be impacted by the things you say. Know that your experience as an LGBTQIA+ BIPOC individual is not necessarily the same as others with similar identities.

Oppressive Behavior

Racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, ableism, fatphobia, ageism, or discrimination on basis of ethnicity, immigration status, or religious, cultural, and/or spiritual beliefs, or any other kind of oppressive behavior is unacceptable and will be challenged. Please do not use slurs that are not yours to use.

Sexual Harassment

There is a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment. This means no unwanted touching, including hugs, so please make sure you have consent before engaging in any physical contact

with someone. This also means no wolf whistling or catcalling, and no inappropriate sexual comments or sexually based jokes, songs, or taunts.

Content Warnings

Give people a heads up if you are going to discuss something that others might find upsetting. Sometimes upsetting things happen and we need to be able to talk about how we deal with them as a community. However, not everyone is able to talk about everything all the time, so let people know if you are going to talk about something potentially upsetting, such as mental illness, sexual assault, or abuse.

Space to Speak

Please be aware that it is sometimes difficult for those belonging to marginalized groups or minority groups to participate in discussions both online and in person. Do not talk over people. Gauge whether or not it is appropriate for you to speak on certain topics, and if not, be open to listening. However, it is not the job of people with marginalized identities to educate you, so please do research on your own time.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will ask everybody to respect the fact that not everybody is “out” everywhere outside of this space, so if you use social media, please do not share any contact information or identifiable information of other people without their explicit consent.

SYLVIA RIVERA HOUSE AGREEMENT FORM

Operating within the Rivera House, there is an expectation that members will come into the house with a basic knowledge and genuine interest in the concepts mentioned above.

Additionally, it is expected that members of the Rivera House will attempt to contribute to their own education about these matters, and will help foster a safe space.

I, [Contact.FirstName()] [Contact.LastName()] have read, understand, and agree to the above information.

ARTICLE I - General

Sec. 1 The name of the group which operates under this constitution is the Sylvia Rivera Cooperative House.

Sec. 2 This house is a member of and abides by the rules of the Inter-Cooperative Council at the University of Michigan.

ARTICLE II - Orientation

Sec. 1 Prospective members must visit the house prior to signing a contract. Virtual tours are offered. They must also attend an orientation before a contract will be offered. If you cannot make orientation in person or online, you must reach out to the presidents to make it up. No contract will be offered if orientation is not attended.

ARTICLE III - Membership

Sec. 1 Membership in the Sylvia Rivera Cooperative House requires:

- A. Acceptance by the Inter-Cooperative Council.
- B. Payment of membership deposit fee.
- C. Living in the house.

Sec. 2 Duties of House Members:

- I. House members are responsible for work assigned by the Work Manager. Members may not hire another person to do their work. Members may be assigned up to 5 hours of chores a week.
- II. House members are responsible for payment of bills as determined by the house and the Inter-Cooperative Council.
- III. House members must abide by rules passed at house meetings.
- IV. House members may be required to serve on ICC committees.

Sec. 3 Gender Ratio: Rivera has no gender ratio.

Sec. 4 Referral:

- I. A house member may be considered for referral as an incentive for them to correct the following:
 - A. generally unacceptable and/or uncooperative behavior.
 - B. failure to perform house duties.
 - C. failure to pay house fines.
- II. A member may be placed on referral by the one of following methods:
 - A. receiving a simple majority vote in favor of the referral after a referral hearing.

- B. after receiving a simple majority of house signatures on a petition for referral.
- III. Attendance at referral hearings is mandatory, and it may be held virtually. If a member is unable to attend the hearing, they must notify the house president(s) at least 24 hours in advance, and they may cast absentee votes by messaging the house president(s) directly.
- IV. If members request to have their signatures added anonymously on a petition for referral, they may message or email their signature to the house president(s) directly, and the signature(s) will be redacted before being posted on the house bulletin board, in the case that a simple majority of signatures is reached.
- V. If a member fails to comply with the terms for getting themselves off referral by the assigned deadline, the member will be considered for expulsion.
- VI. People's ability to sign contracts while on referral will be decided on a case by case basis.

Sec. 5 Expulsion:

- I. A committee made up of house officers will consider all of the recommendations for expulsion brought by house members. They shall gather evidence from all interested parties including the member in question, and form an opinion to be presented at a house meeting with the member to be judged and their accuser present if possible. This meeting is to take place within one week of the recommendation.
- II. The house shall hold a meeting to hear the gathered evidence and a defense by the accused.
- III. The member shall be voted on within one week after the meeting above and will be expelled by a two thirds majority of all house members.
- IV. Grounds for expulsion include failure to obey house rules and behavior which is potentially harmful to other house members or the proper functioning of the house, including but not limited to **racism, transphobia, homophobia, misogyny**, etc. There is a no tolerance policy for **sexual assault and harrassment**.
- V. Attendance at the expulsion hearing is mandatory, and it may be held virtually. If a member is unable to attend the expulsion hearing, they must notify the house president(s) at least 24 hours in advance, and they may cast absentee votes by messaging the house president(s) directly.

ARTICLE IV - House Meetings

- Sec. 1 The house shall make all decisions by a general consensus of the house through voting. For voting rules in the cases of referral and expulsion hearings, see Article III, Sections 4 and 5.

- Sec. 2 A regular house meeting should be held every other week.
- Sec. 3 An agenda for all house meetings must be posted in the house google drive 24 hours prior to the meeting. All members should be alerted of the new agenda and encouraged to add their own topics to discuss.
- Sec. 4 All members are required to attend all house meetings. If a member must miss a house meeting, it is their responsibility to let the president(s) know at least 24 hours in advance.
- Sec. 5 Special House Meetings:
- I. Special house meetings may be called by any house member.
 - II. There must be at least 24 hours notice for calling a special house meeting.
 - III. The purpose of the special meeting will be indicated on the agenda, which must be posted at least 24 hours prior to the proposed meeting.
 - IV. The attendance policy for special house meetings is the same as for regular house meetings.

ARTICLE V - House Officers

- Sec. 1 House Officer Positions:
- A. President(s)
 - B. Board Representative
 - C. Work Manager
 - D. Maintenance Manager
 - E. Treasurer
 - F. Food Steward
 - G. Kitchen Manager
 - H. Secretary
 - I. Sustainability Steward
 - J. Social Chair (Optional Position)
- Sec. 2 Duties of the House Officers:
- A. President(s): The president shall receive full (five) work hours and will hold this position for the entire eight months of their contract (unless the house decides to remove the president after the first term). In the case of multiple house presidents, work hours and responsibilities will be split between them. The house president(s) duties are to:
 - a. preside over house meetings.
 - b. post notices of house meetings.
 - c. send out meeting agendas at least 24 hours prior to scheduled meetings.
 - d. ensure that the members of the house abide by the rules and policies of the ICC.

- e. operate in accordance with the constitution.
 - f. compile a list of seniority for room picks for the following year at the end of the year.
 - g. resolve and mediate house conflicts.
- B. Board Representative: The board representative shall act as an official representative of Rivera. The person holding this position shall receive full (five) work hours and will hold this position for the entire eight months of their contract (unless the house decides to remove the board rep after their first term). The duties of a board representative are to:
- a. be a communication link between Rivera and the ICC Board of Directors.
 - i. ensuring that the needs and opinions of house members are represented.
 - ii. informing house members of ICC-wide issues and events.
 - b. attend the Board of Directors meetings.
 - i. reporting Board decisions and proposals.
 - c. serve on an ICC committee.
- C. Work Manager: The person holding this position shall receive three work hours. The duties of a work manager are to:
- a. equitably assign the work necessary for the efficient and sanitary functioning of the house.
 - b. create a work schedule at the beginning of each term and update it as needed.
 - c. ensure that members are completing work hours as assigned properly, consistently, and to an accepted standard.
 - d. pursue appropriate action when work hours are missed.
 - i. including alternate work or referral.
 - e. work with the president(s) and maintenance manager to schedule and organize a work holiday once a term.
 - f. maintain inventory of house cleaning supplies and coordinate with the food steward to ensure they are stocked.
- D. Maintenance Manager: The person holding this position shall receive three work hours. The duties of a maintenance manager are to:
- a. maintain house appliances, facilities, and general house.
 - b. purchase necessary materials, utensils, and appliances with the approval of the house.
 - c. perform all maintenance work to the best of their ability, or
 - d. arrange to have the work contracted out.
 - i. notifying when workers will be coming to the house.
 - e. keep the maintenance closet tidy and organized.

- f. follow the preventative maintenance program as described by the ICC maintenance committee.
 - g. keep accurate records on all house work.
- E. Treasurer: The person holding this position shall receive two work hours. The duties of a treasurer are to:
 - a. formulate the house budget.
 - i. presenting it to the house for approval at the beginning of the term.
 - b. track all financial transactions.
 - i. keeping a monthly budget expenditure.
 - ii. submitting a monthly financial report to the ICC.
 - iii. saving and uploading all receipts to the shared google drive.
 - c. inform the house of its financial status.
 - d. remind members to pay house charges every month.
 - e. reimburse house members for approved purchases for the house.
 - f. direct members who are experiencing financial difficulty to the resources the ICC provides.
- F. Food Steward: The person holding this position shall receive three work hours. The duties of a food steward are to:
 - a. order food, kitchen supplies, and equipment.
 - b. maintain a sufficient supply of food for the house while remaining within the house budget.
 - i. working with the treasurer to track expenditures.
 - c. assist the treasurer in keeping track of receipts.
 - d. within reason, listen to food requests.
- G. Kitchen Manager: The person holding this position shall receive three work hours. The duties of a kitchen manager are to:
 - a. periodically inspect all kitchen facilities to ensure that they are sanitary and functioning properly.
 - i. ensuring that all freezers and refrigerators are operating properly.
 - ii. monitoring the internal temperatures.
 - iii. periodically monitoring sanitizing solution by using bleach test strips.
 - iv. deep cleaning the oven, stove, vent panels, and grill top at least once every month.
 - v. servicing and cleaning the hobart every month.
 - b. examine all food containers and discard all food that has spoiled or is about to spoil at least once a week.
 - c. train cooks in safe and sanitary preparation of food.

- d. ensure proper signage, labeling, and organization throughout the kitchen.
 - e. prepare for kitchen inspections with the work manager.
- H. Secretary: The person holding this position shall receive one work hour. The duties of a secretary are to:
- a. take meeting minutes at all house meetings.
 - i. in the case of absence, allocating someone else to take meeting minutes.
 - b. make sure that house minutes and records are maintained in the house google drive.
 - i. turning them into the ICC Office at the end of each term for the permanent house archives.
 - c. collect mail daily - sorting, rerouting, and forwarding mail to former members.
- I. Sustainability Steward: The person holding this position shall receive three work hours. The duties of a sustainability steward are to:
- a. track and report energy usage to the house and to the ICC Sustainability Committee.
 - b. attend meetings of the ICC Sustainability Committee.
 - c. encourage sustainable living, energy use, and consumption.
 - i. identifying and addressing areas of wasted energy or resources.
 - ii. educating house members on what is recyclable and compostable.
 - d. plan sustainability projects.
 - e. take care of all yard work - leaves, shoveling snow and removing ice.
 - f. take out trash, recycling, and compost bins for collection every week.
- J. Social Chair: This position is optional. At the first house meeting of each term, members should discuss whether or not the house would like to have this position. The person holding this position shall receive one work hour. The duties of social chair are to:
- a. plan and execute both intra-house and inter-house gatherings either on a regular basis.
 - b. utilize funds, as approved by the house, for the purpose of these gatherings.
 - c. foster the interconnectedness of house members.

ARTICLE VI - Financial Assessments and Rebates

- Sec. 1 If expenditures exceed the amount budgeted, members will be equitably assessed. Similarly, if expenditures do not reach the amount paid by members, members will be reimbursed at the end of the term.
- Sec. 2 Rebates will be in cash only if accounts are paid in full and the member is not returning to the house. Otherwise, rebates will be applied to the member's account.

ARTICLE VI - Room Assignments

Sec. 1 House members exercise room choice on the basis of seniority with the person having the highest seniority given the first choice, the person with the second highest seniority given the second choice, etc. Seniority refers to the number of terms that one has lived at an ICC house, with ties broken by date that the contract was signed. Exceptions may be made based on a case-by-case basis, such as the following:

- I. requiring a single room for trauma-based reasons.
 - A. including but not limited to PTSD, gender dysphoria, etc.
- II. having a gender preference for their roommate.
- III. having a race preference for their roommate .
- IV. not wishing to share a room with a pet.
- V. requiring accessibility accommodations.
- VI. requiring a lock on their door.
 - A. rooms 4 and 8 do not have locks due to the fire escapes.

Sec. 2 If someone wishes to swap roommates, they must bring their case to the president(s), who will attempt to resolve the issue and accommodate the request.

Sec. 3 The president(s) shall be responsible for maintaining an accurate seniority list and for seeing that room choices are made in accordance with the rules established above.

ARTICLE VII - Work Policy

Sec 1. As members of Rivera, we make a commitment to the house community that we will do our work to the best of our ability. Each job shall have a description of what needs to be done and the time it must be completed by. These descriptions will be maintained and made accessible by the work manager. It is the sole responsibility of each house member to learn and fulfill the expectations of their jobs. If a house member is unable to complete their assigned chores for a week, for any reason, that must be communicated to the work manager so that that person can be given the time they need.

ARTICLE VIII - Smoking

Sec. 1 Neither members nor guests will be allowed to smoke tobacco in Rivera House. Members may only smoke other substances in their own rooms with permission of their roommate(s). Smoking any substances, including tobacco, may be done outside of the Rivera house, such as on the porch or other outdoor spaces.

ARTICLE IX - Amendments

Sec. 1 Amendments to this constitution shall be made in accordance with the following rules:

- A. An amendment shall be proposed in a house meeting.

- B. The secretary shall write up and post the proposed amending statements. After having been posted for 24 hours, the proposal is subject to change by kwuncensus.
- C. The final form of an amendment to this constitution shall be passed by kwuncensus, after it has been released for more than 24 hours.

Sec. 2 Ratification: This constitution shall go into effect after it has been ratified by kwuncensus.

ARTICLE XI - Pets

- Sec. 1 Rivera is a pet-friendly house. Members may keep pets in accordance with the ICC standing rules regarding pets. Pets can be allowed into the house via a simple majority vote. The house will approve pets on a rolling basis. When members seek house approval to keep pets, they must address specifics of the pet living in the house. For instance, the spaces they may occupy.
- Sec. 2 Expectations: There is an expectation that **people are responsible for taking care of their own pets**. If someone fails to take care of their pet properly in a way that causes the concern of other house members, house members may bring these concerns to the attention of the house president(s). Also, members with pets must pay the pet fee each month and are expected to clean up any messes their pets create, including but not limited to, urine, feces, vomit, hair, lingering smells, etc.
- Sec. 3 Pet Removal: House members may hold a vote at a meeting to determine whether a pet should be removed from the house. If a simple majority is reached in favor of the pet's removal, the pet's owner will have up to a week to find alternative housing for their pet. For example, if a pet disturbs and/or harms members of the house in any way, house members may bring these concerns to the attention of the house president(s) to begin a petition for removal. Other possible reasons for pet removal are listed above in Sec. 2 Expectations.