Code of Conduct
Leadership Tips

PEDIATRIC MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE
HELPING PEDIATRICIANS SUCCEED

Spreading the Word

When a company decides to implement a code of conduct, it should be done the right way to send the right message on its importance.

That means announcing it companywide. It should be treated as good news because it is. Give employees all the information they could conceivably need to buy in to the project

Let them know:

- Why your company decided to have one?
- What your goal is for the code?
- Who worked on it?
- When it will come into effect?
- Who does it apply to?
- What form it will take (paper document, online PDF, website) and how they can get a copy.
- Who they should contact with questions about the code.
- How to suggest any changes.

Make sure that everyone in the company has access to a copy of the code of conduct. It can be a paper copy or an online version, as long as it's easily accessible.

Training

Once you have a code of conduct in place and available for everyone, it's also pertinent that you require everyone to read it.

Once they've read it every employee should have to indicate that they have read and understand the code and will adhere to it.

Take the time to offer short training sessions for employees to go over the code. Let them know what it's all about and give plenty of time for any questions.

Training should include examples of situations and expected behaviors to help reinforce the message contained within the code.

This is also the time when you will discuss breaches of the code. Give examples of ways the code can be violated (with varying levels of severity) and how these breaches will be dealt with.

Orientation sessions for new employees must incorporate the code of conduct once it is complete.

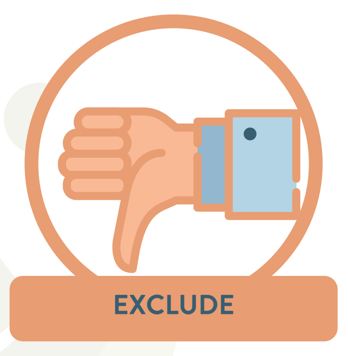
What to leave in, what to leave out

What to include

- Let's start with the first thing people will encounter if the code of conduct is produced as a standalone document –rather than being incorporated into an employee handbook, which is an option –the title. Give it a title that is catchy, something that is easy to read and understand. It shouldn't be cryptic or too clever. But, on the other hand, it doesn't have to be dry and staid.
- Include an introduction from the CEO or another prominent figure from the management team. This shows that management fully supports the code and expects everyone else to follow suit.
- Add the company's mission statement or vision statement, if one is available.
- Specifics. State within the body of the code what exactly is expected from everyone involved.
- Include definitions of what is acceptable conduct and what isn't. Let employees know what kinds of consequences they could expect from violating the code of conduct.
- Give examples of situations that may be encountered by employees and expected responses. Provide information on related laws that are applicable to instances cited in the code.

What to exclude

- Make sure to exclude jargon or legal mumbo jumbo. You are not rewriting the Code of Hammurabi here, or the 10 Commandments. If it's readable, it's more likely to be read, simple enough.
- Irrelevant information. This is similar to the above bullet point, but sometimes people go overboard in belaboring a point. There are times when less is more and that promotes readability as well.



Violations

During the training let the students know that they should feelfree to report violations. You are not trying to develop a culture of informants, but are endeavoring to build a workplace that is held to a high standard which benefits everyone.

There should be multiple ways to inform the appropriate person (there should be a dedicated person in this role, such as the HR manager) ofsuspected violations of the code. Make sure these reporting avenues are confidential to encourage employees to come forward.

Punishments for violations of the code should be commensurate with the violation itself. It would be inappropriate to fire an employee for coming back late from lunch.

Auditing Techniques

Readiness Assessments

As you begin to consider implementing a code of conduct in your organization, it can be helpful to see where things currently stand. This will have been undertaken prior to writing a code of conduct, however, keep the assessments handy so they can be used to measure progress in the follow-up audit. These audits can then be repeated to evaluate progress and to expose areas that require further work.

The Importance of Audits

Asking questions and assessing the current state of the code and its acceptance helps promote mindfulnessand expose possible problems.

Churchill's Four Questions

Winston Churchill had a framework of four questions that he asked whenever anything went wrong. This simple structure can also help organizations look at hownegative events unfold, identify missed opportunities, and close gaps for future events.

The four questions that Churchill asked were:

- Why didn't I know?
- Why didn't my advisors know?
- Why wasn't I told?
- Why didn't I ask?

Who writes it?

Now that you've got an idea of what does, and doesn't, go into a code of conduct, you need to look at who writes it.

Collaboration

One person should be designated to actually write the code, but it needs to be a collaborative process –a joint document.To that end, a team from the workplace must be assembled to work on various drafts on the way to the end product. The team should include management and members of company departments such as HR, communications, safety, and so on.

If your company has a legal department, you should definitely have one of its members on board as well. To make sure any legal concerns and requirements are covered.

Once some groundwork meetings have been held, and the relevant material assembled, then it's time for the first draft. This, as mentioned previously, should be written by one person. This draft version can be shared for revision, but all revisions should also only be incorporated by the same individual.

As with any project-by-committee, it could morph into an unending project with rounds and rounds of revisions if things are allowed to get out of hand. That's where a deadline comes into play, set one and stick to it. Otherwise, you can end up with a bloated Frankenstein monster of a document that misses the mark by a mile.

Once the document is complete, let the legal department have one final look, not for quality or content, but just to ensure the document covers all the required legal basis.

Checklist

- Each company should have a Code of Conduct.
- A workplace Code of Conduct must apply to everyone in the organization from the CEO on down.
- A committee will outline the document.
- One person will be appointed to write the final version based on suggested revisions and reviews from the committee.
- It should have a memorable title and should be concise and easy to read.
- A copy of the Code of Conduct must be made available to everyone in the company.
- All employees and new hires need to be trained on the Code of Conduct.
- Violations of the code should be dealt with appropriately.
- Follow up and audit. Look for areas to improve.
- Update the Code of Conduct based on area identified in the audit.