

## **Policy Direction – Code of Conduct and Ethical Behaviour**

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### **Rationale and Relationship to Mission, Principles and Values**

In the pursuit of the mission, vision and strategic directions of the MS Society of Canada, the behaviours, actions and decisions of volunteers and staff are guided by the following values:

- We believe in and work toward the full integration of people with MS in all aspects of life.
- We keep those affected by MS at the centre of our work at every level of the organization.
- We treat everyone with respect and dignity, and protect their privacy and rights to make decisions about their lives.
- We provide meaningful benefit to the greatest possible number of people affected by MS.
- We give hope to people affected by multiple sclerosis.
- We acknowledge the grassroots of our organization as one of its greatest strengths.
- We recognize that volunteers, donors, and employees are critical to our success, and we celebrate their commitment.
- We demonstrate ethical behaviour and integrity.
- We adhere to the highest standards of quality, transparency, and accountability.
- We create safe and collaborative environments that foster positive relationships.

The reputation of the MS Society is one of its highest assets. Our reputation and work environment are based on the actions and behaviors of all our volunteers and staff. Through comprehensive and effective screening of staff & volunteers the MS Society aims to recruit individuals who best embody the values listed above. However, the private conduct of any employee and volunteer is a private matter except when such conduct compromises the reputation, image or integrity of the Society. The policy is intended to preserve the reputation, integrity and credibility of the MS Society with its stakeholders and general public.

### **Policy Objective**

The Code of Conduct and Ethical Behaviour aims to ensure MS Society activities are conducted in an open, fair and transparent manner. This policy defines acceptable behaviours, promotes the highest standards of practice and establishes a framework for ethical conduct and responsibilities for all volunteers and staff of the MS Society of Canada.

## **Policy Application**

This policy applies to governance volunteers, other volunteers and employees at all levels and locations of the MS Society including the national office, all divisions, and chapters . The policy is effective on the date of approval.

## **Authorization**

The policy was approved by the MS Society of Canada board of directors on May 20, 2015.

The Executive Team is authorized to develop detailed procedures for this policy direction following its approval.

## **Policy Details**

The MS Society requires its volunteers and employees to observe high standards of professional and personal ethical behaviour in all matters involving their association with the MS Society.

Volunteer and staff actions should be driven by the core values of the MS Society of Canada. They are expected to practice honesty, integrity and principled behaviour in fulfilling those responsibilities and to comply with all applicable laws and MS Society policies.

To this end MS Society board volunteers, other volunteers and employees will:

1. Acquaint themselves with the MS Society's mission, vision, values, strategic directions and all organizational policies and comply with both the letter and the spirit of these in relation to their responsibilities.
2. Not participate in, or condone or engage in dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation or illegal activities.
3. Protect all assets of the MS Society (which belong to the organization and not to an individual or group). Such assets include people (directors, volunteers, employees, clients, donors), real property (includes buildings, facilities), income (donations, membership fees, grants & contributions, investment earnings), goodwill (reputation, stature in the community, ability to raise funds, appeal to prospective volunteers, board members, & staff), information (about staff, volunteers, clients, donors, members, research funding applications, other).

4. Comply with MS Society policies that address specific areas of conduct and ethical behaviour:
- **Privacy and Confidentiality.** Volunteers and staff must respect and maintain at all times the confidentiality of information gained as volunteer or employee, including but not limited to personal information about persons affected by MS, computer software and files, business documents and printouts, all volunteer, membership, donor and supporter records.
  - **Conflict of Interest.** Volunteers and employees must recognize and take steps to avoid conflict of interest to protect the interests and reputation of the MS Society.
  - **Workplace Relationships.** Discriminatory, harassing and violent behaviour will not be tolerated. Such behaviours include written or spoken comments as well as overt actions.
  - **Social responsibility.** As a responsible employer, we also have an obligation to protect you from the consequences of alcohol consumption during and following events sponsored by the MS Society or any other third party sponsored event.
  - **Ethical Fundraising and Financial Accountability.** The MS Society has adopted the Imagine Canada Ethical Fundraising and Financial Accountability Code as of January 1, 2012. Staff and volunteers are required to abide by requirements of the Code in relation to donor policies and public representations, fundraising practices, and financial practice and transparency.
  - **Volunteer Engagement.** The MS Society is committed to building a strong volunteer engagement culture that recognizes the fundamental interests and wishes of volunteers to support the mission of the organization.
  - **Accessibility Standards for Customer Services.** In fulfilling our mission, the MS Society of Canada strives at all times to provide its goods and customer services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.
  - **IT Acceptable Use.** Users of MS Society computing and communications resources are required to consistently follow established operating and security procedures in order to protect the MS Society's business and its operations with vendors and clients.
  - **Delegation of financial and signing authority.** Volunteers and staff who have been delegated financial or signing authority must comply with the principles and levels of authority outlined in this policy.

5. Take responsibility for their actions and decisions, follow reporting lines to facilitate the effective resolution of problems, ensure that they do not exceed the authority of their position.
6. Follow MS Society communication protocols in regard to public comments and contact with media.

### ***Implementation***

- Strict observance with this Code is fundamental to the activity and reputation of MS Society. Volunteers and staff will be asked to confirm they have received a copy of the code, have read it and commit to complying with its provisions. Directors and employees shall complete an annual sign-off to reaffirm their continuing commitment and compliance with the code.
- Orientation, training and education shall be provided to all volunteers and staff on this Code to facilitate compliance.
- This policy is supported by the MS Society **Leadership Volunteer and Employee Disclosure Protection Policy (Whistleblower)** which creates conditions and process by which serious violations to ethical policy or fraud and financial impropriety can be raised without fear or harassment and retaliation; and the **Stakeholder Concerns Policy** which provides an avenue for external individuals to communicate with the MS Society in the event that they wish to register a concern or complaint.
- If it is alleged that an individual has not been in compliance with this policy, an investigation will be conducted under established procedures for specific policies, or if there are none, under the auspices of the Executive Champion of this policy or chair of the board of directors based upon the circumstances. Violations of this Code will be considered as a serious matter and subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- This Code shall be publicly disclosed on the MS Society's website.

### **Executive Champion**

The MS Society National Vice-President, Talent is the Executive Champion for this policy.

### **Monitoring and Compliance**

The Executive Champion is responsible for leading the communication, monitoring of the application of and compliance with this policy direction in conjunction with other members of the Executive Team.

If an investigation under the policy is initiated, the Executive Champion will work with appropriate staff to carry out the investigation and ensure compliance.

On a quarterly basis, members of the Executive Team must acknowledge compliance with this policy and the related procedures. The board shall receive information from management that satisfies them that compliance is appropriately measured and monitored.

### **Related Policies, Legislation**

All MS Society of Canada policies which are posted on our public web site [here](#) and on Mercury (our intranet) [here](#).

[Employee Handbook: Workplace environment](#)

Framework for Programs and Services

Other programs and services standards

### **Policy Review**

The policy is to be reviewed at a minimum every five (5) years following its approval.

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### **Definitions:**

**Executive Team** - The most senior level of staff leadership within the MS Society comprised of the president and chief executive officer; division presidents; chief financial officer, chief marketing and development officer; and national vice-presidents of research, programs and services, talent, government relations and information technology. One person may hold more than one position. The president & chief executive officer may alter the composition of the Executive Team as required from time-to-time.

**National Vice-President, Talent** – senior staff position within the MS Society responsible for providing strategic leadership to our volunteer engagement and paid workforce activities.

**Governance volunteers** – members of the board of directors or board committees at any level of the MS Society.