

## STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

### **Purpose/Background**

The State Board of Directors reviews and coordinates the activities of local Review Boards, makes recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly regarding foster care policies, procedures and deficiencies, and promulgates regulations to carry out the provisions of Article 7, Section 63-11-700 of the South Carolina Children's Code.

### **Guidelines**

#### A. Standards of Conduct

This procedure provides uniformity for standards of conduct of appointed members to local Foster Care Review Boards. Because of the special trust and confidence conferred and the responsibility placed upon Foster Care Review Board members, those so appointed to this public trust shall at all times observe the highest standards of integrity, commitment, professionalism and respect for others. It is the expectation of the State Board of Directors that local board members shall:

1. Support the vision, mission, and values of the Foster Care Review Board.
2. Represent the Foster Care Review Board and the local board in a professional and honorable manner at all times.
3. Immediately and fully disclose any possible conflicts of interest in regard to any child or family scheduled for review by the appointed board or by any board on which the member is serving as a substitute.
4. Annually attend both of the scheduled professional development opportunities offered by the Foster Care Review Division (FCRD).
5. Serve in positions of leadership on the local board when called upon by other board members.
6. Respect the role and responsibilities of FCRD staff and the Review Board Coordinator as a professional and knowledgeable staff member. To include but not limited to: demonstrating appropriate professional boundaries; allowing the coordinator to participate in the review as necessary to obtain information and facilitate the review process; adhering to the appropriate chain of command when addressing issues and concerns.
7. Fully respect all participants in the review process with objectivity, honesty, and professionalism, including, but not limited to:
  - Maintain a non-biased, non-judgmental demeanor in reviews
  - Remain sensitive to and respectful of the child and family's culture, ethnicity, religion, gender, and socioeconomic status



- Demonstrate appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication (avoid eye-rolling, huffing, interrupting, reprimanding, scolding, or preaching to staff, other board members, participants, or visitors)
  - Listen actively and respectfully to those speaking (staff, interested parties, other attendees, or board members)
8. Come fully prepared to each board meeting, having fully reviewed the advance review materials and having prepared relevant questions for interested parties/attendees.
  9. Respect the allotted scheduled time for the review by asking relevant, child-centered questions and focusing on child permanency and placement
  10. Attending reviews as outlined in the attendance requirements provided to board members upon appointment.
  11. Maintaining the confidentiality of all information received through the course of review meetings.

**B. Non-compliance with the Standards of Conduct**

This procedure provides uniformity in handling allegations and complaints of non-compliance with the Standards of Conduct by current local members and clearly outlines which infractions require State Board involvement in place of or in addition to local Board leadership. Ongoing concerns, regardless of severity, that have been addressed by local Board leadership without resolution, must be addressed by State Board or the Division Director.

**Level 1** offenses listed below must be addressed by the Local Board Chair for first or second offenses. If there are continued concerns, they will be escalated to State Board or the Division Director.

<b>Standard of Conduct</b>
Not supporting the vision, mission, and values of FCRB
Not representing the FCRB in a professional manner
Training attendance
Treating review participants in a disrespectful manner
Not being prepared for review meetings
Not remaining focused on parent treatment progress or child permanency/safety
Not meeting attendance requirements

**Level 2** offenses must be addressed by State Board or the Division Director. Continued concerns could result in notification of the legislative delegation.

<b>Standard of Conduct</b>	<b>Action By</b>
Violating confidentiality	State Board
Recurring unprofessionalism and/or being disrespectful to review participants	State Board
Failure to disclose conflict of interest	State Board
Being disrespectful to FCRD staff	Division Director
Egregious disrespect to review participants	Division Director

1. When FCRD staff, a State Board of Directors member, or other local review board member receives an allegation or complaint that a local Review Board or individual board member is in non-compliance with one or more of the Standards of Conduct, the person receiving the complaint shall notify the FCRD Supervisor as soon as possible. This should be done both verbally and in writing. The FCRD Director will be notified immediately if the allegation(s) or complaint(s) concerns a State Board member.
2. The FCRD will not act upon any anonymous complaints. If the complaint is not in writing, the supervisor will notify the complainant that allegations must be made in writing and request the necessary information from the complainant. The supervisor may contact one or more other board members and/or DSS participants or other witnesses to assess their observations of the alleged behavior or conduct. Information gathered from other parties will be documented in writing.
3. The supervisor, upon consultation with the Program Manager, will determine if the alleged conduct should be addressed initially through direct contact with the affected board member, usually for a first offense or minor non-compliance with the Standards of Conduct. The action steps, and ultimately the outcome, will be documented in writing by the supervisor or other appropriate staff. After an allegation is received in writing and an action plan is determined, the affected board member will be notified by a member of the FCRD Leadership Team.



In response to any allegation or complaint, the affected board member may submit a written report to the FCRD Director and/or the State Board Chairperson.

The FCRD Director will share any written response(s) received from an affected board member(s) with the appropriate FCRD staff or State Board Chairperson.

It may be requested that a State Board member assists with coaching the affected board member on appropriate behavior and conduct. The FCRD Director will report in writing all allegations, written responses, and outcomes to the State Board Chairperson within sixty days.

4. The State Board Chairperson will be notified when conduct is deemed egregious and/or excessive non-compliance with the Standards of Conduct, or of subsequent complaints about the same board or board member. The Executive Committee of the State Board will review the allegation(s) and determine the appropriate next action(s). One or more of the other board members and/or DSS participants or other witnesses may be contacted to assess their observations of the alleged behavior. Information gathered from other parties will be documented in writing. The State Board Chairperson will notify the FCRD Director of the Executive Committee's determination and action taken. The State Board Chairperson will communicate the Executive Committee's determination in writing to the affected board member, or to the board chairperson for a complaint against a board.

If the State Board determines there was no violation of the Standards of Conduct, the matter is considered resolved. The State Board will notify the affected board member in writing that the State Board unfounded the allegation and that the process is concluded. The board member's permanent file shall reflect that the complaint was unfounded by the State Board.

5. In response to founded allegations of non-compliance with the Standards of Conduct, a member of the State Board may personally visit the board and/or meet with the affected board member for coaching, request the board member's immediate resignation from the local review board, or in the case of multiple complaints or complaint(s) of egregious or excessive non-compliance with the Standards of Conduct, may notify the local legislative delegation and the Governor's Office in writing.
6. A copy of the allegation, the outcome and all written communication concerning the allegation will be filed in the board member's permanent file at the FCRD State Office.

This procedure provides uniformity in handling allegations and complaints of non-compliance with the Standards of Conduct by a current State Board member.

1. Upon receipt of an allegation concerning a State Board member, the FCRD Director will notify the State Board Chairperson and the State Board member who is the subject of the allegation. In response to any allegation, the affected State Board member may submit a written report to the FCRD Director. The FCRD Director will share any written



- response(s) received from an affected board member(s) with the Staff Attorney or other staff member investigating the complaint.
2. The FCRD Director will notify the Review Board's Staff Attorney of the allegation. The Staff Attorney will contact complainant, all other pertinent witnesses, and the affected State Board member to gather the facts surrounding the alleged violation. Information gathered will be documented in writing. In the event the Staff Attorney is unavailable, the FCRD Director will designate another appropriate staff member to act in that capacity.
  3. The Staff Attorney or assigned staff will report findings and recommendations to the FCRD Director.
  4. In response to an allegation, the State Board must review the facts of the case and make the final determination about whether the State Board member is in non-compliance with the Standards of Conduct. If necessary, the State Board chairperson may convene the State Board to make a determination.
    - a. If the State Board determines there was no violation of the Standards of Conduct, the matter is considered resolved. The Director will notify the affected State Board member in writing that the State Board unfounded the allegation and that the process is concluded. The State Board member's permanent file shall reflect that the complaint was unfounded by the State Board.
    - b. If the State Board decides a violation occurred, the State Board shall determine next steps for addressing the matter. The action plan, and ultimately the outcome, shall be documented in writing.
  5. In response to founded allegations of non-compliance with the Standards of Conduct, a member of the State Board may personally meet with the affected board member for coaching, request the board member's immediate resignation from the local review board, or in the case of multiple complaints or complaint(s) of egregious or excessive non-compliance with the Standards of Conduct, may notify the local legislative delegation and the Governor's Appointment Office in writing.
  6. A copy of the allegation, the outcome and all written communication concerning the allegation will be filed in the board member's permanent file.

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Board Member Signature

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Board Member Printed Name

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Date

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Review Board