Principles for Processing Ethical Complaints

As spiritual care professionals from many faith traditions we recognize the infinite value of each person and demonstrate respect for all living beings and the natural environment.

While our individual spiritual care organizations may configure specific procedures in different ways, we are all committed to accountability to the principles stated in this document. We strive toward the very best in our common calling as healers as we steadfastly seek to confront ethical breaches as both challenge and opportunity. In so doing we seek to discover the true meaning of concepts like “faithfulness” and “justice.”

The principles of restorative justice should inform the lens and questions by which situations are addressed within each organization’s process of addressing ethical concerns. Restorative justice asks: Who has been hurt? What are their...
It is with the above realization in mind that the following principles for ethical processes have been fashioned. They exist to serve two complementary purposes.

1. To provide our organizations and their members with procedures designed to support highly ethical behavior and a means to address breaches in the Code of Ethics.

2. To communicate clearly to the public at large the means by which we seek to fashion our ethical ideals into practical instruments of service.

**Guiding Principles**

Following is a general set of principles which should serve as the foundation for procedures for addressing ethical concerns.

1. Each process for ethical accountability shall be consistent with the adopted Code of Ethics.

2. Each organization shall administer its own procedures and impose sanctions maintaining a commitment to respect for the dignity and well-being of each person involved in the process.

3. Each process should be based on transparency, and designed to encourage as much openness and communication as possible.

4. Each process will balance transparency and confidentiality. Maintenance of records will permit access to information and materials only in accordance with an organization's policies.

**Recommended Elements for Ethics Procedures**

Each professional organization's framework within which to process concerns about ethical behavior of members should include the following:

1. Use of an accountability statement (with renewal subject to the discretion of each organization, e.g. annual renewal when membership is renewed).

2. Structure for processing an ethical complaint.

3. Optional procedures for intervention before a formal complaint is filed.
4. Guidelines for filing a written complaint.

5. Guidelines for investigating a complaint which include

   a. notice of allegations to the person purported to have violated the Code of Ethics
   b. opportunity for that person to be heard in responding to the allegations
   c. by an impartial gatherer of facts

6. Guidelines for adjudicating a complaint after investigation and a clear standard of review by which evidence will be evaluated by an impartial fact finder.

7. Guidelines for determining remedies and sanctions.

8. Guidelines for communicating a decision.

9. Guidelines for appealing a decision on the limited grounds within an organization’s policies.

10. Guidelines for processing an appeal and rendering a final decision.


12. Guidelines for recruiting, training and providing resources for Commission members.