



American Adoption Congress  
Code of Ethics Policy and Corrective Action Form  
Approved by the Board of Directors [07/20/2017]

## American Adoption Congress Code of Ethics

The AAC *Code of Ethics* is intended to serve as a guide to the everyday professional/volunteer conduct of Board, Regional Representatives, and the Membership of the organization.

### AAC Mission:

The American Adoption Congress is comprised of individuals, families, and organizations committed to adoption reform. We represent those whose lives are touched by adoption or other loss of family continuity.

We promote honesty, openness and respect for family connections in adoption, foster care and assisted reproduction. We provide education for our members and professional communities about the lifelong process of adoption. We advocate legislation that will grant every individual access to information about his or her family and heritage.

### The AAC is committed to:

- Increasing public awareness about the realities of adopted life for birth and adoptive families
- Changing public policies related to adoption practices in order to acknowledge adoption as an extension of family
- Enacting legislation in all states that guarantees access to identifying information for all adopted persons and their birth and adoptive families through records access and preservation of open adoption agreements
- Facilitating birth family reunification for all adopted adults, without prior restraint, through search and support group networking and/or social service assistance

### AAC Beliefs

The American Adoption Congress believes that growth, responsibility, and respect for self and others develop best in lives that are rooted in truth. The AAC is therefore committed to achieving changes in attitudes, policies, and legislation that will guarantee access to identifying information for all adoptees and their birth and adoptive families.

The AAC believes that all children have the same core of basic needs, and that these needs can be met most easily when children can grow up in the family into which they were born. Every effort shall be made to preserve the integrity of this family. When birth families are unable to meet the ongoing needs of children born to them, however, we believe that adoption provides the best alternative—provided the adoptions are humane, honest, and rooted in the understanding that adoption does not erase a child's connections to the family into which they were born. We believe that those who have lived the adoption experience are in the best position to articulate the importance of these conditions and to bring about an adoption system that is based on them.



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## Purpose of the AAC Code of Ethics

Ethical standards of operation are core to adoption reform and the development of adoption practices; thus, as an organization dedicated to that reform, AAC requires all associated with the organization to follow ethic principles and values.

## Ethical Standards

The following ethical standards are relevant to the professional activities of all AAC Board, AAC State Representatives, and membership.

These standards concern (1) ethical conduct; (2) ethical responsibilities to the adoption constellation, (2) ethical responsibilities to colleagues, professionals, legislators, and one another, (3) ethical responsibilities to the organization, (4) ethical responsibilities to Adoption Reform, (5) the care of Personal Identifiable Information (PII) and (6) the forwarding of copyrighted or confidential information by those who hold a position within the AAC.

1. All representative(s) of the AAC CONDUCT as:
  - A. PROPRIETY - The AAC member shall maintain high standards of personal conduct in the capacity or identity as AAC representative.
  - B. SERVICE - The AAC Board members and AAC State Representatives shall regard their volunteer role as a service role that positively impacts the mission of the AAC.
  - C. INTEGRITY – All AAC representative(s) shall act in accordance with the highest standards of integrity.
  - D. RESPECT, FAIRNESS AND COURTESY - All AAC representative(s) shall treat everyone with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith.
2. THE AAC MEMBER'S ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY TO THE CONSTELLATION
  - E. PRIMACY OF CONSTELLATION MEMBER'S INTERESTS – The primary responsibility of any representative of AAC is to the constellation ensuring that efforts for reform are fair, provide support to all, and engage in openness always.
  - F. RESPECT OF THE CONSTELLATION MEMBERS – All AAC representative(s) shall respect the views and values, and variations of opinions from the members of the constellations and respectfully engage in advocacy that promotes openness in adoption
3. THE AAC MEMBER'S ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY TO THE AAC ORGANIZATION AND ORGANIZATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH AAC
  - G. - The AAC Representatives shall adhere to commitments made to the organization and those organizations with which AAC is associated and/or partnered.



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4. THE AAC MEMBER'S ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY TO ADOPTION REFORM
  - H. MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF ADOPTION REFORM – All AAC Representative(s) shall uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the organization.
  - I. COMMUNITY SERVICE - The AAC representative shall assist the community by providing adoption information, knowledge and education regarding the need for openness available to the public.
5. ALL AAC MEMBERS SHALL BE AWARE OF ALLOWING WHAT COULD BE CONSIDERED PERSONAL IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION TO BE SHARED
  - J. PERSONAL INFORMATION WITHIN AAC DATABASE – All information which is contained in the AAC database will be considered private and not given out to anyone outside of AAC unless the specific individual is contacted and verifies which information can be shared.
  - K. INDIVIDUALS EITHER OUTSIDE OF AAC, OR MEMBERS SHALL NOT BE ADDED TO MESSAGE BOARDS WITHIN THE DATABASE SYSTEM, WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE MESSAGE BOARD LEAD PERSON – Adding individuals to the individual message boards without approval may lead to personal emails being distributed outside of the AAC.
5. **ZERO TOLERANCE** - MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND AAC STATE REPRESENTATIVES SHALL NOT DISTRIBUTE TO ANY NONBOARD MEMBERS OR NON-STATE REPRESENTATIVES ANY AAC DOCUMENTS, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO EMAILS BETWEEN AAC BOARD MEMBERS OR ANY AAC STATE REPRESENTATIVE WHETHER POSTED VIA AN AAC MESSAGE BOARD OR SENT FROM/TO INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS OR STATE REPRESENTATIVES, WITHOUT EXPRESS WRITTEN PERMISSION.

L. FURTHER, all emails shall carry the following statement at the bottom of the email:

**Do not copy, forward or otherwise distribute email messages or any other AAC documents without express written permission. The information contained within this communication is confidential and intended only for the use of the recipient(s) named above. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, please return it to sender and delete the original message and any attachments from your computer system.**

Any member of the Board of Directors or AAC State Representative who violates these provisions of the AAC code of Ethics will be subject to removal.



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**Definitions:**

**Board of Director Member** – Any member in good standing within the American Adoption Congress (AAC) who has gone through the AAC Nomination Process and has been elected to the AAC Board of Directors, per the AAC By-Laws.

**State/Country Representative** – Any member in good standing within the American Adoption Congress (AAC) who has been appointed to represent a specific State within the United States, or a country outside of the United States.

**Member** – Someone who holds a current membership and is in good standing with the AAC.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

The AAC Code of Ethics sets a high standard of conduct and expects the highest ethical behavior from all its members. If there are issues of concern, the members shall bring the situation to the Board of Directors for resolution. All members must abide by the rules set forth by the American Adoption Congress. If there are significant violations of the Code of Ethics, the Board of Directors shall be notified. At the next Board of Directors meeting, the matter will be reviewed by the Board of Directors and they shall find a means of resolving the issue, which could include suspension or removal of either an AAC Board Member, State Representative or AAC member from the AAC membership.

As an AAC member in good standing, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the AAC Code of Ethics and agree to abide by these standards.

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
AAC Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Once signed, please forward this document to the President or Vice President  
Maintain a copy for your records and send one with your application.



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Corrective Action Policy

As a member, member of the Board of Directors of the AAC, and/or a representative for my State, I agree to uphold the AAC Code of Ethics previously received. I agree and understand that should I violate the AAC Code of Ethics the following steps will be taken:

**First Occurrence** - A telephone conversation shall occur within seventy-two (72) hours of discovery of the breach of a specific code of ethics. These conversations shall be either between the member and President and Vice President, State Representative and Regional Director and the Vice President. In the event of no Regional Director, the President and Vice President will hold the conversation with the member. In the case of an AAC Board Member, the conversation will be between the AAC Board Member in question, and two members from the Executive Committee as to how the Code of Ethics was breached and what steps should be taken to remediate the situation.

A telephone conversation was held between \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.

This person is a (Please check one):

		Position	State
<input type="checkbox"/>	AAC Member		
<input type="checkbox"/>	AAC State Representative		
<input type="checkbox"/>	AAC Board Member		

Other Members on telephone call:

Regional Director \_\_\_\_\_

Executive Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Executive Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_



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**Second Occurrence** – Within seventy-two (72) hours of discovery of a second occurrence, a formal written warning shall be sent via letter on AAC letterhead and will be signed accordingly to the First Occurrence above. (President and Vice President, Regional Director and Vice President, or two Executive Committee Members) will be sent via Registered Mail as warning to the member, State Representative or Board Member of potential removal. If the Registered letter is returned to the AAC this will be considered cause for immediate removal of either the AAC member, AAC State Representative, or AAC Board Member.

A Registered letter was sent to: \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.  
This person is a (Please check one):

		Position	State
<input type="checkbox"/>	AAC Member		
<input type="checkbox"/>	AAC State Representative		
<input type="checkbox"/>	AAC Board Member		

Those who signed the letter were:

Regional Director \_\_\_\_\_

Executive Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Executive Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

**Third Occurrence** - The member, AAC State Representative, AAC Board Member will be removed.

Should the occurrence be determined by the Board of Directors as an egregious or a blatant violation or a zero-tolerance violation of the AAC Code of Ethics or applicable By-laws it will be cause for immediate removal. Only a telephone call will be required.