

## **Ethics Committee Consultation Requests and Complaints**

There are two confidential processes through which the Ethics Committee can provide assistance: (a) submitting a consultation request, or (b) filing a formal complaint. See the proper format for each below. In either case, you should submit your consultation request or complaint to the Ethics Committee Chairperson. [Click here for Chair email.](#)

### **Ethics Consultation Request**

An ethics consultation request should be used to ask a question or request guidance about an ethics matter. A consultation request is not the same as a complaint. If you are not sure which process to use, please contact the Ethics Committee Chairperson for guidance. Requests for consultation will remain confidential within the Ethics Committee. Since the consultation process could take time as outlined below, requesting consultation is usually best for non-urgent situations. To maintain confidentiality, do not share personal details (i.e., names) or any information that could identify a person involved in the situation you are requesting a consultation about. If your matter involves legal issues such as, but not limited to, abuse, sexual harassment, discrimination and/or retaliation, a complaint may be more appropriate than a consultation. Nonetheless, consultation can be requested to determine if consultation or a complaint would be the best approach.

Common topics for ethics consultation include use of terms, financial arrangements with clients, dual relationship dilemmas, boundaries of competence, advertisement of services, and/or use of social media. For any of these issues, a member could also request a consultation prior to submitting a complaint.

Just as any professional might seek out another colleague for informal consultations, any member of the Ethics Committee may be approached for an informal consultation. Informal consultations typically include a request for resources, ethics code information, general guidance on handling a potential ethical issue, and/or could be a precursor to a formal ethics consultation or complaint. Any Ethics Committee member who provides an informal consultation will provide the Chair with a brief anonymous summary.

If you decide to initiate a formal consultation, please email the Ethics Committee Chair. The Ethics Committee Chairperson will acknowledge receipt of the written consultation request and will review the consultation request within 48 business hours of receiving it. The Chair will then determine if the consultation can be adequately addressed by the Chair alone or if the full Ethics Committee needs to be involved based on the complexity of the matter. The Chair is most likely to address the consultation alone if it involves a simple factual request for information, or if the Chair can direct the AASP member (or member of the public whom may inquire about an ethical issue with an AASP member) to a process (e.g., licensing law or conflict resolution strategy) to address the issue(s) raised in the consultation. The AASP member (or member of the public) may ask that the full committee review the consultation and provide

feedback. This request will be honored in most cases at the discretion of the Chair if the consultation is deemed complex enough to warrant the full committee's involvement. The full Ethics Committee will mostly be involved when the consultation involves complicated issues that require interpretation of the current AASP Ethics Code such as, but not limited to, potentially significant violations of the Ethics Code, egregious behavior, and/or actions that have implications for the organization or the profession. When the full Ethics Committee is involved, the members of the committee will have 7-10 business days to respond to the consultation request. If there is a need to get consultation about an issue from the Executive Board and/or the Executive Director, it will be done with personal details de-identified. Consultation with the Executive Board and/or Executive Director may add 1-2 business days to the process. At the completion of the consultation, an email will be sent by the Chair to the person(s) requesting the consultation summarizing the recommendations for addressing the issue(s).

To submit an ethics consultation request, please submit the following information using the format below to the Ethics Committee Chairperson. [Download the fillable form here.](#)

## **Ethics Complaint**

An Ethics Complaint can be filed against an AASP member by another AASP member or by a non-AASP member (i.e., member of the public). *Please note: An AASP ethics complaint cannot be filed against a non-AASP member.* If there is a concern about a non-AASP member, please consult with the Ethics Committee Chairperson for guidance. A complaint should be submitted if a member believes that there has been a violation of the AASP Ethics Code. It is helpful to provide supporting documentation of the allegations when possible, but a complaint can still be filled without any supporting documentation. Common violations of the ethics code could include, but are not limited to, misuse of terms, dual relationships, sexual boundaries violations, exploitation or harassment, and/or violation of confidentiality.

When considering filing an Ethics Complaint, please be aware of the following. The details of the complaint may become known to the AASP President, the Professional Standards Division Head, and/or the Executive Director. The information within the complaint will be kept confidential by the parties mentioned above who have access to the complaint. In some cases, where the person who the complaint is against involves a Certified Mental Performance Consultant (CMPC), through consultation with the Certification Council, your complaint may need to be shared with the Certification Council. If there is a special circumstance and you wish to remain anonymous to the person whom the complaint is against, please contact the Ethics Committee Chair to discuss whether that would be possible given the nature of the complaint. In most cases, the person who files a complaint cannot be anonymous to the Ethics Committee because the Ethics Committee needs to review the complaint details.

If you decide to file an Ethics Complaint, please be advised that your written complaint about an AASP member's alleged misconduct will be handled in the following way:

- 1- The Ethics Chairperson will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, will review the complaint within 48 business hours of receiving it, and then will send an electronic copy to the full Ethics Committee for confidential review. The Ethics Committee will have 7-10 business days to review it, and discussions and deliberations will remain confidential within the committee. If there is a need to get consultation about an issue from the Executive Board and/or the Executive Director, it may add 1-2 business days to the process. The complainant will be advised of outcomes of those discussions sufficient to explain the Ethics Committee's actions.
- 2- Immediately upon receipt of the complaint, the Ethics Chairperson will send an electronic copy of the complaint to the Executive Director who will keep a confidential copy in AASP's administrative office. If the complaint is submitted electronically, it will be maintained on a password protected computer. If the complaint is submitted in paper form, it will be converted to an electronic document and maintained on a password protected computer. This computer will be in a secure locked office only accessible by the Executive Director.
- 3- A copy of your written statement with your name ( \* ) and the details of the accusation(s) will be sent to the accused AASP member who will be given the opportunity to provide a written response. (*\*If you wish to remain anonymous, please contact the Ethics Committee Chairperson to discuss whether that would be possible given the nature of the complaint.*) The complainant will be shown the accused members written response and can provide a response to Ethics Committee about the accused member's written communication.
- 4- The Ethics Committee will review the accused member's and complainant's responses and the ensuing discussions and deliberations will be confidential. The complainant and accused member will be advised of outcomes of those discussions sufficient to explain the Ethics Committee's next actions.
- 5- Once the complaint is resolved, the complainant, the accused member, and the Executive Director will be advised accordingly.
- 6- During this process the only people who will have access to this confidential information will be the Ethics Committee, AASP President, the Professional Standards Division Head, and the Executive Director.

Submitting a formal ethics complaint, means that you have read and understood the above 6 step process. To submit a formal ethics complaint, please submit the following information using the format below to the Ethics Committee Chairperson. [Download the fillable form here.](#)