

## Explanation of Confidentiality Policy

American Mensa has no established policy regarding confidential information. This has resulted in an incoherent and confusing situation which not only impedes the effective operation of American Mensa but also causes distrust within the American Mensa Committee and by the membership at large. Despite multiple requests that American Mensa leadership address this issue and clarify confidentiality requirements, the only substantive statement has been that if information can be found on the American Mensa website then it is not confidential.

The consequences for violating confidentiality are both draconian and arbitrary. A violation of confidentiality is described as an Act Inimical to Mensa, and may result in expulsion from American Mensa. Officers have been removed because of inconsequential violations, while in other circumstances, violations are accepted or condoned. Out of an abundance of caution, present and former AMC members and others who have information which may or may not be confidential have resorted to circumlocution, allusion, obfuscation, or simply refused to disclose this information, even when such disclosure would be beneficial to the organization.

Some of the consequences of the current practice are as follows:

- AMC members not on an AMC committee may not see committee materials, and have been refused access to requested information.
- Current AMC members cannot see discussions made by previous AMCs about policy issues, and past AMC members are prohibited from discussing these with current AMC members.
- Current RVCs are unable to review reports from prior RVCs, even when such reports are the only source of information about actions taken by the previous RVC.
- Selection of the location for future Annual Gatherings and Mind Games, long conducted in public and often with great fanfare and with significant member input, have become a closed-door decision because eventually a hotel contract will be involved.
- Hearings, open to membership oversight for more than four decades, have become a secret tribunal, which neither the Complainants nor the Respondents are permitted to discuss publicly. National and Regional Hearings (or the threat of them) have been used to intimidate, punish, or retaliate against members, relying upon the secrecy of these proceedings.
- Information which should be readily available to the membership is not. For example, local group bylaws are in a confidential library only accessible to RVCs, while it seems reasonable that local groups considering changes to their bylaws might wish to review other groups' bylaws.
- Budget proposals and other documents used to create the current budget are not available to current AMC members who will create the next year's budget.
- AMC members cannot solicit member input about policy issues if any of these have been discussed on the AMC confidential mailing list. Past AMC members have refused even to discuss the motions which they have drafted.
- Current AMC members are not informed of the financial commitments made by past AMCs.

The existing incoherent and incoherent policy regarding confidentiality has created a toxic environment where cooperation is impeded and public trust is severely compromised. This policy is intended to allow the cleansing rays of sunlight to illuminate the opaque functioning of American Mensa.