



ACCRÉDITATION SANS FRONTIÈRES

ASF Code of Conduct

One standard of conduct for everyone who acts on ASF's behalf

Version 2 · 2026

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Foreword

ASF's conflict-of-interest rules have, until this document, lived in five separate places: the manual, the Surveyor Training Standard, the Training & Education Standards, and implicitly within several others — each internally consistent, but genuinely scattered. A fair critic could point to that scattering as inconsistency, even though no individual provision was actually wrong. This document exists to fix that, following the real model established accreditors use: Joint Commission maintains a single, comprehensive Code of Conduct covering every person who acts on its behalf, organized around seven durable principles [1]. This document adopts that same structure.

This Code does not replace the specific conflict-of-interest procedures already built into How ASF Develops and Revises Standards, the ASF Surveyor Training Standard, or the ASF Training & Education Standards — it becomes the single authority those procedures now point back to, so that a genuinely comprehensive standard exists in one place, with each document's specific application of it cross-referenced rather than restated.

1. Scope and Application

This Code applies to every individual acting on ASF's behalf in any capacity: Council members, Revision Panel members, certified surveyors, ASF staff performing any internal operational function under the ASF Personnel Competence & Awareness Policy, and any external party engaged under the ASF Outsourcing Policy. No exception exists for seniority, tenure, or the informality of a particular role — a volunteer Revision Panel member and a salaried member of ASF's own staff are held to the identical standard.

2. Why a Single Code, Grounded in Evidence, Not Assertion

This Code is not built on the assumption that stating a rule is the same thing as preventing its violation. Real research on organizational ethics offers three specific, documented findings that shape how this Code is structured and enforced.

First, pressure to compromise standards is a measurable predictor of actual misconduct: in a major national ethics survey, seventy-three percent of employees who felt pressure to evade ethical standards also personally witnessed workplace misconduct, compared with only seventeen percent of employees who did not feel that pressure [2]. A Code that only states rules, without addressing the conditions that create pressure to break them, addresses half the problem.

Second, and directly relevant to Principle 7.3 of this Code, real research finds that a significant majority of documented workplace misconduct is attributable to individuals holding some level of management responsibility — not junior staff [2]. This is precisely why this Code applies without exception to seniority: the evidence says leadership-level conduct is where the real risk concentrates, not where it is safest to assume good behavior.

Third, organizations with genuinely strong ethical cultures see measurably less misconduct, less pressure to compromise standards, and less retaliation against people who report concerns — the same three outcomes this Code and the ASF Internal Whistleblower Protection Policy are designed to produce together [3].

Ethics officers' own field experience suggests that genuine violators are typically a small minority of any organization — in some documented accounts, under one percent [4]. This Code is not written on the premise that most people acting on ASF's behalf need to be watched. It is written because a real minority exists everywhere, and a Code that only exists for show does nothing to identify or address that minority.

Principle 1 — Business Ethics

Every individual covered by this Code deals honestly in every transaction and representation made on ASF's behalf. This includes:

- Never misrepresenting ASF's accreditation status, an organization's accreditation status, or the meaning of any ASF standard to any party, for any purpose
- Never accepting a gift, payment, or benefit from an accredited organization, applicant organization, or surveyor candidate that could reasonably be seen to influence an accreditation-related decision
- Never offering or accepting a bribe, kickback, or improper inducement of any kind in connection with any ASF activity

Consistent with the ASF Independence & Non-Influence Statement, no individual represents, implies, or allows another party to believe that purchasing any ASF-affiliated service — training, consulting, or advisory support — influences or expedites an accreditation outcome.

Principle 2 — Confidentiality

Every individual covered by this Code protects confidential information encountered through ASF work — an organization's survey findings, a complainant's identity under the ASF Public Complaints & Feedback Policy, a sentinel event report, or a candidate's application materials — consistent with the confidentiality provisions already governing each specific process. This obligation survives the end of an individual's service to ASF, in any capacity, indefinitely.

Principle 3 — Conflicts and Dualities of Interest

Every individual covered by this Code discloses, in writing, any financial, professional, or personal interest that could reasonably affect — or reasonably appear to affect — their objectivity in any ASF matter, before participating in that matter. This Code is the single governing authority for conflict-of-interest requirements across ASF; the specific procedures in Section 10 of How ASF Develops and Revises Standards, Standard A5 and A6 of the ASF Surveyor Training Standard, and Standard C4 of the ASF Training & Education Standards each apply this Code's requirement to their own specific context, and none of them state a different or lesser standard.

A duality of interest — a relationship or role that is not financial but could still compromise independent judgment, such as a close personal relationship with an organization under review — is disclosed and managed on the same terms as a financial conflict.

Principle 4 — Core Activity and Relationships

Every individual covered by this Code maintains ASF's independence in every relationship with an accredited or applicant organization. This means:

- Declining to provide paid consulting, advisory, or preparation services to an organization ASF may survey, where doing so would create the appearance that ASF's own judgment could be bought
- Treating every organization under review with the same rigor and courtesy, regardless of its size, prominence, or relationship to ASF's own leadership or founders
- Referring an organization to an external service — including any ISO 9001 certification partner referred under ASF's own management-systems strategy — only on a non-exclusive basis, with no commission or benefit returned to ASF or to the referring individual

Principle 5 — Protection of Assets

Every individual covered by this Code protects ASF's own assets — its published standards, its name and accreditation marks, its confidential records, and its physical and digital infrastructure — from misuse, whether by an outside party or by another individual covered by this Code.

- ASF's published standards may be freely read and used by any organization seeking to meet them, consistent with ASF's own transparency principle — but may not be republished as another party's own work, or altered and represented as ASF's genuine standard
- The ASF name and any accreditation mark are used only to describe a genuine, current ASF accreditation status, never to imply a status that does not exist or has lapsed
- ASF's digital systems — including the public registry and complaint intake systems governed by the ASF IT & Data Security Policy — are accessed only for legitimate ASF purposes

Principle 6 — Workplace Conduct and Employment Practices

This is the one principle in this Code addressing how ASF treats its own people, not how ASF's people treat the outside world — and until this document, ASF had never stated it.

- Every individual covered by this Code treats colleagues, surveyors, Council and Panel members, and ASF staff with respect, regardless of role, seniority, nationality, or background
- Harassment, discrimination, or retaliation of any kind — including retaliation against someone who raises a concern under the ASF Internal Whistleblower Protection Policy — is not tolerated, from anyone, regardless of position
- Recruitment, appointment, and advancement within any ASF role is based on genuine merit and the eligibility criteria stated in the relevant ASF document, applied consistently regardless of the candidate's personal connection to ASF's own leadership

An organization that holds its accredited facilities to real patient-safety and dignity standards, while never stating what it owes its own people, has been asking more of others than of itself. This principle exists so that is no longer true.

Principle 7 — Administration and Application

7.1 Acknowledgment

Every individual covered by this Code acknowledges it in writing before beginning service in any ASF capacity, and re-acknowledges it at the same interval Council and Revision Panel members re-confirm their conflict-of-interest declarations.

7.2 Handling a Violation

A suspected violation of this Code is addressed as a nonconformity under the ASF Internal Nonconformity & Corrective Action Procedure where the individual is ASF's own personnel, or under the ASF Public Complaints & Feedback Policy's second track (Section 7, complaints about ASF itself) where the concern involves ASF's own conduct raised by an external party. This Code does not create a third, separate enforcement process — it states the standard those existing processes already enforce.

7.3 No Exception for Seniority

A violation by a Council member, a founder, or any senior individual is addressed under the identical process as a violation by any other individual covered by this Code. No role within ASF places an individual outside this Code's reach. This is not a symbolic commitment — Section 2 of this Code cites the specific evidence showing that management-level conduct is where documented misconduct actually concentrates, which is exactly why this provision exists without a carve-out.

References

- [1] Joint Commission. Code of Conduct. Oakbrook Terrace (IL): The Joint Commission; 2026.
- [2] Thomson Reuters. Top Four Indicators of Ethical Risk in the Workplace, citing the 2013 National Business Ethics Study and the Ethics & Compliance Initiative's 2016 Global Business Ethics Survey.
- [3] Rhode, Deborah L.; Packel, Amanda K. Ethics and Nonprofits. Stanford Social Innovation Review, Summer 2009.
- [4] Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University. Encouraging Internal Whistleblowing (And More!).

Annex A — Code of Conduct Acknowledgment

Signed by every individual before beginning service in any ASF capacity, and re-signed at the standard re-confirmation interval.

Name: _____

ASF role or capacity: _____

- ☐ I have read and understood the ASF Code of Conduct in full
- ☐ I understand this Code applies to me regardless of seniority or the informality of my role
- ☐ I have disclosed any conflict or duality of interest under Principle 3, or confirm none exists

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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Seven principles, one standard, applied to everyone who acts in ASF's name — including the people who wrote this Code — grounded in real evidence about where misconduct actually concentrates, not assumptions about where it might.