

Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) Code of Ethics

Approved by the SRCD Governing Council on September 18, 2025

Preamble to the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) Code of Ethics

The Society for Research in Child Development advances the developmental sciences and promotes the use of developmental research to improve human lives. SRCD's mission is rooted in an understanding of child development as an integrated part of lifelong development that takes place in complex and interrelated contexts. It is based on a belief that in order to create reliable, valid, and useful knowledge, developmental science must explore a diverse array of biological, cognitive, psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of development through rigorous scientific inquiry that uses multiple perspectives, methods, and levels of analysis. This task requires approaches that represent individual disciplinary traditions as well as those that integrate multiple disciplines across a broad range of biological, behavioral, and social sciences. This task also requires diversity in all its forms—among the children, families, and communities who are studied; among the scientists who conduct this work; and among the students who are preparing to be future teachers, practitioners, and researchers. Although no single study can incorporate the full range and scope of these disciplinary and diversity goals, SRCD takes the position that a full, integrative field of developmental science is needed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of human development and to foster the effective application of that understanding to improve human well-being.

The following **SRCD Code of Ethics** is intended to serve as a guide for professional conduct of SRCD members within the purview of SRCD events, publications, and interactions:

Section I outlines the *Ethical Principles for SRCD Members*, which serve as aspirational guidelines rather than enforceable rules.

Section II outlines the *Ethical Standards for SRCD Members, Editors, Representatives, and Events* which set forth enforceable rules for professional conduct across various SRCD settings.

Section III outlines the *SRCD Ethics Committee Policies and Procedures* that are implemented to help enforce the ethical standards enumerated in Section II.

***The following is adapted from NCFR (2024) and ASA (2023). ***

I. Society for Research in Child Development Ethical Principles

The following ethical principles should guide the professional conduct of SRCD members.

Integrity and Professional Competence: SRCD members hold themselves accountable to clearly and accurately conduct, disseminate, and cite research and uphold rigorous standards of scholarship, teaching, and professional practice. Researchers follow the code of ethical research as set forth by their Institutional Review Boards (e.g., ensuring that research minimizes harm, is conducted with informed consent and confidentiality, is developmentally appropriate and non-coercive). Further, SRCD members teach, conduct research, and provide professional services within the boundaries of their education, training, and professional expertise.

Respect and Fairness: SRCD members behave and communicate respectfully toward colleagues, SRCD staff, students, research participants and their families, and community partners. SRCD members recognize and respect a wide range of scholarly paradigms, epistemologies, values, beliefs, theories, methodologies, and practices. Even when there are disagreements, SRCD members behave collegially and professionally. Discussion, disagreement, and debate are welcomed and encouraged; personal attacks on and denigration of individuals who hold views different from one's own are not.

SRCD members do not engage in harassment or abuse of SRCD colleagues, staff, students, or research participants. Harassment includes a single act or multiple persistent acts/behaviors that are demeaning, abusive, offensive, or create a hostile professional or organizational environment. Sexual harassment may include unwanted sexual solicitation, physical advance, or verbal or non-verbal conduct that is sexual in nature.

SRCD members do not abuse their power or privilege in hierarchical relationships, ensure they do not exploit the labor, intellectual property, or experiences of SRCD colleagues, students, supervisees, or research participants.

Inclusive Social Responsibility: SRCD members recognize their social responsibility to apply their knowledge and expertise to support and contribute to the well-being of all children. Members respect human diversity and do not tolerate any forms of discrimination based on age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, national origin or immigration status, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, health conditions, political affiliation, language, marital/partner status, or parental status. SRCD members also acknowledge the existence of systemic racism, bias, and discrimination within their organizations and around the world, and actively work to promote equity, inclusion, and diversity in their research, teaching, and professional conduct.

II. Society for Research in Child Development Ethical Standards

A. The following ethical standards are expected of all SRCD members who conduct, publish, and review research.

1. SRCD researchers uphold the standards of research ethics dictated by their academic institutions, funders, community-based organizations, or professional organizations for research endeavors, including engaging in research practices that (a) protect vulnerable populations, (b) do not exploit research participants, (c) respect participants' dignity, and (d) protect the welfare of research participants. SRCD members do not coerce individuals to participate in research.
2. SRCD researchers do not present others' work as their own, whether it is published, unpublished, or electronically available. In written publications or in presentations, they must explicitly identify, credit, and reference the author(s) when they use any data or verbatim material from their own or others' written work (published, unpublished, or electronically available). The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) should be disclosed in accordance with [SRCD's publication ethics policies](#) published elsewhere.
3. SRCD researchers take responsibility and authorship credit only for work they have actually performed or for which they have made a substantial contribution. When submitting a manuscript to a journal, they adhere to the journal's guidelines for authorship determination. Research teams, including faculty, students, collaborators, and community partners, where applicable, should be actively involved in the decision-making process about authorship.

Importantly, faculty advisers should discuss publication credit and authorship with students as early as feasible and throughout the research and publication process as appropriate. Faculty respect students' intellectual property and their contributions to research (paid or unpaid).

4. SRCD members do not use information or material gained in a confidential review of unpublished manuscripts for journals, other publications, or proposals. They respect the strict proprietary rights of the author(s) and uphold the confidentiality agreement with the journal or organization. They disclose conflicts of interest to the journal editor who solicited the review or organizational leadership, and they decline any requests to review when conflicts are involved. They submit reviews that are fair and non-discriminatory.

B. While serving as an Editor, Co-Editor, Associate Editor, or a member of the Editorial Board for an SRCD Journal (referred to broadly as Editors), individuals are held to a high ethical standard. Specifically:

1. Editors must be fair in the application of standards and operate without personal or ideological favoritism or malice. Any potential conflicts of interest should be disclosed, and a substitute Editor shall cover the conflicted manuscript. In addition, Editors shall make unbiased selections of reviewers who will be able to fairly evaluate a manuscript.
2. Editors should ensure the confidential and anonymous nature of the review process and supervise editorial office staff, including students, in accordance with practices that maintain confidentiality and anonymity of reviewers and authors.
3. Editors are obligated to publish all manuscripts accepted for publication unless major errors or ethical violations are discovered after acceptance of the manuscript (e.g., plagiarism or scientific misconduct). More details about publication ethics and editor conflicts are in the Publications Ethics document and Editor Contracts.

C. While serving on **SRCD Governing Council** and/or an **SRCD Committee or SRCD-sponsored group** (referred to broadly as **SRCD Representatives**, either elected, appointed, or self-nominated), individuals are held to a high ethical standard. Specifically:

1. SRCD Representatives will not share, transmit, or disclose confidential information related to the affairs of the Society (e.g., personnel matters), and will uphold the strict confidentiality of all meetings and other deliberations and communications, only discussing or distributing such information as has been approved by the President for public release. Minutes from GC meetings are available to members on SRCD Commons to promote transparency.
2. SRCD Representatives will store Society files and reference materials in the SRCD archive (e.g., Commons community) designated for the specific service. Upon end of service, they will promptly relinquish to the Society all documents, electronic and hard files, reference materials, and other property entrusted to the member for the purpose of fulfilling their job responsibilities.
3. SRCD Representatives will respond to the needs of the Society's members in a fair and professional manner. They will not engage in, nor facilitate (e.g., via listservs), any discriminatory or harassing behavior directed toward Society staff, members, officers, directors, meeting attendees, exhibitors, advertisers, sponsors, suppliers, contractors, or others based on their protected characteristics in the context of activities relating to the Society.
4. SRCD Representatives will not use any information provided by the Society, or acquired as a consequence of the member's service to the Society, in any manner other than in furtherance of their duties to the Society.
5. SRCD Representatives, while serving in their role, will act at all times in the best

interests of the Society and not for personal or third-party gain or financial enrichment. They shall:

- a. avoid placing (and avoid the appearance of placing) one's own self-interest or any third-party interest above that of the Society; while the receipt of incidental personal or third-party benefit may flow from certain Society activities, such benefit must be merely incidental to the primary benefit to the Society and its purposes;
- b. not abuse their membership by improperly using their Representative status or the Society's staff, services, equipment, resources, or property for their personal or third-party gain or pleasure, and shall not represent to third parties that their authority as a member extends any further than that which it actually extends;
- c. not solicit or accept gifts, gratuities, free trips, honoraria, personal property, or any other item of value from any person or entity as a direct or indirect inducement to provide special treatment to such donor with respect to matters pertaining to the Society;
- d. provide goods or services to the Society as a paid vendor to the Society only after full disclosure to, and advance approval by, the Governing Council, and pursuant to any related procedures adopted by the Governing Council.

D. SRCD ethical standards are expected to be followed at all **SRCD Events** as well. SRCD is dedicated to providing a harassment-free event experience for everyone, regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, age, sexual identity, mobility, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, country of origin or immigration status, religion (or lack thereof), or political perspective.

1. The following behaviors are considered harassment by SRCD and are prohibited at all SRCD events:
 - Violence, threats of violence, or violent language directed against another person or group for any reason
 - Sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, discriminatory jokes or language about a religion (e.g., antisemitic or Islamophobic comments), or other discriminatory jokes and language
 - Posting or displaying sexually explicit or violent material
 - Posting or threatening to post other people's personally identifying information
 - Personal insults, particularly those related to the above-mentioned identities and characteristics
 - Inappropriate, unwelcome, or non-consensual photography or recording
 - Inappropriate, unwelcome, or non-consensual physical contact
 - Unwelcome sexual attention including sexualized comments or jokes, inappropriate or unwelcome touching, and unwelcome sexual advances
 - Deliberate intimidation, threats of retaliation for rebuffing advances, stalking or unwelcome following (online or in person)

- Advocating for, or encouraging, any of the above behavior
 - Disruption of presentations during sessions, in the exhibit hall, or at other events organized by SRCD whether the event is in-person or virtual.
2. Individuals who have observed or experienced any of the conduct described above at an SRCD event **should promptly report it to the SRCD Event Ombud via the method publicized at the meeting**. SRCD reserves the right to take any action deemed necessary and appropriate, including immediate removal from the event without warning or refund, in response to any incident of unacceptable behavior.

III. SRCD Ethics Committee Policies and Procedures

The Ethics Committee is tasked with receiving and resolving alleged violations of the SRCD Code of Ethics.

A. The responsibilities of the Ethics Committee are to:

1. Publicize the Code of Ethics to the members of SRCD.
2. Provide advice to members of SRCD on an informal and confidential basis regarding their ethical obligations under the Code of Ethics.
3. Investigate allegations of violations of the Ethical Standards, determine if violations of the Ethical Standards have occurred and, where appropriate, impose sanctions.
4. Coordinate and investigate cases brought by the SRCD Event Ombud.
5. Make recommendations to the Governing Council regarding any suggested changes to the policies and procedures.

B. Operating Rules of the Ethics Committee

1. **Membership:** The Ethics Committee shall consist of five members, appointed by the Executive Committee of the Governing Council in consultation with the Nominations Committee. Each member shall serve a three-year term. Members of the Ethics Committee may not serve concurrently on Governing Council and should represent a range of institutional and disciplinary backgrounds.
2. **Meetings:** The Ethics Committee will meet as needed to consider any allegations of an ethical violation brought against an SRCD member. Additionally, the Ethics Committee will meet virtually once per year to review the Code and present any recommended changes to Governing Council.
3. **Conflict of Interest:** No member of the Ethics Committee shall participate in the deliberations or decision of any matter in which there is a conflict of interest. This may include, but is not limited to, having personal or collaborative relationships, or belonging to the same institution (e.g., same university department). In the event of such a conflict, the member should inform the chair and recuse themselves from any deliberation or decision on the matter. In such a case, the remaining four members will carry out the deliberations and must agree by majority rule for a decision to be reached. In the unlikely event that a majority of members have a conflict of interest, the Executive Committee and Nominations Committee will appoint temporary replacement members without conflicts.
4. **Authority:** The Ethics Committee shall have sole authority to do everything necessary or appropriate to administer the Code of Ethics, including interpreting the Code of Ethics and making all other determinations necessary or advisable for the administration of this Code of Ethics. All decisions, determinations and interpretations of the Ethics Committee regarding this Code of Ethics shall be final and binding on all persons subject to this Code of Ethics, except as otherwise provided in section III.C.8 below.

C. Enforcement of the Code of Ethics

1. Jurisdiction

a. The Ethics Committee shall have jurisdiction to receive and determine the resolution of any complaint of a violation of the Ethical Standards in the SRCD Code of Ethics by a member of SRCD. All members of SRCD are subject to the Code of Ethics while members of SRCD.

b. If a complaint alleges conduct which is, could be, or may be, the subject of other legal or institutional proceedings, the Ethics Committee may defer further proceedings with respect to the complaint until the conclusion of the other legal or institutional proceedings. The Ethics Committee may also decline to consider such complaints or limit its consideration to the findings of the other institutions (such as universities, journals, or courts), using those as a basis for considering and recommending action.

2. Filing a Complaint

- a. SRCD members who have a good faith reason to believe that a current SRCD member has violated the Ethical Standards in the Code of Ethics may file a written complaint with the Ethics Committee with as much detailed information about the alleged violation as possible, including the specific Code of Ethics provision violated, how they are aware of the violation, supporting documentation, and contact information for themselves, the subject of the complaints, and any others with relevant information. Anonymous complaints and complaints by non-SRCD members are not accepted.
- b. Potential complainants are encouraged (but not required) to make an initial contact with the SRCD Executive Director or their designee to clarify whether concerns about a possible ethical violation are covered by the Ethical Standards.
- c. A complaint may not be accepted or initiated if it is received more than 12 months after the alleged conduct either occurred or was discovered, except as set forth below. A complaint received after the 12-month time limit may only be accepted if the Ethics Committee determines, in its sole and exclusive discretion, that there is good cause for the complaint not to have been filed within the time limit and that the passage of time will not materially interfere with its ability to consider the complaint.

3. Notice of a Complaint and Offer of Mediation

- a. If a complaint is submitted in writing to the Ethics Committee, they will first screen for a cause for action. Cause for action shall exist when the subject of the complaint's alleged actions and/or omissions would, if proved, in the sole and exclusive judgment of the Ethics Committee constitute a breach of the Ethical Standards in the Code of Ethics. For purposes of determining whether cause for action exists, the Ethics Committee may decline to further consider what it determines in its sole and exclusive discretion to be incredible, speculative, and/or internally inconsistent allegations, allegations that have previously been considered by the Ethics Committee, and allegations that are in the purview of another institution and cannot be appropriately investigated by the Ethics Committee as allowed pursuant to paragraph III.C.1.b. If a cause for action is

- determined to potentially exist, a formal case will be initiated. If a cause for action is determined not to exist, the complaint will be dismissed at this stage and the complainant so notified.
- b. If the Ethics Committee finds a potential cause for action, the Executive Director or their designee shall provide a copy of the complaint and all supporting materials, a copy of the Code of Ethics, including these Policies and Procedures, to the subject of the complaint.
 - c. Where appropriate, the Ethics Committee may offer to the subject of the complaint and the complainant a settlement through mediation. A trained mediator who is an SRCD member and not a current member of the Ethics Committee will be recommended by the Executive Committee. Such mediation services will in most cases be by written correspondence or teleconference.
 - d. Any person appointed to serve as a mediator shall agree to maintain the confidentiality of the proceedings as set forth in the Code of Ethics and these Policies and Procedures. The mediator shall report to the Chair of the Ethics Committee whether a resolution has been agreed upon by the parties involved. If a resolution has been reached, the mediator shall provide a summary of the resolution to the Executive Director or their designee and the complaint will be considered resolved and closed to further investigation.

4. Response to a Complaint

If either or both the complainant and the subject of the complaint declines mediation, or if mediation fails to resolve the complaint, or if mediation is deemed inappropriate by the Ethics Committee, the subject of the complaint shall be notified in writing that the case will go forward in accordance with these Policies and Procedures. The subject of the complaint shall have 30 days after receipt of this notice to respond in writing to the complaint and provide any supporting material. An extension may be granted by the Chair of the Ethics Committee if good cause is shown, but the extension shall not exceed 90 days beyond the expiration of the initial 30-day period.

5. Investigation and Determination of a Violation

The complaint, the response, and all supporting material will be forwarded to the full Ethics Committee. The Ethics Committee shall use its best efforts to begin deliberations within 30 days of receiving all material concerning a complaint. During the investigation, the Ethics Committee may communicate with the complainant, the subject of the complaint, witnesses, or other sources of information as necessary to carry out its investigation. The scope and nature of the investigation shall be determined by the Ethics Committee in its sole and exclusive discretion. The Ethics Committee may designate one or more members to act as primary investigators and report information to the full committee. Complainants and subjects of complaints have the right to consult legal counsel at their own expense, but the Ethics Committee has the right, if it so chooses, to interact solely with the parties to the complaint. Upon completion of its investigation, the Ethics Committee shall issue a

determination of whether one or more violations of the Ethical Standards in the Code of Ethics have occurred, including a summary of the factual basis for this determination and, if deemed necessary, the appropriate sanctions. The investigation report is not required to be provided to the parties and shall remain a confidential part of the investigation proceedings.

6. Sanctions

In any case in which it has been determined that a violation of the Ethical Standards in the Code of Ethics has occurred, the Ethics Committee, in its sole and exclusive discretion, may impose no sanction, or it may impose one or more of the following sanctions set forth below, as the Committee decides is appropriate. In circumstances where implementation of the sanction requires further action pursuant to contract or SRCD governing documents, the Ethics Committee shall recommend the sanction to the appropriate entity for further implementation; the Ethics Committee may also seek the concurrence of the subject of the complaint to the sanction prior to pursuing the steps needed to further implement the action. The goals of sanctions should be focused on restoration and education, such that the subject of the complaint fully understands the violation, encourages ethical behavior, and, where appropriate, redress the violation. The most severe sanctions will be reserved for the most egregious ethical violations. The range of possible sanctions include:

a. Private Reprimand: In cases where there has been an ethics violation, but the violation did not cause serious personal and/or professional harm, the subject of the complaint may receive a letter from the Ethics Committee concerning the violation, including any stipulated conditions of redress or additional training. The subject of the complaint must provide evidence of conditions being met as stipulated in the letter. Failure to comply with stipulated conditions in a reprimand within the designated time period may result in the imposition of a more severe sanction.

b. Denial of Privileges: The Ethics Committee may determine that a subject of a complaint shall be denied one or more of the privileges of SRCD membership and/or the opportunity to participate in SRCD-sponsored activities including, but not limited to, appointment to editorship or the editorial board of any SRCD journal, election or appointment to any SRCD office and Committee, receipt of any SRCD award, publishing in an SRCD journal, presenting a paper, or otherwise participating at meetings sponsored by SRCD. The time period for denial of privileges may be temporary or permanent. Temporary denial of privileges may occur in conjunction with stipulations of redress or additional training. For temporary denial of privileges, the eligibility to reinstate privileges at the expiration of the determined time period may be automatic or may be conditioned on a future recommendation by the Ethics Committee to the Executive Committee that eligibility is appropriate.

c. Termination of Membership: In cases where there has been an ethics violation and the violation caused serious personal and/or professional harm, the Ethics Committee may recommend to the Executive Committee that the SRCD membership of the subject of the complaint may be terminated. The termination of membership may

be temporary or permanent. Temporary termination of membership may occur in conjunction with stipulations of redress or additional training. The eligibility to reinstate membership at the expiration of the determined time may be automatic or may be conditioned on a future recommendation by the Ethics Committee to the Executive Committee that eligibility is appropriate.

7. Notice of Determination

The chair of the Ethics Committee shall notify the complainant and the subject of the complaint of the determination by the Ethics Committee (the “Notice of Determination”). If a sanction is imposed, the Ethics Committee shall instruct the Executive Director to take the appropriate actions and inform the subject of the complaint of their right to appeal.

8. Appeal of Determination

A subject of a complaint who is determined by the Ethics Committee to have violated the Ethical Standards in the Code of Ethics and who receives a sanction may appeal this determination by filing a Notice of Appeal, including a statement of reason for the appeal, with the Executive Director of SRCD, no later than 30 days after receipt of the Notice of Determination. There is no right of appeal for determinations not to accept an ethics complaint for investigation, of a determination that there was no violation of the Ethical Standards, or of a determination that there should be no sanction issued. The Executive Director will forward the appeal to the SRCD President. An extension may be granted by the President if good cause is shown, but the extension may not exceed 90 days beyond the expiration of the initial 30-day period. If an appeal is filed, the President shall convene the Executive Committee to serve as an appeal panel (the “Appeal Panel”) to review all information considered by the Ethics Committee and, within 90 days of the meeting at which the information was reviewed unless additional time is required, decide to uphold or reverse the determination. The Appeal Panel may remand the Ethics Committee for more information prior to making their decision. The Appeal Panel may affirm the Ethics Committee’s decision, set aside the Ethics Committee’s determination that a violation has occurred, or determine that the sanction imposed by the Ethics Committee is not appropriate and impose a different sanction. The decision of the Appeal Panel shall constitute the final decision of SRCD with respect to all matters subject to this complaint.

9. Confidentiality

- a. The filing of a complaint against an SRCD member, the identities of the complainant and the subject of the complaint, and all related proceedings shall be kept confidential to the extent possible by the Ethics Committee and the Executive Director or their designee, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation, except that information regarding the complaint may be shared with any staff designated by the Executive Director to assist the Ethics Committee, SRCD legal counsel, the complainant, the subject of the complaint, and third party sources of information. Determinations of violations of the Ethical Standards in the Code of Ethics by the Ethics Committee or by an Appeal Panel shall be kept confidential, except in the case of applicable legal requirement.

- b. The name of each individual whose membership is terminated and a brief statement of the reason for termination shall be reported annually to the SRCD Governing Council. Such information may otherwise be disclosed only when compelled by an applicable legal requirement.
- c. Initiation of legal action against SRCD or its officers or employees shall constitute a waiver of confidentiality by the person initiating such action.
- d. Records relating to the investigation of complaints of violations of the Ethical Standards in the Code of Ethics, whether or not the Ethics Committee determined that a violation occurred, shall be maintained in a secure place.

10. No Retaliation

No complainant who in good faith submits a complaint or who participates in a review or investigation of a complaint shall be subject to retaliation because of such report or participation. This protection extends to complainants who report in good faith, even if the allegations are, after an investigation, not substantiated. Any SRCD member who retaliates against someone who in good faith has reported or participated in a review or investigation of a complaint under this Code of Ethics will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of membership status in SRCD. Anyone who believes that a complainant has been subject to retaliation or adverse consequences because of making a good faith report or participating in a review or investigation of a complaint under this Code of Ethics should contact the Executive Director or their designee.