

CODE OF ETHICS POLICY

ETHICS: Definition- Greek, ethikos, "of moral"); the branch of philosophy dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions, and to the goodness and badness of the motives and ends of such actions; a system of moral principles. Also, in accordance with the rules for right conduct.

Purpose

The purpose of a code of ethics is to acknowledge a profession's acceptance of the responsibility and trust conferred upon it by society and to recognize the internal obligations inherent in that trust.

Ethics address appropriate or inappropriate conduct and behavior as determined by the entity setting the ethical standards. An issue of ethics is resolved by the determination that the best interests of the association and its members are served.

Policy

The Code of Ethics Policy of the Association of Technical Personnel in Ophthalmology (ATPO) applies to the members, officers, and other professionals associated with the ATPO. It is enforceable by the ATPO Ethics Committee, or other entity convened by the ATPO Board of Directors. Committee members, officers, and other professionals associated with the ATPO may not serve on any matter in which his or her impartiality is subject to question or where the presence of actual or apparent conflict of interest might reasonably exist. It is the responsibility of the committee member, officers, and other professionals associated with the ATPO to identify any potential conflict and to disclose all appropriate facts to the Chair of the Committee, who shall have final authority to determine whether the Ethics Committee member shall be replaced for that hearing.

Ethical Principles

Maintaining trust and confidence of all those with whom the ATPO members, officers, and other professionals come into contact is critical for ATPO's success. That trust and confidence depends on ATPO's reputation for acting ethically, with integrity and toward the highest professional standards. Therefore, all ATPO members, officers, and other professionals associated with ATPO should strive at all times to avoid acting in such a way as would, accidentally or otherwise, bring ATPO into disrepute.

In all actions, activities, and relationships, ATPO members, officers and other professionals associated with ATPO will act with the highest standards of integrity and objectivity. This includes, but is not limited to, activities such as: sharing of information; providing undue advantage(s); receiving or providing unapproved monetary and/or non-monetary advantage(s) on behalf of ATPO or from ATPO; influencing elections, board of directors, committees, subcommittees, task forces, *ad hoc* bodies, and other teams as might be organized and

entrusted with specific duties; unfair advantages in examinations and other guides used in assessing performance(s).

In view of afore stated, the ATPO Code of Ethics shall embrace the following principles:

- **Competence of the Ophthalmic Medical Profession**

Ophthalmic medical personnel must maintain competence. Competence can never be totally comprehensive, and therefore must be supplemented by other colleagues when indicated. Competence involves technical ability, cognitive knowledge, and ethical concerns for the patient. Competence includes having adequate and proper knowledge to make professionally appropriate and acceptable decisions regarding testing or measurement protocols of the ophthalmic patient.

- **Providing Ophthalmic Services**

Ophthalmic services must be provided with compassion, respect for human dignity, honesty, and integrity.

- **Responsibility toward Patients**

It is the responsibility of ophthalmic medical personnel to act in the best interest of the patient.

- **Communication with the Patient**

Open communication with the patient is essential. Patient confidences must be safeguarded within the constraints of the law.

- **Legal Responsibilities**

Ophthalmic medical personnel must comply with all applicable requirements imposed upon them by federal, state, and local laws, as well as regulatory and licensing bodies.

Examples of Ethics Breach

Examples of breaches in ethics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Copying answers or otherwise cheating on CEC quizzes.
- Falsifying records
- Improper patient care
- Impersonating another eye care professional
- Exceeding professional scope of training as established by certification and accreditation organizations
- Disrupting continuing education classes or meetings
- Disseminating privileged information
- Compromising the ATPO board, members, or organizational teams
- Deriving or providing unapproved monetary or non-monetary advantage(s)
- Misstatements in an application or any other communication to ATPO or JCAHPO
- Providing unauthorized ophthalmic services
- Misrepresentation of JCAHPO certification status
- Violations in connection with JCAHPO examinations endangering their security or validity
- Gross or repeated professional negligence
- Impaired work performance due to alcohol or other drugs

- Any physical or mental condition which impairs competent professional performance
- Physical or sexual abuse of a patient
- Criminal convictions of misdemeanors and any felonies

Procedures for Filing Ethics Violation

If a member has a reasonable basis for believing that another person has deviated from professionally-accepted standards in a manner that adversely affects patient care, or from the Code of Ethics, the member should attempt to prevent the continuation of this conduct, by adopting the following procedure:

Communicate directly with the person who appeared to violate the ATPO Code of Ethics, and inform the ATPO Board of Directors, which shall refer the matter to the Ethics Committee for a decision. When that action is ineffective or is not feasible, the member has a responsibility to refer the matter to the appropriate authorities, and to cooperate with those authorities in their professional and legal efforts to prevent the continuation of the unethical conduct. Concurrently, the ATPO Board of Directors or relevant committee shall continue all reasonable efforts to investigate the violation and determine the best course of action within the framework of the Code of Ethics.

Penalties and Disciplinary Actions

Setting penalties and disciplinary actions are the decisions of the ATPO Ethics Committee, or other entity convened by the ATPO Board of Directors.

The disciplinary process may, in ascending order, involve any or all of the following:

1. The President or Executive Director, after consultation with counsel, will determine whether the complaints or allegations warrant transmission to the Ethics Committee.
2. The Ethics Committee will review the allegations and facts and may find them inadequate to raise a question of possible violation of the rules, or may find cause to suspect a violation. In the latter case, the offender(s) would be notified of the allegations and may dispute them and/or request a hearing. If there is no dispute or request for a hearing, the committee will render a decision and apply sanctions.
3. If there is a dispute or if a hearing is requested, the allegations and response will be forwarded to the Board of Directors and a formal hearing will be scheduled, following which the Ethics Committee will issue a written decision.

Penalties and disciplinary actions may be set in a steadily increasing level of consequences and can include, but are not limited to:

- Withholding of CECs
- Probation
- Temporary expulsion from ATPO
- Expulsion from ATPO

In cases of expulsion, the Ethics Committee, or other entity convened by the ATPO Board of Directors, may recommend to the Board of Directors to re-instate a member, officer or other

professional associated with the affair after an appropriate duration, which will be determined by the Ethics Committee, or other entity convened by the ATPO Board of Directors.

Appeals

If a member wishes to appeal a decision, the Board of Directors will be consulted for a final decision.

Changes to the Policy

The ATPO Code of Ethics Policy is a living document and therefore subject to change and improvement. Due to changes in policy and penalties, disciplinary actions may not be re-examined in light of new policies, but must be examined based on the policy in effect at the time of the violation. However, recurrences of previous violations must be examined based on the new policy in effect at the time of the recurrence.