

Preamble to the SOWINS Code of Conduct

The SOWINS Code of Conduct has been developed in order to advance the goal of preserving public trust and confidence in the Society and to assist employees in applying the Society's core values in the completion of their work.

It is built on the understanding that we can and should demonstrate to the people of the South Okanagan and to each other that our work is rooted in standards designed to strengthen public trust and confidence in our work and the services we deliver.

The principles set out in the Code of Conduct will guide the work we do. The Code of Conduct does not provide all the answers; but it acts as a touchstone for questions, and reminds staff how SOWINS' core values can be applied in various situations. The Code of Conduct reflects our commitment to the highest ethical standards in the work we do.

This Code of conduct was developed collaboratively by union-member staff and management staff in a committee comprised of representatives from each of: Transition House; Outreach; Bridging; WINGS and Administration in order to be truly reflective of all of our values.

This Code of Conduct is not meant to conflict with SOWINS' obligations to its employment contracts.

Integrity

This Code of Conduct reflects the shared core values that we hold as public servants for the women and children of the South Okanagan: these values preserve the integrity of our Society's work.

Integrity is the foundation and our shared values are the pillars that support our Society's work. We are guardians of public funds and responsible for delivering important services. We owe it to our funders, our donors, our clients and to ourselves to perform our duties with transparency, respect and equity.

As employees of SOWINS, we will be guided by the principles of:

- Accountability
- Transparency
- Respect
- Stewardship
- Confidentiality
- Open Communication

Responsibilities

It is each employee's responsibility to know this Code and comply with its principles, and to seek clarification from their Supervisor where necessary.

Breaches of the Code are to be disclosed promptly to your immediate supervisor, whether committed by yourself, or a co-worker. Employees will fully cooperate with investigations into alleged wrongdoing.

Breaches of the Code will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Principles of the Code of Conduct will be observed as a part of daily work and will be reviewed as part of performance evaluation and planning.

No employee will be disciplined for making a report in good faith about a violation of this Code of Conduct or another SOWINS policy, nor will the Society tolerate any retaliation against an employee who has made such a complaint or participated in an investigation. However, any employee making false accusations will be disciplined.

This Code of Conduct will not answer every question that is going to come up. It is designed to promote ethical decision-making and behaviour, to make us think about the values that guide us in doing our job and to reinforce the Society's expectations of us. It is about making ethics and integrity part of the way we think about doing our job.

B: DEFINITIONS:

Words:

1. In the **Preamble** to the SOWINS Code of Conduct the term **Stewardship** can be defined as *to be in charge of someone else's property and to care for it as your own.*
2. Under **Responsibility to Clients** and **Responsibility to Colleagues** statements # 1 and # 5, the term **Equitable** can be defined as *fair and impartial.*
3. Under **Responsibility to Clients**, statement # 1, the term **Integrity** can be defined as *the following of moral or ethical codes.*
4. Under **Responsibility to Clients**, statement # 6, the word **Independence** means *freedom from the control, influence or support of others.*
5. Under **Responsibility to Colleagues**, statement # 3, the term **Respectfully** means *showing politeness or deference to others; being courteous.*
6. Under **Responsibility to Colleagues**, statement # 4, the term **Triangulation** refers to *the act of telling a third (or fourth or fifth) party something that should be delivered straight to the other person involved.* It can be manipulative and disrespectful.
7. Under **Responsibility to Colleagues**, statement # 2, the term **Undermine** refers to *engaging in behavior that lessens the effectiveness, power, or ability of your colleague.*
8. Under **Responsibility to Colleagues**, statement # 6, the term **Competence** can be defined as *the ability to perform your employment requirements consistently, effectively and successfully.*

Phrases:

1. Under **Responsibility to Clients**, statement # 1 applies to dealing with clients in all situations regardless of their level of addiction, mental wellness or level of cooperation. As with colleagues, staff members are expected to communicate openly and honestly with clients. For more information on "healthy boundaries" staff may request a copy of the healthy boundaries workshop handout from the Employment Services program.

2. Under **Responsibility to Colleagues**, statement #2 “***behaviour that can or will incite bullying, exclusion, harassment, or undermining of colleagues***” is self explanatory.
3. Under **Responsibility to SOWINS**, statement # 6 advises staff to inform their supervisor of information that could damage SOWINS’ reputation.
4. In order to further understand the phrase “***philosophy of non-violence***”, see the opening statement in SOWINS Statement of Values. It states “We believe that women and children have the right to live free from economic, sexual, emotional and verbal abuse, violence and the threat of violence in relationships and in society. All individuals have a basic human right to live in a non violent world.” Employees must never resort to using any form of violence when dealing with clients and/or colleagues.

BREACHES

It is agreed that each and every point in the Code of Conduct is important. Each requires us to be caring, respectful, polite and professional. Each could result in termination depending on the severity, repetitiveness and/or effect on clients, colleagues or the Society. Each requires us to be aware of our own language and actions, acknowledge when we have erred and correct our words, attitudes and behaviours immediately. Should we be cautioned by our supervisor, all conversations with our Supervisor that are required to draw our attention to an issue covered by this Code of Conduct will be recorded in our personnel file thereby making it the first – and hopefully the last – action required for change.

EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT

As an employee of SOWINS this is my Code of Conduct

Responsibility to Clients:

1. I will treat all clients with courtesy, fairness, respect, consideration and kindness; and I am committed to providing a high standard of equitable service.
2. I will listen closely to each individual in order to assess the appropriate course of action.
3. I will communicate clearly, concisely, respectfully and with sensitivity regarding SOWINS services.
4. I will perform my obligations and responsibilities with integrity.
5. I will protect the confidentiality of all professionally acquired information about clients, both while employed by SOWINS and after I leave my employment with SOWINS. I will disclose such information only when properly authorized by the client or when obliged legally or professionally to do so.
6. I will ensure that my outside interests do not jeopardize my professional judgment, independence, competence or ability to do my work, and will promote excellence in my field and keep up to date in my professional knowledge.

Responsibility to Colleagues:

1. In all my interactions with colleagues, I will respond with integrity and with regard for the reputation, character and professional interest of my colleague.
2. I will not gossip or participate in behaviour that can or will incite bullying, exclusion, harassment, or undermining of colleagues.
3. In order to effect openness and transparency, I will communicate honestly and respectfully with all colleagues, holding truth at the forefront of all discussion.
4. When clarification is required, I will communicate directly with colleagues regarding their intentions or decisions in order to avoid triangulation.
5. I will treat my colleagues in an equitable manner, respecting their privacy and boundaries.
6. I will endeavour to inspire a positive, healthy team ethic and maintain good working relationships with my colleagues, while at work and in public.
7. I will protect the confidentiality of all professionally acquired information about colleagues, both while employed by SOWINS and after I leave my employment with SOWINS. I will disclose such information only with the express permission of my colleague, or when obliged legally or professionally to do so.

Responsibility to SOWINS:

1. I will respect the Vision, Mission, Values and culture of SOWINS, and commit myself to a philosophy of nonviolence.
2. I will demonstrate respect for SOWINS policies, procedures, and Board and management decisions. I will take the initiative to identify areas of improvement of policies and procedures when it will better the interests of clients or the agency, by presenting my suggestions in writing to SOWINS.
3. I will not speak on behalf of the organization or colleagues without prior authorization.
4. I will respect the SOWINS Values Statement, Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct in my day-to-day work with clients and colleagues.
5. I will work to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided by SOWINS and I will preserve the integrity and reputation of SOWINS as if it were my own.
6. I will bring to the attention of SOWINS any issues that I believe will have an adverse effect on SOWINS or its clients.
7. I will correct, whenever possible, misleading or inaccurate information and misrepresentation by others concerning my qualifications or services.
8. I will accurately represent my education, training, experience and competencies as they relate to my work.
9. I will use SOWINS property and resources only for the purposes intended and will not use them for personal benefit or for the benefit of those with whom I associate.
10. I will not use my position to solicit clients of SOWINS for personal business.
11. I will not use my position with SOWINS to further religious, political or personal objectives.
12. I will not remove any confidential files or property from SOWINS unless properly authorized.

**I have read and understand this Code of Conduct,
and I agree to abide by it as an employee of SOWINS**

Name (print)

Date

Signature

Effective Date: September 28, 2011
Date of Last Revision: September 27, 2012