

Adopted 2010, Revised 2018

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## Preamble

The role of school counseling often is misunderstood, yet, the contributions school counselors make, and the impact they have, are extremely significant. All too often, the public only learns of a school counselor's activities in some negative way. The positive story of school counselors' contributions to improve the fabric of American life needs to be told more effectively. School counselor association leaders should be ambassadors to the general public and should work to improve its understanding of the constructive role played by school counselors. This can only be accomplished if leaders of school counselor associations uphold the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct.

## Purpose

These Ethical Standards for School Counselor Association Leaders have been adopted to promote and maintain the highest standards of association service and personal conduct. All elected and appointed leaders of local, state and national school counselor associations are expected adhere to these standards to ensure public confidence in the integrity and service of their association and of school counseling.

## A. Personal and Professional Conduct

Elected and appointed leaders of local, state and national school counselor associations:

A-1. *Maintain the highest standards of personal conduct.* Association leaders recognize that their personal conduct is held up to public scrutiny stemming from their dual obligation to serve the interests of the association's membership as well as the public's interests, and therefore they are held to a higher standard of conduct. They strive to be model citizens of their community as well as the school counseling community and their broader professional community. They maintain high moral standards in their personal and professional conduct, particularly in their role as association leaders.

A-2. *Actively promote and encourage the highest level of ethics within school counseling.* Association leaders fulfill an important role within school counseling and within society at large. In this role, they have the opportunity and the obligation to enhance the ethical awareness of their members both actively through the promulgation of ethical standards and implicitly by example.

A-3. *Use only legal and ethical means in all association activities.* Misbehavior or inappropriate activity on the part of an association leader reflects badly on school counseling as a whole and can damage the credibility of all school counselors, school counselor associations and their members. This is particularly important and sensitive when an association is attempting to influence legislative, regulatory or judicial bodies. Association leaders have a responsibility to understand the boundaries of appropriate behavior and stay within these parameters and to take steps to ensure that their organization stays within legal and ethical boundaries.

A-4. *Maintain loyalty to the association they serve and pursue its objectives in ways that are consistent with the public interest.* Association leaders have a primary and fundamental responsibility to serve the interests of the association and its members loyally. At the same time, however, leaders have a responsibility not to promote activities contrary to the public good.

When an association leader believes that the direction of the association is in conflict with the public interest, there is a responsibility to notify the members of this opinion; and, should the conflict become irreconcilable, the leader has a responsibility to maintain individual integrity and to act to protect the public interest.

A-5. *Refrain from activities for personal gain at the expense of the association and accept no personal compensation, except with full disclosure and with the knowledge and consent of the association's governing board.* Association leaders have a responsibility to make the best possible management decisions in the interest of the association

without regard to personal or other interests. Therefore, leaders should take special care to avoid either the fact or the appearance of a conflict of interest in decision-making. All actions and behaviors of association leaders should be measured in the context of propriety and best interests of the association.

## **B. Fair and Equal Treatment of Members and other Professionals**

Elected and appointed leaders of local, state and national school counselor associations:

- B-1. *Serve all members of their association impartially and provide no special privilege to any individual member, except with full disclosure and with the knowledge and consent of the association's governing board.* Association leaders may find themselves in a position to grant special favors to members, vendors, and others. Association leaders have a responsibility to represent the interests of all members impartially and should avoid incurring an obligation to a single individual, organization or some fraction of the membership, either personally or on behalf of the association that are not approved by or in the best interests of their association.
- B-2. *Prevent the association from discrimination on the basis of race, sex, gender identity, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability.* Association leaders do not discriminate against individual members or other constituents, and do not allow their association to engage in discrimination.
- B-3. *Maintain the confidentiality of privileged information.* Association leaders frequently have access to privileged information, which must be held in confidence in accordance with the highest school counseling ethical standards. If association leaders find themselves the unwilling recipients of information that they feel they cannot in good conscience hold in trust, they should use appropriate decision-making models to determine actions of disclosure or confidence.
- B-4. *Cooperate in every reasonable and proper way with other association leaders and work with them for the advancement of school counseling.* Association leaders have an ethical responsibility to work cooperatively with leaders of other associations, both in the interest of school counseling and in the interest of establishing a model of cooperative behavior for society at large. If associations are in a competitive relationship

with other associations, the association leaders compete fairly and ethically and do not purposely engage in activities solely to cause harm to other associations or individuals.

## **C. Competent Association Management**

Elected and appointed leaders of local, state and national school counselor associations:

- C-1. *Recognize and discharge their responsibility and that of their association to uphold all laws and regulations relating to the association's policies and activities.* Association leaders have a responsibility to be familiar with the basic principles of law and regulation that affect the association. As a leader of the association, there is a responsibility to help members understand the legal framework within which they operate in the association, and to make sure that all policies of the association are formulated, and all activities are conducted, within this framework.
- C-2. *Strive for excellence in all aspects of the management of their association.* Association leaders have a responsibility to keep current with the best thinking in the field of association management and to follow best practices and generally accepted principles of association management.
- C-3. *Communicate association internal and external statements in a truthful and accurate manner by ensuring there is integrity in the data and information.* Association leaders have a responsibility to maintain credible lines of communication both within the association and between the association and its publics. All communications should represent honest, unimpeachable statements of fact, and opinions should be clearly demarcated. Communication should include public disclosure of association activities and practices, including financial administration.
- C-4. *Work to ensure effective and ethical behaviors among leaders of their organization and affiliated organizations.* Association leaders have the responsibility to hold each other accountable for ethical behaviors by addressing unethical, inappropriate, illegal or immoral behaviors exhibited by other association leaders. They also have an obligation to identify and recruit effective leaders to ensure the preservation and survival of the organization and should not knowingly promote or support ineffective leaders for higher positions within the organization or in affiliated organizations.