



Common Ground
helping people move from crisis to hope

CODE OF ETHICS

POLICY

Common Ground is dedicated to the delivery of behavioral health care in an environment characterized by strict conformance with the highest standards of accountability for administration, clinical, business, marketing and financial management. Commitment to ethical professional conduct is expected of every member of the Common Ground staff and board.

PREAMBLE

The Code of Ethics shall be supplemented by a set of policies, procedures and guidelines, which provide an explanation to assist staff in dealing with the various issues contained in the Code.

The Code of Ethics and its guidelines are intended to serve as a basis for ethical decisions made in the conduct of professional work. They may also serve as a basis for judging the merit of a formal complaint pertaining to the violation of professional ethical standards.

Some words and phrases in the Code of Ethics are subject to varying interpretations, and one ethical principle may conflict with other ethical principles in specific situations. Questions related to ethical conflicts can best be answered by

THE CODE OF ETHICS

- 1. Business Practices.** Common Ground's leadership is fully committed to the need to prevent and detect fraud, fiscal mismanagement and misappropriation of funds and therefore, to the development of a formal corporate compliance program to ensure ongoing monitoring and conformance with all legal and regulatory requirements. Further, Common Ground is committed to the establishment, implementation and maintenance of a corporate compliance program that emphasizes 1) prevention of wrong doing – whether intentional or unintentional, 2) immediate reporting and investigation of questionable activities and practices without consequences to the reporting party and 3) timely correction of any situation which puts the organization, its leadership or staff, funding sources or individuals served at risk.
- 2. Witnessing of Signatures.** An employee or volunteer witnessing a signature on a document will either observe the person signing the document or will make inquiry of the person signing the document to as to whether he or she is the person who signed the document. A person witnessing a signature will either personally know the person who signed or will ask to see appropriate identification. When required, the signature may be witnessed by a notary public. Generally, a person chosen to witness a document should have no financial or other interest in an agreement. A neutral third party is the best choice. The witness is not usually required to discern or understand the contents of the document. A witness must be of legal age and mentally capable.
- 3. Marketing.** All written, oral and electronic communications and marketing information about Common Ground will fully and honestly reflect the programs and services of the organization. Marketing efforts will always respect the dignity and privacy rights of individuals served.
- 4. Service Delivery.** All persons conducting business with or providing services for Common Ground, regardless of professional status, whether their business is with individuals served, other providers within Common Ground, or the community-at-large, are duty-bound to operate in accordance with the generally accepted ethical principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, respect for individual autonomy and justice, as described below:
 - A. Beneficence: the duty to promote the welfare of, and prevent harm to, all individuals served.**

We recognize the importance of responding promptly and courteously to the needs of individuals served. We are committed to providing the highest possible quality of care to individuals served, and continuously monitor and seek to improve the quality of those services. We expect all persons providing services on behalf of Common Ground to vigorously and continuously pursue professional competence and excellence.

As reflected in Common Ground's values, we are also committed to equal opportunity, equitable compensation, professional development and the general welfare of staff/consultants/students/volunteers. We also recognize Common Ground's role as a citizen of the community, and our obligation to promote the welfare of the community and, whenever possible, to prevent harm to other citizens of the community (e.g. duty to warn).

B. Non-maleficence: the duty to do no harm to individuals served.

All persons providing services on behalf of Common Ground are expected to remain aware of the risk for harm, and to reduce that risk by all means possible. Such means include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Referral for services beyond the scope of Common Ground's expertise or ability to provide;
- Avoidance of dual relationships (e.g., social, financial, sexual, etc.), intentional or inadvertent, with the individual served or their families at any time during or after services have been provided;
- Treatment protocols and therapy techniques that are not in conflict with the State and County government mental health authorities;
- Strict avoidance of all other conflicts of interest;
- Reporting of ethical violations to supervisors, agency administration, and relevant certifying/licensing bodies;
- Honesty and integrity in reporting of all operations, both internally and externally;
- Regularly scheduled staff training which addresses common sources of harmful effects such as boundary violations, violations of confidentiality, misdiagnosis, counter-transference, etc.;
- Regularly scheduled supervision for all staff;
- Continuous quality improvement activities; and
- The expectation that all staff/consultants/students/volunteers will contribute to a healthy work environment by encouraging open communication, personal and professional growth, cooperation, a positive attitude toward the work Common Ground does, and by resisting the cynicism and passive-aggressiveness that so often undermines human service organizations and ultimately harms service recipients.

C. Respect for individual autonomy and justice.

Our duty to recognize the individual's right and responsibility to make his/her own decisions, and also recognize the potential conflict between the duty to respect the individual's autonomy and the duty to prevent harm. All individuals served have:

- The right to participate in any plans (including treatment plans) made in their interests;
- The right to refuse services (unless otherwise stipulated by court order, and with the understanding that refusal of specific services of a Common Ground program may change the status as an individual served in that program);
- The right to due process with regard to Common Ground's policies & procedures;
- The right to expect that their transactions with Common Ground will be treated confidentially;
- The right to respect for their moral, religious, and cultural values, whether we as individuals share those values.

5. Conflict of Interest in Service Delivery. Common Ground employees should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment. Employees should inform the individual served when a real or potential conflict of interest arises and take reasonable steps to resolve the issue in

a manner that makes the interests of the individual served primary and protects those interests to the greatest extent possible. In some cases, protecting those interests may require termination of the professional relationship with a proper referral recommendation for the individual served. Common Ground staff should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.

- 6. Personal Fundraising.** Employees shall not engage in coercive solicitation of coworkers or individuals served such as seeking donations, encouraging purchases or taking a position on an issue outside the workplace. Employees receiving unwanted solicitations are encouraged to address the issue with their coworker and/or report the matter to their supervisor and/or Common Ground management.
- 7. Exchange of gifts, gratuities and money.** Common Ground employees should always interact "therapeutically" in their relationship with the individual served. Employees do not give or accept items (money, personal items, cd's, cigarettes, clothes, etc.) to or from the individual served. Common Ground staff members do not allow pictures to be taken or exchanged unless granted permission by written consent of the individual served. Common Ground staff should not have any reason to accept money or gratuities from an individual served, external agencies, funders, or other vendors. If an employee receives a gift during service for Common Ground from an external vendor or referral source, the gift will be turned in to the employee's supervisor and considered a donation.
- 8. Personal Property.** Common Ground cannot be responsible for loss of personal property that is damaged or stolen. Employees are responsible for personal property/items/belongings brought to the workplace. Common Ground also prohibits any items on the premises or worksite that are sexually suggestive, offensive, or demeaning to specific individuals or groups, along with firearms or weapons. All personal property may be inspected for purposes of enforcing Common Ground's policies and to protect against theft. Property owned by Common Ground and personal property of individuals served, visitors, and personnel shall be safeguarded and treated with respect.
- 9. Setting Boundaries.** Common Ground serves people vulnerable to additional abuse, mistreatment and exploitation. Contact between individuals served and staff (volunteers and employees, including recovery coaches) is limited to activities approved to protect all involved. Staff, including recovery coaches, should not meet outside the parameters of the organization. Common Ground employees, including recovery coaches, should not engage in dual or multiple relationships with the individual served or former individuals served, in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm.

All staff, consultants, interns/externs, and volunteers who are bound by a professional Code of Ethics (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, licensed and/or certified counselors, attorneys, certified recreational therapists) are expected to remain familiar and up-to-date with, and to adhere to, their respective codes.
- 10. Fundraising.** Common Ground respects the rights of its donors to be informed of the Common Ground mission, the way the resources will be used and Common Ground's capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes. Confidentiality and privacy of all persons and donors shall be preserved. Common Ground shall respect confidentiality within all lawful limitations.

All fundraising, resource and development activities will be conducted in accordance with standards and ethics set forth by the agency and the National Association of Fundraising Professionals and under the general oversight of the Board of Trustees.
- 11. Professional Responsibilities.** Common Ground's goal is to establish a high standard of performance, professionalism, and ethical conduct. We create an environment that fosters ethical behavior where no employee will ever feel the need to compromise personal integrity to help achieve Common Ground's mission.

The Code of Conduct is applicable to all staff, consultants and contractual employees, regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the population they serve. To that end, Staff will strictly

adhere to established rules of confidentiality regarding all records, materials and knowledge concerning individuals served in accordance with all current government and program regulations.

While working under Common Ground's Ethical Code of Conduct, the staff, consultants and contractual employees must be conscientious, committed, and honest in their work and all duties related to their respective jobs within the organization. In addition, Common Ground employees are expected to comply with the ethical codes of conduct outlined by their respective licensing or certifying boards.

12. Human Resources. Common Ground strives to recruit, manage, develop and retain employees who meet the needs of the individuals served and contribute to the accomplishment of Common Ground's mission. In doing so we strive to ensure compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity and Workforce Diversity guidelines and encourage hiring of qualified candidates who reflect the diversity of the community and population served. The Board of Trustees and staff of Common Ground will not discriminate against any person in recruitment, examination, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or any other personnel action based on actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, language, marital status, familial status, disability, political affiliation, religion, and receipt of public assistance or other factors which cannot be lawfully used as the basis for employment decisions.

13. Contractual Relationships. As part of standard business practices, Common Ground may enter into contractual arrangements for appropriate goods or services. The following guidelines will be adhered to:

Contracts will be executed by the President & CEO or designee and the contracting party; each legally qualified to commit the contracting entity to a binding contract.

The contract will clearly establish and address:

- The nature of services to be performed.
- The period of the agreement.
- If applicable, the conditions under which the contract will be reviewed, renewed and/or terminated and venue for addressing perceived breaches of the contract.
- The financial arrangements.
- Appropriate accounting procedures for revenue and expenditures.
- If applicable, Federal and State requirements.

14. Waste, fraud, abuse and other wrongdoings. Employees, stakeholders, board members and contractors representing Common Ground should not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception.

15. Reporting wrongdoings, fraud, abuse, grievances. When problems arise, hopefully a resolution can be reached informally, promptly, and equitably at the level of the staff's immediate supervisor. No employee will be penalized or retaliated against for reporting negligence, wrongdoing, fraud, abuse, harassment or other such incidents.

16. Delivery of Ethical Code of Conduct. The Board of Trustees delegates to the President/CEO the authority and responsibility for the management of the Code of Ethics Policy in accordance with Board policies.

All individuals served are informed of their rights and responsibilities, and the agency's ethical standards, at the time of admission and as needed during the course of treatment.

Staff/consultants/ students/volunteers and Board Members are informed of their rights and responsibilities and provided a copy of the Ethical Code of Conduct during their initial orientation and asked to sign an acknowledgement of receipt. The community-at-large is informed of these standards by way of the agency's

website. In the event an employee has questions regarding this Code of Conduct, they should seek out advice from a Supervisor, Management Team member, or the Director of Human Resources for clarification.

Reviewed By: Kyle Glasgow, Director of Mission Impact & Data Analysis

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