

Code of Conduct

Introduction

Ethics refers to commonly agreed and accepted standards of right and wrong. These standards prescribe what individuals ought to do, usually in terms of their rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness or specific virtues such as honesty and integrity.

Ethical guidelines should be expressed in general terms, not in detail. Still, they must be clear enough to give guidance when in doubt, faced with the dilemmas in decision-making in corrections.

Ethical guidelines do not offer concrete answers or solutions to problems, but they must offer a framework for reflections, guiding the employee in the right direction. Ethical conduct is highly reliant on the development of one's own ethical standards. It refers to the continuous effort of studying our own conduct and striving to ensure that we, and the institutions that we help to shape, live up to standards that are reasonable and beneficial to society.

The importance of ensuring the highest standards of ethical conduct among prison and correction employees cannot be overstated. The supervision of offenders in the community and the detention of individuals in custody raise unique challenges for all corrections employees that are not covered by the generic provisions of existing public service codes and legislation. Still, in all countries, quality in corrections is a government responsibility. A code of ethical conduct in corrections must therefore be based on ethical guidelines for the public sector. These are valid not only for corrections, but also for other government agencies, not-for-profit organizations and private companies who deliver services in corrections.

Although based on general quality expectations in the public sector, the ethical guidelines must highlight the specific concerns of corrections. Prison and correction employees must at all times be conscious of the power conferred upon them by legislation, the courts and the inferred trust of their community. Correction and prison staff are empowered to direct and restrict many aspects

of the lives of offenders in the community. In a custodial setting, officers can direct and guide almost all aspects of a prisoner's life.

Decisions, conduct and behaviour within the correctional environment must always be founded on what is right, what is just and what is ethical.

The International Corrections and Prison Association expects of its members and all correctional officials unfailing honesty, respect for the dignity and individuality of human beings and a commitment to professional and compassionate service. To this end, we subscribe to the following code of ethical conduct:

1. Concern for the citizenry and for the reputation of the organization

Both as the exerciser of authority, provider of services and steward of significant social resources, correctional agencies – and thus the individual employee – are obliged to take account of the public interest, to strive to achieve equal treatment and to treat individuals with respect. Quality in corrections requires responsiveness to prisoner needs, to the Government, to the community and to other stakeholders. Correctional officials shall respect and protect the right of the public to be safeguarded from criminal activity. Treating individuals with respect implies maintaining a courteous and respectful attitude when interacting with others during the course of duty, even when the language or behaviour of others is offensive or inappropriate. The individual employee is required to perform his or her duties and behave in an ethical manner, and thus avoid damaging the reputation of the organization. The same principles must be upheld unconditionally when correctional officials are off duty or off site for any reason or for any given length of time.

2. Duty of obedience, duty to report and duty of efficiency

Correctional officials are required to comply with the legal rules and ethical guidelines that apply to the activities, as well as to follow orders issued by superiors. The duty of obedience entails no obligation to follow orders to do anything illegal or unethical. Correctional



officials are required to report to their employer corruption, unethical behaviours or any circumstances of which she or he is aware that could cause the employer, employee or the surroundings to suffer losses or damages of any kind. Correctional officials are required to use and preserve the organization's resources in the most economical and rational manner possible, and shall not abuse or waste the organization's funds. Reaching the established targets in a good and efficient manner requires striking a balance between efficiency and the use of resources, thoroughness, quality and good administrative practice.

3. **Duty of care**

Correctional officials should continue to identify in each individual the potential to become a law abiding citizen. He or she must exercise reasonable care and skill, and support a safe and secure environment for the community by humanely and securely managing individuals under custodial and community sanctions. Correctional officials must recognize the inherent dignity and worth of every human being and ensure human rights and civil liberties are safeguarded. He or she shall refrain from discriminating against any individual because of race, gender, creed, national origin, religious affiliation, age, disability, or any other type of prohibited discrimination. Correctional officials shall preserve the integrity of private information. They shall refrain from seeking information about individuals beyond that which is necessary to implement responsibilities and perform their duties. He or she shall refrain from revealing non-public information unless expressly authorized to do so.

4. **Transparency**

There should be openness and transparency throughout the administration so that the general public can understand the organization's activities, and thus gain insight into how the organization attends to its responsibilities. All employees must ensure open communication between staff, offenders, prisoners and the community. Information should be shared with the public to the extent permitted by law subject to individuals' right to privacy. Public administration has an active duty of disclosure. Correctional officials



should always provide correct and adequate information, whether to other authorities, companies, organizations or residents. In certain contexts, this will mean that one should, of one's own volition, disclose information of significance needed for the processing of a case. Like everyone else, correctional officials enjoy a fundamental right to express critical opinions about the government's activities and all other matters. Still, objectivity must be maintained while acting in an official capacity by differentiation between personal views and those expressed on behalf of the agency. Correctional officials must be able to report circumstances in the service that are worthy of criticism. Before a report is filed, an attempt should be made to sort the matter out in-house. Public criticism of colleagues or of the organization should be made only when warranted, verifiable and constructive.

5. **Confidence in the service**

Correctional officials shall not behave in a manner that might impair faith in their impartiality. Correction and prison personnel shall refrain from entering into any formal or informal activity or agreement which presents a conflict of interest or is inconsistent with the conscientious performance of duties, or that lend themselves to undermining trust in the service. There must be transparency about the potential impact of correctional officials' outside and second jobs, etc. on the discharge of their duties. All employees are to be careful about how they treat confidential information. This includes in respect of former colleagues, especially if they represent an interested party in a matter where the agency is the decision-making authority, or if they are employed by an organization engaged in interaction or negotiations with the agency.

Correctional officials shall not, on their own behalf or on behalf of others, accept or facilitate the acceptance of gifts, travel, hotel accommodations, hospitality, discounts, loans or other contributions or perquisites that are appropriate to, or intended by the donor, to influence their work.

Correctional officials must not use their position to gain an undue advantage for themselves or anyone else. This also applies in cases where these advantages would not

affect their service-capacity actions. Correctional officials shall not, as part of discharging their duties, give or offer gifts or other perquisites that are appropriate to, or intended to, sway the recipient's service-capacity actions.

6. Professional conduct and independence

The principle of professional independence means that correctional officials should use their professional knowledge and professional judgement to discharge their duties. Correctional officials shall apply sound judgement, which is fair, reasonable, and just. Reasons for decisions should be explained, be based on evidence and made free from bias. In order to perform the challenging, demanding and often complex tasks of corrections, all employees must continuously update and develop their knowledge, and be prepared to raise their professional level. Correctional officials shall maintain relationships with colleagues to promote mutual respect within the profession and improve the quality of service. He or she shall respect the importance of all disciplines within the criminal justice system and work to improve cooperation with each segment. Cooperation with other agencies and stakeholders should be used as a multiplier in improving standards of delivery.

The Mission of ICPA

To contribute to public safety and healthier communities by encouraging and enabling best correctional practices in prisons and outside communities

Shared Values

1. The enhancing of public safety by the development of sound corrections and criminal justice policy.
2. The respect for the dignity of all individuals and the protection of their rights in accordance with the United Nations Standards and Norms in Criminal Justice, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

3. The expansion and testing of the theoretical and empirical body of knowledge that underpins professionalism in corrections.
 4. The open and free sharing of ideas, knowledge, values and experience that is essential for sustained growth and development of all communities.
 5. The importance of strong partnerships, built upon mutual respect and ongoing collaboration.
 6. The recognition that sound correctional practices contribute to the harmony, health, and prosperity of communities.
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