

Zoological Registrars Association (ZRA)
Code of Professional Ethics

Preamble

The ZRA Code of Professional Ethics (COPE) has been written by and for the members to establish standardized principles for ethical conduct. The COPE presents inspirational guidelines for interpersonal behavior between members within the Association and for how ZRA is represented in our interactions with other organizations. The COPE is also written for the protection of freedom of speech and to recognize the importance of respect for each other, for equal justice and the pursuit of truth.

I. Code of Professional Ethics

The Ethics Committee shall administer and uphold the COPE, including the receipt, review and recommendations related to reported violations or related outcomes. All appeals will be handled by the ZRA Board of Directors and will be granted upon a two thirds (2/3) vote of the entire Board of Directors. The appellate decision of the Board of Directors shall be final and shall not be appealed.

Any deviation by a member from the Mandatory Standards, shall be considered unethical conduct. The member shall be subject to investigation by the Ethics Committee as described below and, if warranted, the committee shall make recommendations for disciplinary action subject to the approval of the ZRA Board of Directors.

II. Mandatory Standards

As established in the Association's bylaws Article IV, Section 5 (Removal from Membership), the Mandatory Standards establish a level of conduct to be applied to and upheld by all ZRA members. All violations that are proven to be valid may result in disciplinary action.

- A. If a member is found to have knowingly violated local, state, federal or international laws that relate to our profession or to have failed to cooperate with government agencies regulating animal welfare or transport, then they may be subject to disciplinary action.
- B. A member shall not engage in conduct that adversely affects or is prejudicial to the established mission, vision, purpose and values of ZRA.

- C. A member shall not solicit the aid of another individual or organization to circumvent, or assist another to violate, a Mandatory Standard.

III. Obligations of Professional Ethics

In order to promote the highest standards of conduct in our profession, ZRA has formulated the following principles as guidance for its members.

As a member of ZRA, I will strive to ensure that the professionalism of the organization and the following principles, concepts and ideals are upheld:

- A. Display the highest integrity and use my professional skills, experience and knowledge to the best interests of all.
- B. Deal fairly with others in the dissemination of professional information and advice.
- C. Create and maintain accurate records and ensure that the information reflects the true facts insofar as they are known.
- D. Act cooperatively and constructively with colleagues in the furtherance of my institution's and ZRA's goals and objectives.
- E. Maintain the highest standards of personal, professional and business conduct and behavior.
- F. Aid the professional development of those who enter the registrar position in a zoological facility by assisting them to understand the functions, duties, and responsibilities of the profession.
- G. Report to the Ethics Committee any known or suspected violation of the COPE.

IV. Ethics Committee

The primary role of the Ethics Committee is to investigate and determine whether or not reported violations of the COPE are valid. ZRA members are strongly encouraged, whenever possible, to work out their professional differences directly, and to file an ethics complaint only as a last resort or where direct resolution is neither possible nor appropriate.

- A. Resolution of conflicts should first be attempted by the relevant members through direct communication via an in-person meeting or phone call.
- B. If resolution cannot be attained the conflict must be documented in writing with the problems clearly defined and any action taken and proposed resolutions recorded.
- C. Written documentation must be submitted to the Chairman of the Ethics Committee along with the complaint form that provides evidence to the Ethics Committee that sufficient effort has been made on behalf of all relevant members to resolve the conflict directly.
- D. All parties involved in a conflict shall work towards an expedient resolution.

Any member filing an ethics complaint shall be advised that full disclosure of the circumstances will be made available to all parties concerned. At that time, the complainant has the right to withdraw the complaint. If the specific complaint is withdrawn, it will be officially closed and cannot be re-opened. The Ethics Committee, the complainant and the defendant shall at all times during the investigation maintain strict confidentiality regarding the case.

The Ethics Committee shall determine the validity of the reported violation according to the process established in the Ethics Committee Standing Rules. If the violation appears to be valid, the Ethics Committee shall initiate a full investigation. Once a full investigation has been conducted, the Ethics Committee shall determine if any provision of the COPE has been violated. In making its determination, the Ethics Committee shall consult with relevant advisors as needed and as directed by the ZRA Board of Directors. If the Ethics Committee determines that an ethics violation has occurred, it shall submit its recommendations for disciplinary action to the Board of Directors. The recommendations may be:

- A. Verbal warning with guidance from the Chairman of the Ethics Committee.
- B. Written warning (*Censure).
- C. Suspension of certain membership privileges for up to two (2) years depending on the severity of the violation.
- D. Expulsion from ZRA membership for a minimum of two (2) years.

*Censure – “its purpose is to reprimand a member in the hopes of reforming him or her so that he or she won’t behave in the same way again,” as paraphrased from Page 211 Robert’s Rules of Order Simplified and Applied.

Verbal warnings will be issued to members by the Chairman of the Ethics Committee. Approval by the Board of Directors is not required for this first level of disciplinary action.

The Ethics Committee’s recommendation to censure, suspend or expel a ZRA member shall be submitted to the Board of Directors who must then approve the recommendation by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the entire Board of Directors before it can be carried out. The Board of Director’s decision is based completely on the recommendation of the Committee as they will not have reviewed the facts of the complaint.

The Board of Directors serves as the appellate body, and the disciplined member may appeal his case within sixty (60) days directly to the Board of Directors. At that time, the Board of Directors will request the Ethics Committee to disclose all of the relevant documentation and facts regarding the complaint, and conduct a separate investigation in order to determine a final outcome for the appeal.

V. Amendment Procedures for the Code of Professional Ethics

The Code of Professional Ethics may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the membership at the annual business meeting. Any proposed amendments shall be submitted to the Chairman of the Ethics Committee in writing sixty (60) days prior to the annual business meeting. Notice of proposed changes shall be sent to the members electronically or by US Postal Service thirty (30) days prior to the annual business meeting.

VI. Acknowledgements

The ZRA Ethics Taskforce, Ad Hoc Governance Committee and three separate Boards have had the opportunity to take part in the development of a Code of Professional Ethics for ZRA. Throughout the development of the Code, numerous organizations both internal and external to the zoological field were consulted and include: the American Association of Museums (AAM); the Society of American Archivists (SSA); the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA); the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA); the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA); the Enterprise Content Management Association (AIIM); the Museum Documentation Association UK (MDA); the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK); ARMA International; the Institute of Certified Records Managers (ICRM); and ZRA's current parliamentary advisor, Robert McConnell Productions.