



Association for
Office Professionals
of South Africa

The Association for Office Professionals of South Africa (OPSA)

Code of Ethics

(Preface note: The International Association of Administrative Professionals® defines administrative professionals as “individuals who are responsible for administrative tasks and coordination of information in support of an office related environment and who are dedicated to furthering their personal and professional growth in their chosen profession.”)

Recognising that a position of trust imposes ethical obligations upon administrative assistants, office coordinators, executive secretaries and other types of administrative professionals to act for benefit of employers, clients, and the public, members of the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) established and promulgated four standards of professional conduct and resolve to be guided by them as embodying the ethical ideals of their profession.

The development of a Code of Ethics demonstrates that the administrative support profession accepts the obligation to engage in self-discipline and accepts the responsibility and trust earned by administrative professionals throughout past generations.

Each administrative professional has a personal obligation to support and follow the Code, recognising that the greatest penalty possible for its violation is loss of the respect of professional colleagues and the trust of employers, clients, and society.

Ethical behavior is encouraged by both the Code and the profession. An administrative professional's personal ethical behavior may often exceed the requirements of the Code, which do not demand less than the law, and often exceed those of the law. Persons found guilty of violating laws will be considered in prima facie violation of the Code and may be censured or otherwise penalised by the association or profession.

1. The administrative professional shall act as a trusted agent in professional relations, implementing responsibilities in the most competent manner and exercising knowledge and skill to promote the interests of the immediate and corporate employer.

The immediate employer shall be considered to be the person or persons who, by an established and predetermined arrangement, receive directly the agreed upon services of the administrative professional. The corporate employer shall be considered the entity (company or organisation) providing the administrative professional's compensation. In cases where the immediate employer does not provide compensation for the administrative professional, the administrative professional's principal obligation shall be to serve the corporate employer. In serving the immediate employer, however, the administrative

professional shall not act contrary to interests of the corporate employer or to public safety and welfare or in such a way as to impair the dignity and status of the profession.

The administrative professional shall strive to avoid conflicts of interest with the immediate employer whenever possible, but if such conflicts cannot be avoided or resolved, the administrative professional shall fully disclose to the immediate employer and all interested parties the relevant reasons and circumstances.

Communications and information either given in confidence or such that confidentiality is required to serve the best interests of the immediate employer shall not be revealed by an administrative professional unless permission to do so is granted by the immediate employer or continued confidentiality is harmful to the corporate employer, client, public, or profession. Testimony in a court of law regarding confidential matters should be given only under the immediate or corporate employer's authorisation, under legal compulsion, or to protect the public from harm.

The administrative professional will assume responsibilities only when qualified by training and experience and shall inform the immediate or corporate employer concerning any lack of qualification which might harm the interests of the employer or impair the administrative professional's capacity to serve such interests.

In acting as agent for an immediate employer, the administrative professional shall strive to accurately and honestly represent the views and interests of the immediate employer as well as the views and interests of those who seek to contact or influence the immediate employer, and shall not distort or misrepresent such views and interests, whether for personal advantage or to protect the employer from unwelcome information.

The administrative professional shall respond to those seeking the immediate employer's professional attention with impartial courtesy and consistent good will, recognising that by the administrative professional's demeanor the immediate employer will be judged.

When entrusted with funds or material goods essential to serve the employer, an administrative professional shall never appropriate or use such funds or goods for personal or nonprofessional purposes, and an administrative professional shall never use the employer's facilities or time for the pursuit of such purposes without the express consent of the immediate employer.

The administrative professional shall not accept outside employment or accept any form of compensation from outside sources which would impair the efficiency and effectiveness of the administrative professional or which would be in conflict with the employer's welfare.

2. The administrative professional shall strive to maintain and enhance the dignity, status, competence, and standards of the profession and its practitioners.

The administrative professional, when applying for or being listed for employment, shall not make exaggerated, misleading, or false claims concerning training or qualifications. When judging the qualifications of other persons, whether in providing references, assisting with assignments, or evaluating performances, the administrative professional shall strive to provide fair and objective appraisals and shall attempt to avoid any false, malicious, or indiscriminate injury to or criticism of the professional reputation or work of others.

The administrative professional will cooperate with other administrative professionals in extending public knowledge and appreciation of the profession and its achievements and will strive to protect it from misrepresentation and misunderstanding.

The administrative professional shall strive to improve the standards of the profession by belonging to a professional association, attending and encouraging others to attend professional meetings, exchanging knowledge and information with other administrative professionals, and by achieving and encouraging others to achieve the Certified Professional Secretary® or Certified Administrative Professional® rating.

3. The administrative professional shall insist that judgments concerning continued employment, compensation, and promotion be based upon professional knowledge, ability, experience, and performance.

The administrative professional shall strive to improve working conditions and to ensure equal employment opportunities within the profession and throughout the organisation by which employed.

The administrative professional shall refuse to cooperate with or condone by silence the actions of coworkers or employers who misuse their positions for personal, nonprofessional advantage.

The administrative professional shall resist, and if necessary report to the proper authorities, instances in the workplace of harassment for reasons of sex, creed, race, or age.

The administrative professional shall inform the employer concerning any changes in conditions of employment, including fringe benefits, which encourage inefficiency or make difficult the proper performance of prescribed assignments.

4. The administrative professional must consider the promotion and preservation of the safety and welfare of the public to be the paramount duty.

The administrative professional, in addition to sharing with all concerned citizens an obligation to promote the general welfare and safety, has a special obligation to cooperate with and promote the interests of other allied professions and to exercise particular concern for those directly affected by the actions of employers served.

If requested or required by an employer to engage in or passively condone activities which are contrary to the public safety or welfare, the administrative professional shall indicate clearly to the employer the possible harmful consequences and, if such activities continue, the administrative professional must either resign or notify the proper authorities.

The administrative professional is obliged, before reporting to the proper authorities actions contrary to the public interest, to determine that the factual evidence is correct, to be motivated by no desire for personal benefit or vindication, and to inform the employer of such an intention unless doing so will be harmful to the public.

(Adopted July 1980 and amended August 1998 by action of the International Association of Administrative Professionals.)