

## CARES Annual Summary Report to SIGSOFT for 2023-2024

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July 1, 2024

This brief report summarizes activities of [SIGSOFT CARES](#) (Committee to Aid REporting on discrimination and haraSsment policy violations) over the past year, 2023-2024. SIGSOFT CARES was formed in 2022, providing coverage at FSE, ICSE, ASE conferences since FSE 2022.

**Purpose:** CARES is a subcommittee of ACM SIGSOFT. All ACM SIG events and communications abide by ACM's policies against discrimination and harassment, on plagiarism, misrepresentation, and falsification; on coercion and abuse in the ACM publications process; and on roles and responsibilities in ACM publishing. If a violation of any of the ACM policies occurs, ACM urges reporting the incident to the event chair or to ACM leadership. We recognize that reporting to a conference chair or an upper-level ACM administrator can be intimidating, especially in the face of an already unpleasant experience. We have therefore established CARES. In case anyone reading this report needs pointers on how to report a violation of any of these policies, here are the relevant forms:

- Report an ethics violation at <https://services.acm.org/ethics/report.cfm>
- Report harassment, discrimination, intimidation, or violence at <https://services.acm.org/harass/harassForm.cfm>.
- Report a policy violation such as a conflict of interest violation, coercion, abuse, misrepresentation, plagiarism, falsification or abuse of publication process at [https://services.acm.org/policy\\_violations/policy.cfm](https://services.acm.org/policy_violations/policy.cfm).

The role of CARES is to serve as a resource comprising of well-known and respected people in the software engineering community who are approachable and willing to listen to and help people who experience or witness discrimination, harassment or other ethical policy violation, either at our events or related to ACM publications; the committee members can be a sounding board for these people and can provide advice on the steps necessary to have the matter further investigated by ACM. It is important to understand that for the matter to be reported, the person experiencing the incident must still themselves send the complaint to ACM where it will be handled according to ACM's policies. The CARES committee cannot serve as an intermediary in that official process and it cannot be involved in any aspect of the handling of the complaint by ACM.

The motivation in providing a standing CARES committee is: (1) people are more likely to report harassment, discrimination or other ethical policy violations if familiar and respected members of the community are available for support, (2) unlike conference chairs, the members of the CARES committee will be chosen largely for their commitment and record on the targeted issues, (3) longer membership terms and an (eventually) established committee enable building experience and a record that inspires more trust for those considering coming forward about an incident, (4) committee members are expected to be physically present at our main events and work with event leaders to publicize their role, and (5) the presence of such a committee with respected and trusted members from the community assigned to watch for these issues should serve as a deterrent for such behavior as well as encourage us all to be aware of and speak up if we observe such behavior.

**What CARES does:** CARES is dedicated to providing completely confidential support to members of the software engineering community. We listen to members who come to us for advice or who just

want to talk. If they would like advice on what kinds of actions they can take, we do our best to provide such advice.

**CARES' Presence at SIGSOFT Events:** CARES provides support at the three major software engineering conferences (ICSE, FSE, and ASE), with the goal to expand to additional conferences in the future. In the period covered by the report, CARES provided support at FSE 2023, ASE 2023, and ICSE 2024.

The opening ceremonies of each conference included slides that introduced CARES and promoted the CARES booth at the conference. Members availed themselves to anyone who wished to speak about any questions or concerns regarding matters falling within the scope of CARES, by:

- CARES members wearing buttons to make them visible to the community,
- announced hours of scheduled availability for CARES members at the CARES booth, and
- providing flyers at the CARES booth with contact information for the hours where no CARES members were present at the booth.

**Reported incidents:** Unfortunately, incidents have come to the attention of CARES members this past year. We received fewer than five reports of incidents involving harassment/discrimination at official conference events. We also heard reports involving harassment/discrimination by a community member, but not at official conference events. In addition, we heard from SIGSOFT members who reported facing harassing or discriminatory behavior in the past (at and outside of SIGSOFT events) and expressed gratitude to the CARES team for their efforts in preventing such behavior moving forward and providing support when such incidents do occur.

In all cases, CARES members who rendered assistance followed established procedures, including listening and providing timely guidance on reporting options available to the individual(s) as well as protecting confidentiality to the best of the members' abilities. In at least one of the cases, a formal complaint was submitted to ACM by the individual who contacted CARES, reporting the violation of the ACM's policy against discrimination and harassment.

**CARES Membership:** The SIGSOFT executive committee appointed the initial members in 2022: Joanne Atlee (Co-Chair), Alexander Serebrenik (Co-Chair), Kelly Blincoe (Co-Chair), Marsha Chechik, Andrew Begel, Gail Murphy, and Bonita Sharif. In 2023, Rafael Prikladnicki, Raula Gaikovina Kula, Federica Sarro, and Tayana Conte were appointed as new members. In the first half of 2024, Birgit Penzenstadler, Foutse Khomh, and Dan Hao were appointed as new members, and Federica Sarro was promoted to be a Co-Chair of SIGSOFT CARES.

We look forward to embarking on another year of important service to the software engineering community.