

# **Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN)**

## **Code of Ethics Policy (9-29-08)**

### **Overview**

The Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN) requires board of directors, officers, employees, and volunteers to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. As employees, board members and representatives of AORN (Association), we must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling our responsibilities and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

To meet the highest standards, AORN has elected to follow the standards established in the Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) Act, Section 406, *Code of Ethics*.

### **Purpose**

Per SOX, Section 406, the purpose of the Code of Ethics Policy (Code) is to codify standards AORN believes are reasonably necessary to deter errors of omission or commission and to promote:

- Honest and ethical conduct, including the ethical handling of actual or apparent conflicts of interest between personal and professional relationships;
- Professional behavior in the work environment;
- Avoidance of conflicts of interest, including disclosure to persons identified in this Code of any material transactions or relationship that reasonably could be expected to give rise to such a conflict;
- Full, fair, accurate, timely and understandable disclosure in reports and documents that AORN files with, or submits to public communications made by AORN;
- Compliance with applicable government laws, rules and regulations;
- Prompt internal reporting of violations of this Code are consistent with the Whistleblower Policy;
- Accountability for adherence to and enforcement of to this Code.

### **Vision Statement**

The Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN) is the leader in advocating for excellence in perioperative practice and healthcare.

### **Mission Statement**

The Association of periOperative Registered Nurse's (AORN) mission is to promote safety and optimal outcomes for patients undergoing operative and other invasive procedures by providing practice support and professional development opportunities to perioperative nurses. AORN will collaborate with professional and regulatory organizations, industry leaders, and other healthcare partners who support the mission.

## Core Values

The Association of periOperative Registered Nurse's (AORN) core values reflect what is truly important to the Association.

AORN core values:

- Communication - open, honest, collaborative
- Quality - reliable, timely, accountable
- Innovation - creative, risk taking, leading edge
- Diversity – teamwork, inclusion, respect

## Standards of Conduct

- Honest and Ethical Conduct:
  - General employee conduct while at work and board member conduct while representing AORN – Any employee or board member conduct, which AORN determines interferes with the effective operation of AORN's business, is prohibited. AORN may impose disciplinary action in those instances where management decides it is appropriate. Disciplinary actions for employees include, but are not limited to, oral warnings, written warnings, suspension or termination. AORN retains the right to determine what discipline will be imposed in each individual situation. Disciplinary actions for board members will be consistent with board policy.

To ensure orderly operations and provide the best possible work environment, it is expected that employees follow rules of conduct that will protect the interests and safety of all employees and the Organization. Please refer to the current Employee Handbook for examples of conduct rule infractions that may result in corrective action, up to and including suspension or termination of employment. For board members, it is expected that board members follow their Code of Conduct Policy, reported in the Board of Directors Manual.

- Unethical behavior – Employees and board members must not behave in a manner that is unacceptable, such as taking kickbacks or bribes, giving out confidential information or falsifying employment documents. Additionally, employees and board members must follow the Records Retention and Document Destruction Policy in regards to the handling of records and documents. A violation of the Records Retention and Document Destruction Policy would be considered unethical behavior.
- Using the organization's assets for personal activities – Employees and board members must not use AORN's assets for personal activities. Examples include office supplies and company credit card.
- Entertainment – Employees and board members cannot use company funds to pay for entertainment for themselves or for customers, suppliers or members without approval from a higher authority level.

- Confidentiality – Many employees need access to confidential information and records in order to do their jobs. While an open climate of information sharing is most often desirable, employees and board members must safeguard the security of information that could be detrimental to: the Association, our members, our customers, or be advantageous to our competitors. Employees and board members may not retain or use any such information during or after employment (for employees) or during or after their tenure as a board member, for any non-AORN purpose. Such information includes, but is not limited to the following:

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| • Organization manuals                 | • Correspondence                       |
| • Mailing lists                        | • Information on customers             |
| • Marketing strategies                 | • Member database                      |
| • Employee-related data                | • Pricing lists                        |
| • Electronic data (files and programs) | • Computer printouts                   |
| • Pending projects or proposals        | • Financial reports or data            |
| • Vendor programs                      | • Business methods and procedures      |
| • Proprietary information              | • Trade Secrets and/or ideas/processes |

The Association’s Confidentiality Policy also includes any other information that a prudent person could reasonably believe to be confidential. Any employee or board member who discloses trade secrets or confidential business information will be subject to corrective action up to and including termination and legal action. Additionally, upon cessation of employment or termination as a board member with AORN it is agreed to deliver to AORN or shred any and all notes, memoranda and documents, together with all copies thereof, and any other material containing or disclosing proprietary or confidential information.

- Professional Behavior

- The employees at AORN deserve to work in a professional work environment where they are treated with dignity and respect. AORN is committed to creating such an environment and is committed to providing a workplace that is free of discrimination of all types from abusive, offensive, bullying, or harassing behavior. Any employee who feels harassed or discriminated against must report the incident to his or her manager, to human resources, or utilize the whistleblowing process.

AORN affords equal opportunity to all qualified persons and does not discriminate with regard to race, color, creed, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, disability, veteran status, marital status or any other legally protected status in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal laws.

- AORN employees must feel comfortable to express their concerns particularly with respect to ethical concerns. Managers have a responsibility to create an open and supportive environment where employees concerns and questions are responded to without retaliation.

AORN will investigate all reported instances of questionable or unethical behavior. In every instance where improper behavior is found to have occurred, the Association will take appropriate action.

- Conflicts of interest:
  - Overall - It is important to AORN that all employees and board members observe high ethical standards and treat customers, vendors, members, co-workers, or others and the Association fairly. Personal or financial relationships with customers must not interfere with the best interests of the Association. Typical examples of situations that are, or may become, conflicts of interest include:
    - Accepting gifts or anything else of value from customers or vendors;
    - Conducting business with family members, customers or vendors;
    - Performing or conducting a business that competes with the Association;
    - Receiving purchase inducements from vendors that personally benefit staff members directly or indirectly and are unauthorized or questionable in nature;
    - Serving on the board of a competing Organization.
  - Gifts – Employees and board members cannot receive gifts from customers, suppliers, vendors, members, associations and other business partners in excess of a \$100 value per calendar year. Therefore, if an organization provides a gift of \$75 in one month of the calendar year, the employee or board member may only receive up to \$25 in value from the same organization in the same calendar year.

Acceptable gifts are items that are received from organizations in the normal course of business and are not deemed personal. Examples of acceptable gifts are viewed as items to be shared with the entire staff, such as Holiday food baskets.

Unacceptable gifts are items that are deemed personal in nature. Gifts that are not acceptable, regardless of the value of the item are:

- Sporting event tickets, i.e. football, baseball and hockey
- Green fees for golfing
- Concert tickets
- Clothing
- Jewelry
- Spa treatment
- Cash, checks or marketable securities (stocks and bonds)

For any questions regarding gifts, contact the Corporate Compliance Officer for clarification.

- Relationships with customers, suppliers and members – Employees and board members must maintain a professional relationship with customers, suppliers and members.

- **Accurate Reporting:**

Employees that are required to provide financial data, clinical data, membership data and educational data to government agencies, regulatory bodies, employee statistics and other legal entities must maintain adequate disclosure controls and procedures. These controls are designed to provide assurance to AORN members and stakeholders that disclosure of information provided to AORN and its subsidiaries will be communicated accurately and timely.

- **Compliance with Laws, Rules and Regulations:**

It is AORN's policy to promote compliance with all applicable laws, rules and regulations in connection with AORN's business. Employees responsible for these areas should familiarize themselves with the legal standards and restrictions applicable to their assigned duties and responsibilities. AORN requires and encourages compliance with the spirit – as well as the letter – of the law. Even the appearance of illegal, dishonest or inappropriate behavior could have a negative impact on AORN and its employees.

- **Reporting of Violations:**

Employees and board members are responsible for promptly reporting any violations of this Code to the Corporate Compliance Officer or the Corporate Compliance Committee. Refer to the Whistleblower Policy regarding the process.

- **Accountability for adherence and enforcement to this Code:**

All employees and board members are accountable for adherence to this Code. The Corporate Compliance Officer, the Executive Director/CEO, the CFO and other officers will be individually responsible for enforcing the standards set forth in this Code. Upon receiving a report of a violation of this Code, the Corporate Compliance Committee, including its legal and other advisors, will have the full power and authority to investigate the report and determine next steps, if any, should be taken to resolve the problem and avoid the likelihood of a recurrence. These steps may, where appropriate, include the termination of an officer, board of director, or employee of AORN and the commencement of appropriate legal proceedings.

## **Training and Acknowledgment**

Employees and board members will review this policy and sign acknowledgement of the policy annually.

## **Clarification of Policy and Exceptions:**

For clarification of the policy and noted exceptions, please refer to the Corporate Compliance Officer.