

May 2, 2017

Dear Members of CASART,

We, The Listening Ear's Board of Directors, were dismayed to learn of your decision to revoke The Listening Ear's membership in CASART. The shared values and missions of our organizations have allowed for a strong history of partnership and we regret that this partnership has ended for the foreseeable future.

While we respect your decision, we wished to address some of the concerns raised in your letter, dated March 1, 2017, specifically the statement that the Board has not demonstrated a "commitment to transparency, accountability, integrity, survivor-focused services and best practices."

The safety and well-being of The Listening Ear's volunteers and the people we serve are this Board's primary concern. The events of last year were regrettable, preventable, and unacceptable. The Board is committed to ensuring that it cannot happen again, which has resulted in numerous changes to the organization, including adopting and enforcing a permanent background check policy, incorporating sexual harassment awareness education into our staff training, and recruiting additional members, including more community member to the Board itself.

Additionally, we believe that every organization needs to evolve along with the community's needs. As such, we are currently conducting a full evaluation of our policies while developing a volunteer handbook. Specifically, we are looking to create or strengthen policies that will ensure that the board remains fully aware of the organization's processes, facilitate the continuous review of best practices, and clarify roles and responsibilities of volunteers in leadership positions.

Simultaneous to this process, we have been seeking to make sure The Ear's leadership and decision making process are as efficient and accountable as possible. Among those being adopted or reviewed are policies on background checks, sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence and stalking, conditions requiring the dismissal of a volunteer, professionalism, non-discrimination, internal evaluation, and confidentiality. As they are adopted, our new policies are being incorporated into our website so they are available to anyone. We want to ensure that the public and all of our volunteers know how The Ear operates, the standards to which we hold ourselves, and to whom they can go with questions or concerns in the future.



A Crisis  
Intervention  
Center

Throughout this process, we remained committed to maintain open lines of communication with CASART members, as evidenced by our repeated reports at CASART membership meetings, our request for your assistance during the adoption of our permanent background check policy, and our request to send an interim representative to your latest meeting.

The Listening Ear is the nation's oldest all-volunteer crisis center. Our volunteers strive to improve the quality of life in this community by providing crisis intervention and referral services. We remain dedicated to this mission and proud of the work our volunteers do. We look forward to continuing to serve our community in this manner.

Sincerely,

Members of the Board of Directors  
The Listening Ear