

Procedure 5.6 Professional Ethics

1. Introduction

Imago Relationships International has not developed its own ethical code, but instead requires its professional and clinical members to follow the codes of their respective professional associations.

When the Board of Imago Relationships International needs to be guided by an ethical code in order to make decisions, we will follow the code of the American Psychological Association.

This code can be found at: <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code2002.html>

2. Specific Interpretations and Decisions

From time-to-time situations and complaints arise within Imago Relationships International which requires us to offer an interpretation of the APA code.

We expect all members of IRI to be guided by these interpretations. Where they are not followed we will implement one of the procedures identified below.

These interpretations can be found at the following location:
<http://imagoworld.squarespace.com/ethics-interpretations/>

3. Procedures for Ethical Complaints

Whenever an ethical complaint is received an ethics record is kept. That is a chronological log is kept of all communications and correspondence.

Whenever an Ethics Complaint Form is received in the office, the Executive Director shall bring it to the Executive Committee who will decide to adopt one of the following procedures:

A. Standard procedure

1. Anyone, including clients, employees, employer and co-workers, may direct an ethics inquiry and/or question about the ethical conduct of a member of IRI to the Executive Director.
2. If a person chooses to make an ethics complaint, he/she shall complete the Ethics Complaint Form, giving written consent for the executive committee to disclose to the member any information given and to investigate the complaint.
3. The complainant will be informed if the executive committee decides an investigation will be undertaken.
4. When the investigation is completed, the complainant will be informed of the findings and the action taken. Details will not be disclosed.

5. Complainant will be reminded that the right of appeal of the actions taken is a member's right only and may be made by the member within thirty days of receipt of the findings and actions.

B. Determination to Initiate an Ethics Investigation

1. An ethics complaint is received when a complainant completes and submits the Ethics Complaint Form.
2. When the office receives the Ethics Complaint Form that will trigger the investigation process. Possible determinations may be:
 - a) Not a violation of a code
 - b) It is an interpersonal or clinical issue and not a violation of a code and an Imago Dialogue may be recommended.
 - c) Complaint may have merit and investigation begins
3. The ethics investigation will begin a.s.a.p. and depending on the severity of the alleged violation, legal counsel must be included.
4. Only those who were members at the time that the alleged violation of the code of ethics took place may be investigated and disciplined.
5. If a member should resign during the course of an investigation of an alleged violation, the ethics investigation process shall stop. And the IRI office will indicate that the resignation occurred during the course of an ethics investigation.

C. Notifications

1. When an ethics complaint has been received, the chair of the executive committee shall notify all members of the committee with copies of the complaint.
2. The executive committee shall notify the member against whom the complaint has been filed by sending either a copy of the complaint or a summary outlining the nature of the ethical code violations alleged. This notification shall be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested.

D. Investigation Process

1. First, any member of the Executive Committee that appears to have a conflict of interest will be excused. If it is the Chair, the Chair-elect will chair the executive committee for this investigation.
2. The investigation may include separate individual interviews with the complainant, with the member against whom the complaint has been made and with others deemed necessary to obtain needed information. The member may be asked to respond in writing to specific allegations of unethical conduct.
3. Documentation is very important – notes are kept that include dates and brief summaries of all phone calls and meetings. Notes should be kept in a secure place and treated as confidential. Initials, instead of names, should be used.

4. The Executive Committee should consult with legal counsel to ensure that ethics procedures are being followed accurately. The member against whom a complaint has been made may seek legal counsel, at his/her own expense.
5. A member is expected to cooperate with the investigation process. Refusal or failure to cooperate with an ethics investigation may be considered grounds for Dismissal.
6. When asked about allegations against a particular member, the following information, and no other information, may be revealed by a member of the executive committee.
 - a) that a complaint has been received and an investigation of the alleged violation(s) is in process.
 - b) that a complaint has been received, an investigation completed and the member has been disciplined for violation(s) of the code of ethics. Level of discipline and specific code violation may be specified. No other information may be released.
7. The member is expected to comply with final actions, decisions and recommendations made by the Executive Committee.

E. Four Possible Actions

1. **Complaint Unfounded:** Information presented does not support a finding that the code of ethics or “best practices” of Imago Relationships International has been violated.
2. **Advisement:** The executive committee finds that there has been inadequate attention given to a section the Code of Ethics or “best practices” of Imago Relationships International and that education, regarding appropriate ethical conduct, is sufficient to correct this inattention and insure future compliance with the code.
3. **Reprimand:** The executive committee finds that there has been a violation of the code of ethics and “best practices” in Imago Relationships International. This action represents a serious reproof or rebuke of a member and is based on the member taking full responsibility for the violation.
4. **Dismissal:** The executive committee finds that there as been a violation of the code of ethics. The recommendation represents the judgment that the member demonstrated an essential lack of professional knowledge, procedures, character or conduct which are inconsistent with clinical membership and “best practices” in Imago Relationships International.

F. Notification to Final Action

1. When the final action is Unfounded or Advisement, only the member and the complainant shall be notified of the findings and action taken.
2. When the final action is Reprimand or Dismissal:
 - a) the member and the complainant shall be notified of the findings and action taken, and
 - b) the action shall be published in the next Imago Newsletter.
- 3) When a member has resigned during the course of an investigation, the complainant will be notified of the resignation and the fact that Imago Relationships International no longer has any jurisdiction of the member.
- 4) The notice in Imago Newsletter is limited to the member's full name and highest earned degree, geographic location, the fact and date of Reprimand, Dismissal, Resignations and specific parts of the code of ethics which have been violated.

G. Report to IRI

1. The executive committee shall report to the Board of IRI when a complaint has been received and an investigation is in progress.
2. The executive committee shall report to the Board of IRI after an investigation is concluded and a decision has been made regarding a complaint.

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Ethics

Complaint Form

BASIC INFORMATION

Member Information

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone

Numbers _____ (H) _____ (W) _____ (C)

Complainant Information

Name _____ Male Female

Address _____

Telephone Numbers _____ (H) _____ (W) _____ (C)

Call Back

Instructions _____

Is your complaint being addressed in any of the following: (Please check)

Court, either civil or criminal State Board of

Professional Regulation

Other Certifying Professional Organizations

CODE OF ETHICS VIOLATIONS INVOLVED (MAY USE APA) (Please note sections of Code you believe have been violated.)

COMPLAINT (Use additional pages if needed)

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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE INFORMATION AND WAIVERS

Having made an ethics complaint to the Imago Relationships International about the above named member of IRI, I authorize IRI to use my name and the information I presented to investigate and process this complaint.

I authorize the member against whom my complaint has been made, to release to IRI any information requested in the course of their investigation. I waive any confidential privilege, right or claim of privacy I may now have in information communicated to or held by the Member. I understand that information so received by IRI would be treated confidentially.

If additional information is needed by IRI to complete its investigation from other professionals such as therapists, medical care providers or others who might have information about the complaint, I understand that this information will not be sought without my written permission. A separate request to authorize release of information will be requested, specifically stating information sought, from whom and for what purpose.

I understand that information gathered in the process of this investigation would be shared fully with the member so that they may respond without limitation to IRI about the ethics complaint.

For the protection of the integrity of the ethics complaint process, I realize that I will not have access to information gathered by IRI in the course of its investigation. However, I understand that I will be informed of final actions taken.

Date _____ Signature _____

**Return this report and other materials to:
Inc.**

Suite 1001

Imago Relationships International,

**Tim Atkinson, Executive Director
160 Broadway, East Building,**

New York, NY 10038

212-240-7433 Fax 212-240-7435