

Alberta Interagency Council on Homelessness: Code of Conduct

I. Preamble

The Code of Conduct (Code) for the Interagency Council on Homelessness (Council) applies to all Members. The Code reflects a commitment to the Council's values and provides a framework to guide ethical conduct in a way that upholds the integrity and reputation of the Council. Members are expected to behave in a way that aligns with this Code. They understand that this Code does not cover every specific scenario. Therefore, they use the spirit and intent behind this Code to guide their conduct, and exercise care and diligence in the course of their work with the Council.

To demonstrate commitment to transparency and accountability, this Code is available to the public on the Human Services website.

II. Core Values

1. Members act with impartiality and integrity.
2. Members demonstrate respect and accountability.
3. Trustworthy and Trusting: Our approach must engender trust in those with whom we work.
4. Accountable: We will share accountability for developing and implementing strategies with others engaged in the effort to reduce homelessness.
5. Collaborative: We will work collaboratively with the public, private, and non-profit sectors to ensure the Plan builds provincial and local capacity, leading to stronger programs and policies that help communities achieve their goal of ending homelessness.
6. Responsive: Whatever we do will be responsive to the needs of those needing homes.

III. Guiding Principles

These principles guide the behaviour and decisions of Members:

1. The actions and decisions of Members are made to promote the public interest and to advance the mandate and long-term interests of the Council.
2. Members are responsible stewards of public resources.
3. To serve the public interest, Members have a responsibility to uphold the Council's mandate.
4. Members have a responsibility to act in good faith and to place the interests of the Council above their own private interests.
5. Members behave in a way that demonstrates that their behaviour and actions are fair and reasonable in the circumstance.
6. When a Member, as an individual, is subject to more than one code of conduct, the Member or employee must consider the expectations in all. Members understand that this Code is not intended to conflict with other Codes of Conduct, and will discuss any potential conflicts with the Council.
7. The Code applies to all Members unless a specific exemption is granted by the Council.
8. Members know that when they become aware of a real or apparent conflict of interest, they must at the first opportunity disclose this conflict to the Council.
9. Members understand that disclosure itself does not remove a conflict of interest.
10. Members encourage their colleagues to act fairly and ethically and know that they are able to raise concerns about a suspected breach by another to the Code Administrator(s) without fear of reprisal.
11. Members know that breaches of this Code may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal of the Member.
12. Members know that if they have any questions about the Code, or are not sure how to apply these principles, they should consult with the Code Administrator(s) or the Executive Director.
13. Each Member confirms annually their understanding of, and commitment to, the Code's expectations.

IV. Behavioural Standards

Behavioural standards help Members make appropriate decisions when the issues they face involve ethical considerations. Behavioural standards cannot cover all scenarios but provide guidance in support of day-to-day decisions. All Members must adhere to the following standards:

1. Members must not engage in any criminal activity and comply with all relevant laws, regulations, policies, and procedures.

2. Members must not use their status or position with the Council to influence or gain a benefit or advantage for themselves or others.
3. Member conduct contributes to a safe and healthy workplace that is free from discrimination, harassment, or violence.
4. Members must not use drugs or alcohol in a way that affects their performance and safety or the performance and safety of their colleagues, or that negatively impacts the reputation or operations of the Council.
5. Members must act in a way that is consistent with the Council's protocols on public comment.
6. Members must take reasonable steps to avoid situations where they may be placed in a real or apparent conflict between their private interests and the interests of the Council. In other words, actions or decisions that Members take on behalf of the Council must not provide them with an opportunity to further the private interests of themselves, their families, their business associates, or others with whom they have a significant personal or business relationship.

a) Confidential Information

Members must respect and protect confidential information, must use it only for the work of the Council, and must not use it for personal gain. Members must comply with protocols that guide the collection, storage, use, transmission, and disclosure of information.

b) Gifts and Gratuities

Members must not accept or receive gifts/gratuities other than the normal exchange of gifts between friends or business colleagues, tokens exchanged as part of protocol, or the normal presentation of gifts to people participating in public functions.

c) Outside Activities

Members must avoid participating in outside activities that conflict with the interests and work of the Council. For example:

- i. **Business Interests:** Members must not hold interests in a business directly or indirectly through a relative or friend that could benefit from, or influence, the decisions of the Council.
- ii. **Employment:** Members must not take employment, and employees must not take supplementary employment, that affects their performance or impartiality with the Council.
- iii. **Political Activity:** Members may participate in political activities including holding membership in a political party, supporting a candidate for elected office, or seeking elected office. However, they

must not use their position with the Council to seek contributions for a political party or activity from current or future clients or entities doing business with the Council. In addition, any political activity must be clearly separated from activities related to the work for the Council, must not be done while carrying out the work of the Council, and must not make use of Council facilities, equipment, or resources in support of these activities.

iv. **Volunteer Activity:** If Members are involved in volunteer work, the activity must not influence or conflict with decisions relating to the Council.

d) Pre-Separation

Members considering a new offer of appointment must be aware of and manage any potential conflicts of interest between their current position and their future circumstance, and must remove themselves from any decisions affecting their new appointment.

e) Post-Separation

Once Members have left the Council, they must not disclose confidential information that they became aware of during their time with the Council, and must not use their contacts with their former colleagues to gain an unfair advantage for their current circumstances.

f) Property

Members may have limited use of the Council's premises and equipment for authorized incidental purposes providing such use involves minimal additional expense to the Council, must not be performed on the Member work time, must not interfere with the mission of the Council and must not support a personal, private business.

g) Related Persons or Parties

Members must avoid dealing with those in which the relationship between them might bring into question the impartiality of the Member.

V. Administrative Processes

Administrative processes help Members manage ethical dilemmas, including any real or apparent conflict of interest concerns.

1. Administration

The Code Administrators for Members are the Co-Chairs, acting in concert with the Council. The Code Administrator(s) for the Co-Chairs is the Deputy Minister, Human Services. Government of Alberta employees, including the Executive Director, who support the Council are subject to the Code of Conduct and Ethics for the Public Service of Alberta.

The Code Administrator(s) receives and ensures the confidentiality of all disclosures and ensures that any real or apparent conflict of interest is avoided or effectively managed. As well, the Code Administrator(s) is responsible for providing advice and managing all concerns and complaints concerning potential breaches of the Code, including conflicts of interest within the Council. Even though an agency may have a delegated process for responding to and managing concerns, the Code Administrator(s) is responsible for ensuring procedural fairness.

2. Disclosure

It is the responsibility of each Member to declare in writing to the Code Administrator(s) those private interests and relationships that they think could be seen to impact the decisions or actions they take on behalf of the Council. When there is a change in their responsibilities within the Council or in their personal circumstance, Members shall disclose in writing any relevant new or additional information about those interests as soon as possible. Where a real or apparent conflict of interest cannot be avoided, Members and employees must take the appropriate steps to manage the conflict.

Members disclose these real or apparent conflicts of interest so that the Code Administrator(s) is aware of situations that could be seen as influencing the decisions or actions they are making on behalf of the Council. This provides Members, following a review by the Code Administrator(s), an opportunity to take action to minimize or remove the conflict. To actively manage a conflict of interest, options include:

- Removing themselves from matters in which the conflict exists or is perceived to exist
- Giving up the particular private interest causing the conflict
- In rare circumstances, resigning their position with the Council.

3. Reporting a Potential Breach by Another

Members are encouraged to report in writing a potential breach of this Code by another to the Code Administrator(s) for Members. When reporting a potential

breach in good faith and with reasonable grounds, Members are protected from retaliation for such reporting.

4. Responding to Potential Breach

Once a potential breach has been reported, the Council's procedures for responding to and managing a potential breach will be promptly initiated. The Code Administrator(s) will review the circumstance and details of the potential breach and will notify the alleged Member. The alleged Member has the right to complete information and the right to respond fully to the potential breach. The identity of the reporter will not be disclosed unless required by law or in a legal proceeding. The Code Administrator(s) makes a decision and completes a report of the review in a timely manner. The decision may range from finding no potential breach to one that reveals suspected criminal conduct.

5. Consequences of a Breach

Members who do not comply with the standards of behaviour identified in this Code, including taking part in a decision or action that furthers their private interests, may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including removal of the Member.

6. Review of a Decision

Members can request in writing that the Deputy Minister, Human Services, review a decision that has been made by the Code Administrator(s) about a real or apparent breach of the Code, including a conflict of interest involving that Member.

VI. Other Resources

1. Where to Get Advice

When Members require advice and guidance in determining whether misconduct or a conflict exists, or need clarification, they may discuss their issue with the Code Administrator(s) for Members, or the Executive Director.

2. Questions to Consider

When Members are faced with a difficult situation, the following questions may help them decide the right course of action:

- Have I reflected on or consulted with the Code Administrator(s) about whether I am compromising the Code's values, principles, or behavioural standards?
- Have I considered the issue from a legal perspective?

- Have I investigated whether my behaviour aligns with a policy or procedure of the Council?
- Could my private interests or relationships be viewed as impairing my objectivity?
- Could my decision or action be viewed as resulting in personal gain, financial or otherwise?
- Could my decisions or actions be perceived as granting or receiving preferential treatment?

VII. Affirmation

The Code for the Council was introduced in June 2013 and is reaffirmed annually by the Council to ensure it remains current and relevant.

Approved by:

Co-Chair
Alberta Interagency Council on Homelessness

Co-Chair
Alberta Interagency Council on Homelessness

Date

Date