

WSAVA In-Person Education Events: Welfare, Safety and Accessibility Policy

Applies to all WSAVA Regional CE, WSAVA Academy blended sessions and Co-Branded Events.

Purpose: To ensure the ethical, safe, and inclusive conduct of all in-person WSAVA educational activities by upholding global standards in animal welfare, human safety, accessibility, and cultural respect. This policy outlines requirements and procedures to guide the planning, approval, and delivery of WSAVA-supported educational events.

Ethical & Behavioral Code

All participants—including organizers, speakers, volunteers, staff, exhibitors, and attendees—must adhere to the following WSAVA principles:

- **Inclusive Environment:** All participants must contribute to a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment that promotes equity, diversity, and respectful collaboration.
- **Standards of Conduct:** Participants are required to maintain professional behaviour at all times, demonstrating courtesy and respect for differing perspectives, cultures, and experiences.
- **Prohibited Behaviour:** Harassment, discrimination, or any form of hostile or inappropriate conduct is strictly prohibited.
- **Compliance Requirement:** Participants must comply immediately with any request to cease inappropriate behaviour issued under this Code.
- **Reporting Obligations:** Any suspected or actual breaches of this Code must be reported promptly through the appropriate channels.

WSAVA maintains a **zero-tolerance approach** to harassment, discrimination, or exclusion, with clear reporting and enforcement mechanisms in place.

Animal Welfare Standards

Use of Animals in Education: The use of live animals or cadavers in educational events is prohibited unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated. The Association upholds the principles of the Three Rs (Replacement, Reduction, and Refinement) and requires the use of suitable alternatives, including validated models and simulations, wherever possible.

Approval Requirement: Any proposed use of live animals or cadavers must be justified in advance and will only be considered where no appropriate alternative exists. Prior written approval must be obtained from the Chair of the Education Committee before such use is permitted.

Scope of Application

This policy applies to all WSAVA in-person educational events worldwide, including:

- Regional Continuing Education Events
- WSAVA Academy In-Person Sessions
- Dry Lab (and Wet lab if approved) workshops
- Partnered or Co-Branded Events

This policy is intended to be implemented across diverse global settings where regulatory frameworks, resources, and standards may vary. All organisers are expected to apply these requirements to the fullest extent possible within their local context while meeting or exceeding applicable legal and ethical obligations.

Human Welfare and Safety

Purpose

To safeguard the health, dignity, and well-being of all participants at WSAVA educational events by promoting consistent, high standards of safety, hygiene, respectful conduct, and emergency preparedness across all regions.

Policy

All WSAVA in-person events must implement safety and welfare measures that reflect WSAVA's global duty of care. While recognising variation in local standards and resources, organisers are required to comply with all applicable local, regional, and national health and

safety legislation and regulations, and to take all reasonable steps to align with international best practices where feasible.

At a minimum, organisers must:

- Establish and communicate clear emergency, first aid, and evacuation procedures.
- Ensure hygiene facilities are available, accessible, and appropriately maintained.
- Comply with applicable public health requirements in the host location.
- Enforce WSAVA's Code of Conduct, including zero tolerance for harassment, discrimination, or unsafe behaviour.
- Incorporate accessibility and participant welfare considerations into all safety planning.

Where local standards fall below WSAVA expectations, organisers must take all reasonable measures to mitigate risks and elevate practices to the highest achievable standard.

Process

Pre-event

- Confirm that venues meet applicable local health and safety requirements and have documented emergency procedures.
- Identify qualified first aid provision in accordance with local regulations.
- Review hygiene, sanitation, and public health measures with all vendors.
- Integrate relevant legal and public health requirements into planning and communications.
- Communicate behavioural expectations in line with WSAVA's Code of Conduct.

On-site (day of event)

- Clearly display safety information, including emergency exits and first aid access.
- Conduct a safety briefing or walkthrough with staff, volunteers and key personnel.
- Ensure appropriate personnel are available to respond to medical or safety incidents.
- Monitor compliance with the Code of Conduct and respond promptly to concerns.

Post-event

- Review and document any safety incidents or near misses.
- Incorporate participant feedback into continuous improvement of safety practices.
- Update internal procedures to reflect lessons learned across different regional contexts.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Purpose

To ensure equitable access and participation for individuals of all abilities, backgrounds, and regions, reflecting WSAVA's commitment as a global organisation.

Policy

All WSAVA in-person events must be designed and delivered with inclusive principles in mind. Recognising global variability in infrastructure and resources, organisers are expected to comply with applicable local accessibility legislation and take all reasonable and practical steps to enhance accessibility and inclusion beyond minimum requirements where possible.

Organisers should:

- Provide accessible venues and facilities in accordance with local regulations, striving to minimise physical barriers wherever feasible.
- Offer language support, captioning, or interpretation services where reasonably achievable.
- Provide inclusive catering options that respect dietary, cultural, and religious needs.
- Make reasonable efforts to accommodate sensory, mobility, and other accessibility needs.

Where full accessibility cannot be achieved due to local constraints, organisers must clearly communicate limitations in advance and seek to provide alternative solutions wherever possible.

Process

Pre-event

- Assess accessibility requirements in line with local legislation and venue capabilities.
- Incorporate accessibility considerations into early planning, budgeting, and vendor selection.

On-site (day of event)

- Provide clear information on available accessibility services and points of contact.
- Ensure staff and volunteers are briefed on inclusive practices and respectful engagement.
- Monitor delivery of accessibility measures and respond to participant needs as they arise.

Post-event

- Provide access to materials where feasible (e.g., recordings, transcripts, slides). The WSAVA Academy can help facilitate requirements.
- Gather feedback on accessibility and inclusion to inform continuous improvement across regions.

Incident Reporting and Response

Purpose

To ensure all WSAVA-supported events maintain high standards of safety, professionalism, and inclusivity by providing a clear and accessible mechanism for reporting concerns.

Policy

All WSAVA in-person events must have a straightforward process for reporting incidents, including:

- Breaches of the Code of Conduct (e.g., harassment, discrimination)
- Safety, welfare, or accessibility concerns
- Ethical issues related to content, animal use, or professional behaviour

Event organisers must:

- Provide at least one **confidential reporting channel** (e.g., designated contact person, email, or reporting form)
- Clearly communicate how participants can report concerns before and during the event
- Ensure reports are handled **promptly, respectfully, and without retaliation**
- Escalate serious incidents to WSAVA leadership as appropriate

Reporting Mechanism

Participants and event staff are encouraged to report concerns as soon as possible via the designated event contact or reporting channel. Where appropriate, concerns may also be escalated directly to WSAVA for review.

Follow-Up

Appropriate action will be taken, which may include removal of individuals, modification or cancellation of sessions, or further investigation. All reported incidents must be reviewed and documented on the WSAVA post event report form.

Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Event Organizers	Conduct risk assessment, secure approvals, ensure venue compliance, and communicate participant expectations.
Speakers/Facilitators	Ensure humane, inclusive, and professionally delivered instruction; report any concerns immediately.
Attendees	Abide by WSAVA's Code of Conduct and event safety protocols.
Partners	Ensure alignment with WSAVA standards and provide documentation upon request.