

# SRCD Code of Ethical Conduct

*This Code of Ethical Conduct was adopted by the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) Governing Council on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021*

## Preamble

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. In honor of this diverse and inclusive perspective, SRCD has created a Code of Ethical Conduct that emphasizes the values of the profession, which must be upheld by all leaders of the organization. The Code provides specific standards, which are not exhaustive and therefore may not include all possible examples of ethical or unethical conduct. SRCD is committed to protecting our members and breaking down structures that may perpetuate power dynamics and systemic bias.

The SRCD Code of Ethical Conduct (the “Code”) serves as a code of conduct for individuals representing the Society in the following roles:

- Governing Council Member
- SRCD Staff
- Committee Chair
- Committee Member
- Editor
- Associate Editor
- Caucus Leader
- Fellow
- Fellowship Supervisor

This Code is developed and adopted with the goal of ensuring that these individuals (“Representatives”) understand their roles, responsibilities, and rights. Further, the premise of the Code is to promote inclusive and civil discourse, productive disagreement, and open but respectful communication, with our understanding that issues of power and privilege

often disrupt and even silence open communication.

The principles and requirements that comprise the Code, as well as the Procedures for Review (the “Procedures”), are designed to ensure full compliance by the Representatives with the fiduciary duties imposed upon such individuals by state corporate law, the federal tax code’s prohibition on private inurement and private benefit and other requirements of federal tax exemption, common law due process requirements, federal and state antitrust and unfair competition law, state tort law, and other legal precepts and prohibitions. Violations of the Code may result in sanctions imposed under the Procedures.

### **Code of Conduct**

Individuals shall at all times abide by and conform to the following Code of Ethical Conduct in their capacity as SRCD Representatives:

1. Conduct the business affairs of the Society in good faith and with honesty, integrity, due diligence, and reasonable competence.
2. Will not share, copy, reproduce, transmit, divulge or otherwise disclose any confidential information related to the affairs of the Society, and will uphold the strict confidentiality of all meetings and other deliberations and communications.
3. Exercise proper authority and good judgment in their dealings with Society staff, suppliers, and the general public, and will respond to the needs of the Society’s members in a responsible, respectful, and professional manner.
4. 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. Further, they will not misuse Society property or resources, and will at all times keep the Society’s property secure and not allow any unauthorized person to have or use such property.
5. Attend SRCD professional development activities related to their position to the best of their ability.
6. 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. Such return will not abrogate them from their continuing obligations of confidentiality with respect to information acquired as a consequence of their tenure.
7. Act at all times in the best interests of the Society and not for personal or third-party gain or financial enrichment. They shall:

- 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 necessarily flow from certain Society activities, such benefit must be merely incidental to the primary benefit to the Society and its purposes;
- not abuse their membership by improperly using their Council membership 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;
- not engage in any outside business, professional or other activities that would directly or indirectly materially adversely affect the Society;
- not engage in or facilitate any discriminatory or harassing behavior directed toward Society staff, members, officers, directors, meeting attendees, exhibitors, advertisers, sponsors, suppliers, contractors, or others in the context of activities relating to the Society;
- 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;
- provide goods or services to the Society as a paid vendor to the Society only after full disclosure to, and advance approval by, the Council, and pursuant to any related procedures adopted by the Council.

8. Adhere to (if applicable) additional requirements contained in the following position-specific agreements. The Code with hereafter be contained in these agreements as an addendum.

- Governing Council Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Agreements
  - Editorial Contracts
  - Fellowship Agreements
  - Professional Service Agreements
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## **Procedures for Review**

### **I. Introduction**

A. The Code serves as a code of ethical conduct for members of SRCD that serve in the abovementioned roles. Members serving in those roles affirm their endorsement of the Code and acknowledge their commitment to upholding its principles by accepting and retaining membership in SRCD. Violations of the Code may result in sanctions imposed under these Procedures.

B. The grounds for disciplinary action are one or more material, demonstrable violations of any provision of the Code. Multiple alleged violations of the Code may be consolidated, at the discretion of the Co-Chairs (as such term is defined below), into a single complaint (as such term is defined below).

C. These Procedures shall apply to all complaints, allegations, inquiries, or submissions involving a potential violation of the Code (hereinafter collectively referred to as “complaints”) received by SRCD about a member, whether initiated by another member, an officer, employee, or agent of SRCD, or other third party.

D. Actions taken under these Procedures do not constitute enforcement of the law, although referral to appropriate federal, state, or local government agencies may be made about a member's conduct in appropriate situations. Persons bringing complaints are not entitled to any relief or damages by virtue of this process, although they will receive notice of the actions taken. Complaints essentially of a commercial nature (such as claims alleging defamation by or unfair business practices of a competitor), or primarily requesting judicial-type relief, may not be considered under these Procedures unless they also involve potential violations of the Code.

### **II. Development and Administration of Procedures**

A. The Governing Council is responsible for the development and administration of the Procedures.

B. An ad-hoc committee will be formed, in consultation with the Executive Committee, to address any investigations (the Investigative Committee).

C. The Investigative Committee will be co-led by the Executive Director and Secretary of SRCD (the “Co-Chairs”).

D. The Co-Chairs are specifically responsible for ensuring that these Procedures are implemented and followed consistently and objectively.

E. All Committee members, SRCD employees, and other individuals engaged in investigations or decisions on behalf of SRCD with respect to any complaint under these Procedures are indemnified and shall be held harmless and defended by SRCD against any liability arising from such activities to the extent permitted by law, provided such individuals act in good faith and with reasonable care, without gross negligence or willful misconduct, and do not breach any fiduciary duty owed to SRCD.

F. No individual who (directly or through their family or business) has any personal or private business involvement in or connection to the alleged misconduct or any other conflict of interest shall be permitted to participate in the matter to be reviewed. Any such involvement or connection shall be immediately disclosed by the affected individual to the Investigative Committee.

### III. Complaints

A. Complaints may be made and transmitted by any person to the Co-Chair(s), or any officer or director of SRCD (collectively, "Complaint Recipients") in any manner by any individual. While complaints generally should be in writing and the complaining individual generally should be identified, if credible evidence of a violation of the Code is presented, the Complaint Recipient that receives such evidence shall reduce the evidence to writing (including identifying the complaining individual) and promptly forward it to the Co-Chair(s). Moreover, all credible evidence of Code violations received by a Complaint Recipient, or of which a Complaint Recipient becomes aware, shall be subject to mandatory written referral by the Complaint Recipient to the Co-Chair(s), such referrals which shall be subject to these Procedures. In addition, in all instances, any Complaint Recipient may self-initiate a written complaint if circumstances warrant. All complaints received by any person other than a Complaint Recipient should be immediately directed or forwarded to the Co-Chair(s). If against one of the Co-Chairs, then the other Co-Chair will take the matter to the Executive Committee.

B. Direct or indirect retaliation of any kind by SRCD or its officers, directors, employees, members, or agents against any individual that makes, initiates, or is involved in the making of a complaint is strictly prohibited. This prohibition on retaliation shall be enforced strictly by the Investigative Committee. Similarly, complaints made with knowledge of their falsity, in whole or in part, are strictly prohibited. This prohibition on the making of knowingly false complaints shall be enforced strictly by the Investigative Committee.

C. Upon receipt and preliminary review of each complaint, the Co-Chairs may conclude, in the Co-Chairs' sole discretion, that the complaint: (1) contains unreliable or insufficient information, or (2) is patently frivolous or trivial. In such cases, the Co-Chairs may determine that the complaint does not constitute a potentially actionable complaint that would justify bringing it before the Executive Committee for determination of whether there has been a material violation of the Code. If so, such complaint shall be dismissed without prejudice by the Co-Chairs, and notice to its submitter of such action shall be provided by the Co-Chairs in writing. All such preliminary dispositions of complaints by the Co-Chairs shall be immediately reported in writing to all members of the Executive Committee, with a copy to the Society's general counsel. If the Co-Chairs are not in agreement on the course of action, the President will decide between them. Any such complaint may be re-initiated at any subsequent time pursuant to these Procedures.

D. If a complaint is deemed by the Co-Chairs on a preliminary basis to be a potentially actionable complaint, the Co-Chairs shall see that written notice is provided to the member whose conduct has been called into question, advising the member that an

investigation is being initiated. The Co-Chairs also shall provide written notice to the individual who submitted the complaint that the complaint is being reviewed by the Investigative Committee.

#### IV. Review of Complaint

A. For each complaint involving an alleged violation of the Code that the Co-Chairs believe is a potentially actionable complaint, the Co-Chairs shall authorize an investigation into its specific facts or circumstances to whatever extent is necessary in order to clarify, expand or corroborate the information provided by its submitter, and in order to assist the Committee in making a determination as to whether charges (and, if so, what charges) against the member should be brought.

B. The Investigative Committee may be assisted in the conduct of its investigation by SRCD staff, legal counsel, and/or outside experts, provided that no such staff person, legal counsel, or outside expert has any actual or apparent conflict of interest with respect to the matter and provided such individuals agree to maintain the complete confidentiality of the investigation. Both the individual submitting the complaint and the member who is the subject of the charge also may be contacted by the Investigative Committee or its agents for additional information with respect to the complaint. In addition, the Investigative Committee or its agents may contact such other individuals who may have knowledge of the facts and circumstances surrounding the complaint.

C. The Investigative Committee shall then determine whether the complaint warrants initiation of the Procedures against the member who is the subject of the complaint. If the Committee concludes that sanctions should be brought, it shall prepare written notice and a written report explaining the alleged aggrieved conduct and why such conduct constitutes grounds for disciplinary action under the Procedures.

D. If the Committee concludes that no charges should be brought, it shall dismiss the charges and so notify the member in writing. All such dispositions of complaints shall be immediately reported in writing to all members of the Executive Committee, with a copy to the Society's general counsel. Any such complaint may be re-initiated at any subsequent time pursuant to these Procedures. Whether or not charges are brought, for all complaints, the Committee should determine whether the matter should be referred to another entity engaged in the administration of law, and, if so, should promptly do so.

E. All investigations and deliberations of the Investigative Committee are to be conducted in strict confidence to the extent possible, except that the Committee shall be permitted to disclose any relevant information when compelled by law or to parties essential to the review and investigation of the alleged misconduct. All investigations and deliberations of the Investigative Committee shall be conducted objectively, without prejudice of any kind. An investigation may be directed toward any aspect of a complaint that is relevant or potentially relevant.

V. Determination of Violation

A. Upon completion of its investigation and the hearing, the Investigative Committee shall determine by majority vote, upon a preponderance of the evidence, whether or not there has been a violation of the Code, and whether there should be sanctions imposed.

B. When the Investigative Committee finds that there has been a violation, it also shall recommend the imposition of an appropriate sanction. If the Committee so recommends, a written determination with a proposed sanction shall be prepared under the supervision of the Co-Chairs, and shall be presented by a representative of the Committee to the Executive Committee, along with the record of the Investigative Committee's deliberation. Violations will be reported to the Governing Council within 30 days.

C. If the Investigative Committee determines that a violation has not occurred, the complaint shall be dismissed, with written notice thereof provided to the affected member, as well as to the individual who submitted the complaint. A summary report also shall be made in writing to the Executive Committee.

D. Sanctions recommended by the Investigative Committee shall be reviewed by the Executive Committee recommendations based upon the record presented. The member charged may submit a written statement to the Executive Committee prior to the Executive Committee making its decision, but may not otherwise appear before or participate in the Executive Committee's deliberations. The Executive Committee may accept, reject or modify the Investigative Committee's determinations either with respect to the determination of a violation or the recommended sanction to be imposed. If the Executive Committee agrees by the affirmative vote of not less than a majority of a quorum that a violation has occurred, then the determination and imposition of a sanction, as determined by the Council based on the affirmative vote of not less than a majority of a quorum, shall be promulgated by written notice to the affected member, as well as to the individual who submitted the complaint, if the submitter agrees in advance and in writing to maintain in confidence whatever portion of such information is not made public by the Council. If the Council determines that a violation has not occurred, then the complaint shall be dismissed with prejudice, with written notice thereof provided to the affected Council member, as well as to the individual who submitted the complaint.

E. The Council may consider a recommendation from the Committee that the member in violation of the Code should be offered the opportunity to submit a written assurance that the conduct in question has been terminated and will not recur. The decision of the Committee to make such a recommendation and of the Council to accept it are within their respective discretionary powers. If such an offer is extended, the affected member must promptly submit the required written assurance to the Council, and the assurance must be submitted in terms that are acceptable to the Council, including but not limited to any probationary period, if required by the Council. If the Council accepts the assurance, then written notice thereof shall be provided to the affected Council member, as well as to the individual who submitted the complaint, if the

submitter agrees in advance and in writing to maintain in confidence whatever portion of such information is not made public by the Council. Complaints disposed of in this manner shall be deemed to have been disposed of without prejudice.

F. All examinations of the record by, and deliberations of, the Council are to be conducted in strict confidence to the extent possible, except that the Council shall be permitted to disclose any relevant information when compelled by law. All examinations of the record and deliberations of the Council shall be conducted objectively, without prejudgment of any kind.

## VI. Sanctions

One or more of the following sanctions may be imposed by the Council upon a member whom the Council has determined to have violated the Code. The sanction applied must reasonably relate to the nature and severity of the violation, focusing on reformation of the conduct of the affected member and deterrence of the same or similar conduct by others. The sanctions are:

1. Written reprimand to, or censure of, the member (combined with any required amends and probationary period, if desired);
2. Suspension of the member from membership on the Council for a designated period of time (combined with any required amends and probationary period, if desired);
3. Permanent expulsion of the member from membership on the Council;
4. Suspension of the member from membership on one or more SRCD committees or similar bodies for a designated period of time (combined with any required amends and probationary period, if desired);
5. Permanent expulsion of the member from membership on one or more SRCD committees or similar bodies;
6. Suspension of the member from membership in SRCD (combined with any required amends and probationary period, if desired);
7. Permanent expulsion of the member from membership in SRCD.

Once one or more of the above sanctions is imposed, the complaint shall be deemed to have been disposed of with prejudice. For each of these sanctions, a written summary of the determination and the sanction, along with the member's name, may be published, in the sole discretion of the Council, in a printed or electronic medium that is distributed to



all SRCD members.

VII. Resignation

If an elected or appointed leader who is the subject of a complaint voluntarily resigns (in writing) their position at any time during the pendency of a complaint under these Procedures, the complaint shall be dismissed without prejudice and without any further action by the Committee. The member may not seek membership on any SRCD committee or similar body for a period of five years from the effective date of their resignation. However, the Council may communicate the fact and date of member's resignation, and the fact and general nature of the complaint that was pending at the time of resignation, to or at the request of one or more government entities engaged in the administration of law. Similarly, in the event of such resignation, the individual who submitted the complaint shall be notified in writing of the fact and date of the resignation and that the Council has dismissed the complaint (without prejudice) as a consequence.

VIII. Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received my copy of SRCD's Code of Ethical Conduct. I understand and agree that it is my responsibility to read and familiarize myself with the policies therein. I further understand and agree that if there is any policy that I do not understand, I am responsible for seeking clarification from the Executive Director.

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Position in SRCD (e.g., GC Member, Committee Chair, Staff member, etc.)

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Committee, Caucus, or other governance group name (if applicable)

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Name

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Signature

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Date

Please sign and return a copy to Renee Bellis, Membership Associate,  
at [rbellis@srcd.org](mailto:rbellis@srcd.org).