

ACNM Member Code of Conduct

Introduction

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) Code of Conduct reflects who we are, what is important to us, and how we communicate and interact with each other. This Code applies to every ACNM setting, including our interactions in-person, in meetings, at events, in our discussions, and in the ACNM online or virtual communities,- whether Connect, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, online news forums, or other,- and whether through verbal, written, and visual expression (described together as “ACNM Settings”).

This Code of Conduct establishes standards, but it does not cover every situation. You are expected to be respectful and to use good judgment in your words and actions. All aspects of this Code apply to all ACNM-related actions and interactions. Certain aspects particularly applicable to on-line communications are identified below with an asterisk.

Overview of Requirements for Member Conduct.

As set forth in the ACNM Articles of Incorporation, eligibility for membership is predicated upon being supportive of the mission and purposes of the College, namely to support and promote the professional field of midwifery and to encourage excellence in professional practice.

In pursuit of that mission, members are expected to satisfy ethical, professional, and personal standards of conduct. The College may impose discipline, suspension, or expulsion in the event of actions by members that violate the ACNM rules or Bylaws, or which are otherwise not in the best interest of the College.

Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination

ACNM does not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment, or bullying within the ACNM Community. Your actions and interactions are required to be in compliance with the ACNM Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying (found here). We expect your interactions to be conducted with dignity, decency, and respect, and without any discrimination, harassment, intimidation, oppression, or exploitation. The ACNM Position Statement on Racism and Racial Bias can be found on the ACNM website here.

Goals of the Code

1. Maintain a midwifery community that is open, secure, and trustworthy for its participants.
2. Establish fellowship and support among midwives that will enhance their care of women, individuals, and families.
3. Cultivate engagement, exchange of information, collaboration, and sharing of innovative ideas relevant to midwifery.

Rules and Requirements of Interaction within the ACNM Community

1. **Respect diversity.**
Honor our differences. Members of the ACNM Community should treat each other with respect.
2. **Communicate in a professional manner**
Maintain open, honest, and respectful dialogues. Discussions should encourage conversation and the expression of opinions on midwifery-related matters openly and in a civil, respectful manner, without divisiveness or tension. You are expected to act in a dignified and courteous manner to avoid injuring others, their property, reputation, or employment by false, malicious or improper action. Obscene, vulgar, or inappropriate language and/or images are not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Avoid engaging in unjustified negative criticisms and any false, malicious, or demeaning comments about colleagues and ACNM decision-making and leadership in verbal, written and electronic communications with clients, other professionals, or the general public.
3. **Avoid discussions pertaining to politics, religion, and sexual content not related to professional practice**
Interactions within ACNM are designed to enable discussion on topics related to midwifery. Discussion and

debate of politics, religion, and non-health care related sexual content that is not related to professional practice is prohibited. Posting of political promotions and/or content of self-interest is also prohibited.

4. **Behave ethically**

All persons participating in ACNM communities are expected to act honestly, in good faith, and with the highest professional standards.

5. **Treat others as you want to be treated**

Misunderstandings in communications can occur, especially in written statements due to the difficulty in understanding the implied tone in another user's remarks. Take extra care to be respectful in your comments to other users and do not react negatively to comments you perceive as rude or otherwise objectionable. If possible, please either end the discussion or ignore the comment entirely. In severe cases please report the offense promptly to the ACNM staff at membership@acnm.org. Responding to another user's comments in a manner contrary to our posting policy will be viewed by ACNM as equally inappropriate and may result in sanctions against your forum privileges. In short, avoid engaging in personal attacks against others.

6. **Protect the integrity of ACNM**

You are not authorized to make statements on behalf of ACNM. To safeguard ACNM's reputation and integrity, you are expected to portray your statements as your opinion. You are requested to communicate any concerns about ACNM to the ACNM leadership at membership@acnm.org to enable appropriate response, action, or explanation. Regardless, communications should be expressed in a civil and respectful manner to avoid injuring the organization's intellectual property or reputation by false, malicious or improper action. This includes the obligation to disclose and resolve any conflicts of interest, meaning any organizational or financial interest that might be adverse to the interests of ACNM, unless you have first obtained the written consent of the Board or the CEO.

7. **Use of the ACNM Name.** Use the ACNM name only as set forth in policy guidelines or as otherwise specifically permitted by the Board.

8. **Advertising for other companies is strictly prohibited**

Posting or otherwise circulating commercial messages, product or service promotions, advertising, selling goods or services, making solicitations of any kind (research, survey, service and/or product promotions, etc.) are prohibited. Use caution when discussing products. Comments are subject to libel, slander, and antitrust laws. Information shared about a product or service does not constitute an endorsement or opinion of ACNM.

9. **Safeguard patient and member privacy; maintain confidentiality where applicable**

Never share personal health information (PHI) in any ACNM Setting, including its online forums. Preserve, protect, and secure PHI and hold in the highest regard health information and other information of a confidential nature obtained in an official capacity, taking into account the applicable statutes, HIPAA requirements, and all related regulations. Do not disclose any kind of confidential, proprietary, or sensitive business or other information such as personal emails, phone numbers, addresses, family information, employer details or any kind of private information that should not be released publicly .

10. **Respect intellectual property rights**

No one is permitted – whether at meetings, online, or otherwise - to use, to post or distribute information or works subject to trademark, copyright, or other proprietary rights, except with the express consent of the owner of the rights.

11. **Avoid remarks that may constitute defamation**

Posting or otherwise communicating statements or material that are offensive and insulting to individuals (or constituencies or organizations) violate the ACNM Code of Conduct and may subject you to personal liability if you violate defamation laws. The term defamation generally refers to verbal (slandering) and written (libelous) statements that are factually false and that harm the subject's reputation. .

12. **Adhere to antitrust laws**

Users are prohibited from using ACNM, including its online forums, to communicate about prices or terms of service, to exchange practice management or any other proprietary information, or otherwise communicate in a manner that may violate federal or state antitrust laws.

13. ***Do not discuss ACNM administrative/moderator actions or personal membership inquiries in any ACNM Setting, including any online forum**

If you do not agree with a moderator or ACNM staff decision, you may send a private message to the moderator or ACNM staff administrator at membership@acnm.org. You are not permitted to start a thread or post a complaint that your post was removed, nor not post any private correspondence from an ACNM online moderator/administrator. Membership account issues are to be directed to membership@acnm.org, not displayed in a public forum.

14. **Keep Member-Only communications within the membership.**

For example, ACNM online communities are member-only forums. They are a benefit of ACNM membership administered by the College for the sole use of ACNM members. You are not permitted to forward or provide the content of online discussions or other communications in ACNM Settings intended only for members, to non-members.

15. Job postings are permitted, Posts related to a preceptor search are limited.

The posting of job openings or inquiring about open positions is permitted. Posts related to your need for a preceptor are not permitted whether at meetings, in the Town Hall, or in other communications. You may post in any other ACNM Connect community, excluding the Town Hall, about your search for a preceptor.

16. * ACNM online communities are proprietary forums

The ACNM online communities are private message boards administered by ACNM. All message board content is allowed at the discretion of ACNM. The College reserves the right to remove any message board content without notice and for any reason. ACNM may remove forums that have become inactive .

17. *Discussion Group Etiquette

Use the following guidelines to enhance your participation in the community of your choice.

- a. Stay on topic. Do not discuss irrelevant topics or post non-related links or images.
- b. Respect the opinions of your peers. If you feel the need to disagree, do so respectfully. Acknowledge that others are entitled to have their own perspective.
- c. Do not type in ALL CAPS. It could appear as if you are screaming.
- d. Check the most recent comments before you reply to a comment to ensure you are responding to the latest post.
- e. State concisely and clearly the topic of your comments in the subject line. This allows members to respond more appropriately to your posting and makes it easier for members to search the archives by subject.
- f. Send messages such as "thanks for the information" or "me, too" to individuals, not to the entire list. Do this by using the "Reply to Sender" link in every message.
- g. Do not send administrative messages, such as "remove me from the list," to the group. Instead, use the web interface to change your settings or to remove yourself from a list. To change your email address, you do not need to remove yourself from the list and rejoin under your new email address; simply change your settings.
- h. Avoid excessively long posts. Limit word count to no more than 700 words. Additional content can be added as attachments.

18. What to do if you are unsure if your intended communication or conduct would violate this Code?

When unsure whether content is consistent with these policies, please err on the side of caution and refrain from the conduct or do not post the content. If there are questions on what content is appropriate to do, contact membership@acnm.org.

19. What to do if you observe a violation of the Code.

If you perceive a violation of this Code in any ACNM Setting, you may follow the procedures in the ACNM Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying, if applicable, and otherwise please advise ACNM via membership@acnm.org. Complaints may be in the form of described conduct, a letter, or an email describing the unacceptable behavior.

20. Rationale for Enforcing the Code.

Taking action against one of our members, including removing them from ACNM programs or on-line participation is something that we take seriously in order to protect the membership and the quality of service we strive to provide to our members. ACNM has an obligation to the women, individuals and families our members serve, the communities in which they live, and to each other to uphold our core values and to conduct ACNM business with professionalism and integrity.

21. How Enforcement is Conducted for Violations Pertaining Only to Improper Postings

- For a first violation, an email or phone call is communicated to the member that explains the violation that occurred. The post is removed.

- Second violation in a year, the member is placed in a moderation queue, where messages from the member's account are reviewed before they are posted online for a period of 3 months.
- Third violation in a year, a formal letter is sent to the member who violated the Code of Conduct. The member is removed from participating in the ACNM online forum, whether Connect, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, online news forums, or other.
- Egregious violations, such as posting defamatory, abusive, profane, threatening, obscene, or illegal material, may result in immediate suspension or termination of a user's ACNM Connect account.

A member may not appeal removal of a post. A member may appeal their removal from an ACNM online forum by contacting membership@acnm.org in writing. Final decisions will be reviewed and decided upon by a panel of staff and peers. Appeals should include the following information: First name, last name, email address, phone number, full disclosure of any previous violations, why you feel the online community removal should be overturned; include any relevant or supporting evidence. For any further questions or comments please contact membership@acnm.org.

22. How Enforcement is Conducted for Violations Pertaining to Violations of the Code (other than Improper Postings)

- A. Urgent Enforcement Situations.** If the ACNM CEO and the President or her designee agree that any situation or any conduct warrants emergency action, in their discretion they can take immediate action to remove anyone from any ACNM event, suspend any individual's membership, or bar them from some or all ACNM activities.
- B. Potential Consequences.** Otherwise, ACNM in its discretion and under the following procedures may impose as disciplinary action for violations of the Code: a warning, order to cease the behavior, rehabilitative requirements, a reprimand, suspension, and/or expulsion.
- C. Procedures.** The ACNM CEO, or the President or her designee, determine if the conduct as described would potentially violate the Code, including any ACNM rules or requirements. If so, the person complaining and the person complained of are informed about the complained conduct and are given 10 working days or such further time as the CEO or the President or her designee decides to provide a written statement and from any witnesses to the conduct. The person complained of gets another 10 working days to respond in writing to the information submitted by the person complaining.
- D. Committee Procedures for Limited Penalties; Appeals.** The Executive Committee or its designated committee of at least three people including two from the Board review the complaint and decide it in their discretion. In their discretion, they may ask for additional information and may ask the person complained of or any witnesses to answer questions in person (which could be by phone, virtually, or actually in-person, as the committee determines). The Committee can decide whether: (a) to dismiss the Complaint, which is not appealable; or (2) to recommend disciplinary action as described above short of suspension or expulsion, which is appealable if the person complained of provides a notice of appeal to the Executive Committee within 10 days of the decision. The person has 5 more days to provide a written statement of appeal. The Executive Committee in its discretion can provide an opportunity for a hearing (by phone, virtually, or in-person as determined by the President). The Executive Committee makes the final decision in such matters.
- E. Procedures for Suspension or Expulsion.** An ACNM member or any other individual covered by this Policy or the ACNM Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying, may be suspended or expelled by the Board of Directors for reasonable cause. Such cause shall include, but not be limited, to the following: violation of the Bylaws and/or of this Code of Conduct. Suspension or expulsion shall occur only by an affirmative vote of not less than two-thirds (2/3) of the current members of the Board of Directors after 20 days' notice and the opportunity for a hearing (by phone, virtually, or in-person as determined by the President) has been provided to the member proposed to be suspended or expelled. The individual in question may request the Board to reconsider any such decision. The Board's original decision, or upon reconsideration its subsequent decision shall be the final decision of the College.
- F.** The standard for a successful appeal is if the member can show that the finding and/or disciplinary measures are unsubstantiated or otherwise in violation of the rules and criteria of the College.

23. Complaints or Concerns About Decisions and Actions of ACNM Staff or Volunteer Leadership.

ACNM online resources are made available to address issues of concern in midwifery, including ACNM policy issues. Members with concerns or complaints about decisions or actions of ACNM staff or ACNM volunteer leaders with respect to a specific member or situation are to raise those concerns directly with the individual leader where the decisions or actions were taken, such as the ACNM staff supervisor, committee chair, or board chair, and not raise them in the general online resources.

Note Regarding Use of the ACNM On-Line Resourcesⁱ

Changes to the Code of Conduct

ACNM reserves the right to revise the rules, procedures, and guidelines contained in the Code of Conduct at any time, with notice of changes to be posted on the ACNM webpage.

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Disclaimer Posted on the ACNM On-Line Resources

The views expressed on the various ACNM online communities are those of the individual contributors. They do not, and should not, be construed as representing the views of the College. ACNM makes no warranty, guarantee, or representation as to the accuracy or sufficiency of the information posted on its various communities and assumes no responsibility or liability regarding the use or misuse of such information for any purpose. ACNM disclaims any responsibility to maintain copies of any information posted or to assure that such information is deleted. Unless specifically stated otherwise, ACNM does not endorse, approve, recommend, or certify any information, advice, guidance, product, process, service or organization presented or mentioned on its online forums, and information from these forums should not be referenced in any way to imply such approval or endorsement. However, ACNM retains the right to monitor posted information and remove messages or materials that it believes do not comply with its Code of Conduct.

Requests for Assistance

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact the ACNM staff at membership@acnm.org.