

# Up Front: Creating a Code of Ethics and Member Conduct

## A Strong Practice for Association Management

by Sarah Sorum, PharmD, CAE



**T**he Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin (PSW) Board of Directors is continuing our journey to reaffirm our organizational values and enhance the ethical framework within which our association operates. In a world where professional integrity and ethical conduct are paramount, the establishment of a comprehensive Code of Conduct and Member Ethics is not just a procedural necessity but an embodiment of our core values of inclusivity, respect, and collaboration.

During the recent PSW Board strategic planning retreat, our dedication to this endeavor was significantly bolstered by the engagement of expertise from Paula Brantner of Accountability Ignited. Brantner's extensive experience, including her work with the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACPP), was invaluable in guiding our process discussions. It is the goal of the PSW Board to implement a Code of Ethics and Member Conduct in 2025.

### Development of the Code

PSW aims to advance the pharmacy profession and improve medication use quality in Wisconsin. We value patient care, collaboration, innovation, community, and advocacy. A PSW Code of Ethics and Member Conduct will define and promote high standards of professional practice. It will set behavioral benchmarks, ensure transparency, and support a harassment-free environment. When implemented, the Code will apply to all PSW community members, including staff, vendors, and participants in PSW activities, both virtual and in-person. It will cover professional and educational settings, even those not directly affiliated with PSW.

### PSW SHARED VALUES – WHAT BRINGS US TOGETHER

- We believe patients are our purpose—if it's right for the patient; it's right for the profession.
- We value collaboration and mutual respect— if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.
- We believe in innovation, and we believe we are difference makers.
- We value community— we inspire to be inspired, building lasting relationships along the way.
- We engage in advocacy for our patients and our profession— we believe every patient needs a pharmacist and every pharmacist needs an advocate.

Members and participants are expected to treat others with respect, communicate openly, avoid personal attacks, and adhere to PSW policies; the Code will affirm that, and uphold PSW and pharmacy professional practice interests and reputation.

Harassment, abuse, intimidation, and other harmful behaviors are expressly prohibited, and clear consequences for these behaviors will be outlined in the Code.

### Implementation and Reporting

Our workshop at the retreat and our subsequent process discussions have emphasized the need to establish a clear and accessible reporting process. Any member or participant in PSW-sponsored events will be able to report harmful behavior or potential violations. The PSW Board emphasized the importance of a timely and thorough investigation process to acknowledge reports quickly, perform prompt review and, if further investigation is warranted, have in place a detailed and impartial process to follow, ensuring that all parties are heard and results are just.

### Next Steps

As a reflection of who we are as an organization and as a promise to our members that we will continue to strive for a professional environment where everyone can thrive, the PSW Board looks forward to our next steps in this space. Many of our counterpart associations in other states have gone through similar processes, our national partners have, and having a Code of Ethics and Member Conduct is a strong association management practice, according to the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE).

The creation of our Code will be a proactive step in protecting our organization and its members from harm, serving as a safeguard for those with less power and privilege.

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Sarah Sorum is the Executive Vice President & CEO of the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin.

*Disclosure: This commentary has been prepared with the assistance of Microsoft Copilot. The AI tool has been used to support content organization. Final content has been reviewed and revised for accuracy, relevance, and alignment with the PSW Board of Directors' work on this effort.*