

National Partnership for Juvenile Services (NPJS)

CODE OF ETHICS

Developed July 10, 2012

Preamble

In 2004, the Council for Educators of At-Risk and Delinquent Youth (CEARDY), the Juvenile Justice Trainers Association (JJTA), the National Association for Juvenile Correctional Agencies (NAJCA), and the National Juvenile Detention Association (NJDA) merged their respective membership organizations under one operational structure, the National Partnership for Juvenile Services (hereafter referred to as the Partnership or NPJS). Building on years of experience, knowledge, and skill, this union allows these individual organizations to focus on their respective mission and discipline while minimizing duplication, maximizing limited resources, and ensuring sustainability.

As an educational, scientific, training and professional organization, NPJS recognizes that its membership reflects the full range of diversity in the juvenile justice system. The specification of ethical standards enables NPJS to clarify for all members and to those served by its members, the nature of ethical responsibilities shared by its members.

NPJS and its members contribute to the analysis, interpretation, understanding, and resolution of juvenile justice issues by providing programs, services, policy statements, conferences, training, and publications.

The Code of Ethics serves to stimulate greater concern by NPJS members for their own professional functioning and for the conduct of fellow professionals within the juvenile justice system. As the ethical code of NPJS, this document establishes principles that define the ethical behavior of NPJS members.

Purpose of the NPJS Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics guides NPJS members in their own professional functioning and advocates for the ethical conduct of all professionals within the juvenile justice system. The Partnership Code of Ethics has established the following principles and standards to guide member conduct.

Ethical Principles and Standards

Recognizing the critical role of conscience in choosing among courses of action and taking into account the moral ambiguities of life, the members of NPJS commit themselves to the following:

- **Demonstrating the highest standards of personal conduct.**

Juvenile justice professionals are rarely defined by the public or the helping professions as having a high status career. Public perceptions often imply that everyone has the ability to work with at risk and delinquent youth. For these reasons, members must continually demonstrate pride in their profession and self-respect reflective of the highest level of personal conduct. This conduct specifically refers to personal integrity, honesty, and truthfulness demonstrated in their relationships between colleagues, youth and the public.

Juvenile justice professionals are charged with the responsibility to assure public safety, promote competency development and provide safe care of juvenile justice involved youth. Cognizant of this public trust, members understand that any individual or collective compromise of their integrity or self-respect can damage the ability of the juvenile justice system to accomplish its mission. The best insurance against a loss of public confidence is strict adherence to the highest standards of personal conduct.

- **Demonstrating the highest standards of professional conduct.**

Progress as a profession depends not only on public trust but on professional competency. Therefore, members strive for excellence in job performance that advances the cause of their profession by gaining increased public respect in order to further the best interest of justice involved youth. Members support and encourage programs that develop knowledge, skills, and abilities directly relevant to juvenile justice services. Members demand regular and periodic feedback regarding their job performance, career goals, as well as opportunities for continuous professional development.

Members understand that the important component of juvenile justice services is the relationship between staff and youth. Members emphasize training and skill acquisition in the area of interpersonal communication.

Members are concerned with providing the highest quality of care. In keeping with this concern, members contribute to the performance improvement process consistent with nationally recognized juvenile justice standards and encourage others to contribute in this process as well. Members perform their duties in a non-intrusive and respectful manner. Members do not permit personal feelings, prejudices, animosities, or friendships to influence their decisions. Members implement programs without fear or favor, without malice or preferential treatment. Members consistently respect the personal safety and boundaries of youth and co-workers and utilize appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Members utilize the least restrictive intervention available to ensure the safety of the youth as well as the immediate community.

- **Avoiding any interest or activity which is in conflict with or which produces undue personal gain through the execution of official duties.**

Members refrain from any task or relationship which is or could be viewed as conflicting with job responsibilities. Conflicts occur when an individual's obligation to meet their

professional responsibility to their clients, their employer or the Partnership are at odds with the individual's own personal or financial interests.

Members must understand their role in developing the independence of youth in their care. Therefore, members value the human worth of these youth by steadfastly refusing to behave in a manner which satisfies their personal needs at the expense of youth.

Members must not engage in any activity which may result in or be perceived as a financial conflict.

Members must abstain from voting on any matters which may create or be perceived as a conflict of interest.

- **Safeguarding the confidentiality of youth.**

Members adhere to all legal requirements, standards and policies regarding issues of confidentiality for justice involved youth. Members refrain from identifying youth and discussing specific problems and incidents outside the context of their official duties.

- **Advocating the legal and ethical rights of youth.**

Members advocate for policies that ensure the legal and human rights of justice involved youth. Members educate justice involved youth, professionals and others about policies and practices that either promote or violate these rights. Members refuse to remain silent when these rights are violated, and they speak on behalf of the affected youths.

Members support the rights of justice involved youth to be served in a psychologically and physically safe and secure environment.

- **Eliminating all forms of unethical and illegal behavior.**

As representatives of the juvenile justice system, members are committed to promoting legal and ethical standards of behavior. Therefore, members will confront and report illegal or unethical behaviors that occur in any juvenile justice setting. Members are committed to upholding ethical standards that transcend issues of friendship, efficiency, and loyalty to their agency.

Members do not tolerate acts of discrimination, theft, or any form of child abuse (i.e., physical, mental, or sexual), and advocate for the removal from the profession those individuals who condone or engage in such behaviors.

- **Maintaining an optimum level of physical conditioning and mental alertness.**

Members realize that working with juvenile offenders is a highly stressful profession. Part of this stress derives from the potential for physical interventions. Members maintain an optimum level of physical conditioning in order to respond to physical situations in the most efficient manner. Members realize that both staff and residents are less likely to be injured when staff are trained, in good physical condition, and psychologically prepared to control any situation.

- **Maintaining an optimum level of physical conditioning and mental alertness.**

Members take responsibility for maintaining their physical and psychological wellness in order to provide optimal levels of safety, security, and helpful services for youth in their care.

Members realize that working with youth is a challenging and sometimes stressful profession. The stress that can be associated with juvenile justice service may affect the mental attitude and physical health of staff. In order to provide optimal levels of care and supervision, members consistently maintain a high degree of mental alertness and an awareness of both youth and the environment. Members also maintain an optimal level of physical fitness in order to respond safely and appropriately to situations that may require physical intervention.

Members support and encourage training and continuing education for juvenile justice staff in stress management and other mental and physical health practices. Members endorse and encourage the development of support groups among staff within the juvenile justice system to provide an appropriate forum to ventilate frustrations, to discuss problem situations, to share ideas that work, and to rejuvenate.