



American Adoption Congress  
Code of Ethics Policy and Corrective Action Form  
Approved by the Board of Directors 02-14-2016

## **Code of Ethics**

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

1. All representatives of the AAC CONDUCT as:
  - A. PROPRIETY - The AAC member shall maintain high standards of personal conduct in the capacity or identity as an AAC representative.
  - B. SERVICE - All AAC Board members and Regional Representatives shall regard their volunteer roles as a service role that positively impacts the mission of the AAC.
  - C. INTEGRITY - All AAC representatives shall act in accordance with the highest standards of integrity.
  - D. RESPECT, FAIRNESS AND COURTESY - All AAC representatives 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 AAC representative's primary responsibility is to the constellation ensuring that efforts for reform are fair, provide support to all, and engage in openness at all times.
  - F. RESPECT OF THE CONSTELLATION MEMBERS –All AAC representatives 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. - All AAC Representatives shall adhere to commitments made to the organization and those organizations with which AAC is associated and/or partnered.
4. THE AAC MEMBER'S ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY TO ADOPTION REFORM
  - H. MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF ADOPTION REFORM - All AAC Representatives shall uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the organization.
  - I. COMMUNITY SERVICE - All AAC representatives shall assist the community by providing adoption information, knowledge and education regarding the need for openness available to the general public.



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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

The AAC Code of Ethics sets a high standard of conduct and expects the highest ethical behavior from all of 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, this 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 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.

AAC Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

State Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Board Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Corrective Action Policy**

As a member, board member 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 conversation will occur between the member and a Board of Director, State Representative and their Regional Director or board member and remaining board as to how the Code of Ethics was breached and what steps should be taken to remediate the situation.

**Second Occurrence** - A formal written letter warning to the member, State Representative or board member of potential removal.

**Third Occurrence** - A written notice from the AAC Board of Directors of removal.

- Should the occurrence be determined by the Board of Directors as egregious or a blatant violation of the AAC Code of Ethics or applicable laws the board may act for immediate removal.

AAC Member \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

State Representative \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Board Member \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_