

Adopted 2010, Revised 2018, 2024

Preamble

School Counselor Associations are professional organizations that champion the advancement and support of school counselors and the profession of school counseling at the local, state, and national levels. These organizations acknowledge the school counselors' pivotal role as education leaders who implement school counseling programs that inspire, assist and advocate for pre-K-12 students to reach their highest potential.

School counselor professional associations support pre-K–12 school counselors, school counseling students/interns, school counseling program directors/supervisors and school counselor educators/faculty. They serve as advocates and elevate public awareness of the profound and essential role school counselors play in fostering student academic success, career development and social/emotional well-being as well as dismantling systemic barriers to equity and access in education.

Upholding the highest professional standards, school counselor associations navigate organizational management and governance with integrity, sensitivity and dedication. These standards are the ethical obligation of all school counselor associations.

Purpose

In this document, ASCA specifies the obligation to the principles of ethical behavior necessary to maintain the highest standards of integrity, leadership and professionalism. The Ethical Standards for School Counselor Association Leaders outline the highest standards of association service and personal conduct. All elected and appointed leaders and association staff are expected to adhere to these standards, which helps ensure public confidence in the integrity and service of the association and the school counseling profession.

The purpose of this document is to:

- Serve as a guide for the ethical practices of school counselor associations and their leadership (e.g., elected and appointed leaders, volunteers, paid or volunteer staff)
- Ensure a culture of equity and inclusion and a commitment to advancement of the association

- Expand diversity in association networks
- Identify and remove barriers to the inclusion and retention of diverse leaders and to make adjustments when necessary to support equity, inclusion and belonging.
- Expand efforts to incorporate diverse perspectives and worldviews.

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 understand that their behavior is subject to public scrutiny due to their responsibility to both the association's membership and the public. They aim to exemplify model citizenry within their community, the school counseling community and their wider professional community.
- A.2. *Actively promote and encourage the highest ethical practice within school counseling.* Association leaders maintain an influential role within school counseling and 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 sharing of the ASCA Ethical Standards and implicitly by example.
- A.3. *Use only legal and ethical means in all association activities.* Association leaders are responsible for understanding the boundaries of appropriate behavior and ensuring that their organization operates within legal and ethical boundaries. Misbehavior or inappropriate activity on the part of an association leader reflects poorly upon the school counseling profession and can undermine the association's efforts to influence legislative/regulatory policymakers.
- A.4. *Maintain loyalty to the association and pursue its objectives consistent with the professional and ethical standards of school counseling.* Association leaders are responsible for promoting the interests of the organization and its members.

When association leaders perceive that the association's direction conflicts with the professional and ethical standards of school counseling, leaders must follow a predefined conflict resolution process. Should the conflict become irreconcilable, leaders are responsible for maintaining the interests of the organization.

- 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 are responsible for making the best possible management decisions in the interest of the association. Leaders may only accept personal compensation with the governing board's explicit consent. Leaders are obliged to prioritize the association's welfare in all decisions, avoiding conflicts of interest to ensure actions align with the association's best interests.
- A.6. *Maintain a high-level of professionalism at all scheduled association meetings.* As elected individuals, association leaders and staff are responsible for conducting meetings with decorum and with respect for all contributions of expertise and knowledge from those in attendance.

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 the association impartially without special privilege to any individual member, except with full disclosure and knowledge and consent of the association's governing board.* Association leaders refrain from granting special favors or giving undue advantage to members, vendors or other parties without explicit governing board approval. Leaders are obligated to represent all members fairly and must avoid commitments to specific individuals or groups unless they align with the best interests of the association as sanctioned by the governing board.
- B.2. *Prevent the association from discriminating on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, age, language, ability status or genetic information.* Association leaders do not discriminate against individual members or other constituents, and do not allow their association to engage in discrimination.

- B.3. *Safeguard the integrity of confidential information.* Association leaders frequently have access to sensitive information, which must be held in confidence in accordance with school counseling ethical standards. If association leaders receive information that they feel they cannot in good conscience hold in trust, they should use appropriate decision-making models, such as the ASCA Ethical Decision-Making Model, to determine actions of disclosure or confidence.
- B.4. *Cooperate with other association leaders for the advancement of school counseling.* Association leaders have an ethical duty to collaborate with counterparts from other associations, promoting school counseling and setting a precedent of cooperative conduct. Even in competitive scenarios, leaders uphold fairness and ethics, refraining from actions intended solely to harm other associations or individuals.
- B.5. *Foster inclusivity within the election process for association leaders.* Associations annually review the criteria for nominations and elections and provide opportunities for diverse leadership, removing any barriers to access.

C. Competent Association Management

Elected and appointed leaders of school counselor associations:

- C.1. *Recognize and discharge their responsibility and that of their association to uphold all laws and regulations related to the association's policies and activities.* Association leaders are responsible for understanding the basic laws and regulations that apply to the association. Leaders help association members understand the legal framework within which the association operates. Leaders ensure all policies and practices of the association are created and conducted within this framework.
- C.2. *Strive for excellence in all aspects of association management.* Association leaders are responsible for keeping current with trends and following best practices and generally accepted principles of association management.
- C.3. *Ensure association internal and external statements are truthful and accurate.* Association leaders, are responsible for maintaining opportunities for communication between the association and the public. 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, as appropriate.

- C.4. *Ensure effective and ethical behaviors among leaders of the association and affiliated organizations.* Association leaders are responsible for holding each other accountable by addressing inappropriate, illegal or unethical behaviors exhibited by other association leaders.
- C.5. *Identify and recruit effective prospective leaders to ensure the preservation and advancement of the organization.* Association leaders foster the organization's growth and sustainability through judicious leader selection and recruitment. Leaders should not knowingly promote or support ineffective leaders for a higher position within the organization or affiliated organizations. This standard implicitly underscores the importance of meritocracy and integrity within the leadership recruitment process, advocating for decisions made in the best interest of the organization's future rather than personal advantage or nepotism.
- C.6. *Preserve association integrity and prohibition of personal gain or creation of competing entities using association resources.* Leaders within the association are committed to upholding ethical standards that strictly prohibit the use of association resources, including membership lists, intellectual property or organizational materials, for personal gain or the establishment of competing associations. This commitment extends beyond their tenure, ensuring that all proprietary information and resources remain dedicated solely to the benefit and advancement of the association and its members.