



## **Family Advocates, Inc. Code of Ethics**

Family Advocates, Inc. establishes this Code of Ethics for the purpose of setting forth principles of conduct on which we base our relationships and behaviors towards clients and each other.

Each person involved with Family Advocates, Inc. shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with this Code in accordance with the established and applicable state and federal laws, including Mandatory Reporting, work rules, procedures and other policies of Family Advocates, Inc.

The following definitions apply to this Code:

1. Abuse: As used in this code, “abuse” means physical, psychological or sexual acts towards a client or paid/unpaid staff. This includes but is not limited to “harassment” which is defined as any unwanted, deliberate or repeated unsolicited comments, gestures, graphic materials, physical contacts or solicitation of favors.
2. Client: “Client” means any adult of child who is currently receiving direct services from Family Advocates, Inc. or is participating in a support group sponsored by Family Advocates, Inc.
3. Paid Staff: “Paid Staff” means all full-time, part-time, contractual, and work-study employees.
4. Unpaid Staff: “Unpaid Staff” means all individuals who do not receive monetary compensations for services rendered including, but not limited to, volunteers, interns, practicum students, and the Board of Directors.
5. Professional Conduct: “Professional Conduct” is considered to include, but is not limited to, the following: communicating using clear, courteous language without swearing, derogatory comments or references to use intoxicants; strict adherence to the affirmative action policy; demonstrating behaviors in and out of shelter that are in accordance with our philosophy, mission, policies, and procedures, and a neat, clean personal appearance with work clothing suitable for the scheduled activity.
6. Direct Service: Any service which assists the client in achieving his/her personal goals, obtaining housing, employment, child care, individual or group counseling, transitional living services, advocacy, or any other service which is provided by the agency to a specific client to assist or benefit that client.
7. Former Client: A client who is currently receiving direct services becomes a former client for a period of two years when she/he stops receiving those direct services. A former client who calls the agency with an information and referral type call is not considered to have become a current client unless the call results in a direct service being provided.

**Family Advocates, Inc. recognizes and acknowledges that this Code of Ethics is premised on the following commitments:**

**Commitment to Clients**

Our primary responsibility is to support the empowerment of clients. We use peer counseling in which clients' alternatives are discussed and they are challenged to consider all options. Each individual staff person will set up and maintain appropriate, culturally sensitive and professional boundaries at all times. This will prevent burnout, loss of objectivity and effectiveness of paid and unpaid staff. It will also prevent confusion of and manipulation by clients.

**Commitment to Understanding the Victim and Issue of Abuse**

We are, by the very nature of our work, committed to understanding clients we serve who are victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault. We are also dedicated to the education of ourselves and the community about the issues and causes of domestic abuse and sexual assault. This commitment includes openness to self-education as initiated by clients and their children.

**Commitment to Ending Abuse**

We are committed to promoting a society where non-violence and equality replace oppression and violence and we, consequently, will not tolerate abusive behavior. We are an agency committed to the elimination of all forms of abuse and oppression such as racism, sexism and homophobia. We strive to be respectful and empowering in all communications and interactions among staff and clients. All violent, abusive, manipulative or otherwise unprofessional behavior and language is unacceptable.

**Commitment to Safety**

Physical and emotional safety are key issues and primary goals within Family Advocates, Inc. Therefore, the agency will strive to assure that the offices and shelter facilities remain physically safe and secure, and that the emotional security of clients will also be protected. Recognizing our obligation to understand and respect our individual differences, we are committed to building emotional safe relationships. We believe the means to attaining our goals are as important as the goals themselves. Family Advocates, Inc. works toward an organizational structure which reflects mutual respect, equality, and shared responsibility among all paid and unpaid staff and the clients we serve.

**Commitment to Confidentiality**

We believe that confidentiality is one of the most important aspects of our work at Family Advocates, Inc. We will practice maintaining it in all areas of our agency for all those affiliated with us. Violations of client confidentiality will not be tolerated. Breaches of confidentiality must be documented, and must demonstrate an urgent need to protect the life of a client or another person. However, all staff at Family Advocates, Inc. whether paid or unpaid, follow the Mandatory Reporting guidelines set forth for child abuse and are required to understand and abide by the reporting requirements.

**Commitment to Diversity**

It is a value of this agency to be committed to social justice by respecting and honoring diversity. Family Advocates, Inc. encourages each paid and unpaid staff person to educate himself/herself

on the issue of race, culture, class, age, sexual orientation, ability, language, religion and parental status. The agency will provide diversity training opportunities whenever possible.

### **Commitment to Equal Access**

We are committed to providing equal access to non-confidential information about our agency as well as information about the issues of abuse. Equal access to information, opportunity and the tools for ending abuse will be available to all paid and unpaid staff and clients in a manner that respects differences of race, culture, class, age, sexual preference, ability, and parental status obligations.

### **Commitment to maintaining Professional Behavior in Regard to Close Personal Relationships between Clients and Staff.**

The nature of the counseling relationships between paid and unpaid staff members with clients prohibits staff from entering into any significant contacts with any current clients. Personal relationships may include financial, familial, friendships, social, business, and/or intimate relationships.

If a paid or unpaid staff person has had a prior personal, non-professional relationship with an individual who becomes a client of the agency, that staff person will avoid providing direct services to that person, as the prior relationship will most likely impair the staff person's ability to provide objective services. The staff person is not expected to discontinue the prior relationship, but the staff person should take extra precautions to avoid confusing the personal nature of the relationship and the professional nature of services.

Clients who wish to volunteer or become employees must wait a minimum of six (6) months after they have received direct services. Once the former client becomes a volunteer or employee they are no longer considered a former client.

Personal relationships with former clients should be avoided if at all possible. Because of the size of the population and geographic area the agency serves, it is not always possible to avoid these relationships. If a staff person is unable to avoid entering into a personal relationship, the staff person should enter into the relationship with the client's perspective in mind. If at any point the staff person believes the former client perceives the current relationship as similar to the previous counseling relationship, the staff person has an obligation to discontinue that relationship, or to sensitively and professionally clarify the nature of the relationship with the former client. When a staff person enters into a personal relationship with a former client, the staff person should document the relationship, and discuss it with his/her supervisor to assure that the relationship is perceived by other professionals as unavoidable, and not detrimental to the client in any way. All paid and unpaid staff is forbidden to have sexual or intimate relations with clients or former clients.

### **Commitment to Maintaining Professional Behavior in Regard to Close Personal Relationships Between Staff Members**

Each paid and unpaid staff member should strive to insure that inter-staff relationships do not constitute a conflict of interest in his/her professional work with this organization. All staff should strive to avoid conflicts of interest and any action which might appear to involve a

conflict of interest. Such conflicts of interest include but are not limited to the following: providing compensation or preferential treatment to another person associated with Family Advocates, Inc. because of the intimate relationship between the provider and the recipient of that compensation or preferential treatment; beginning or maintaining an intimate relationship in which one person in that relationship has supervisory responsibilities for the other person in that relationship; and entering or maintaining an intimate relationship with another person associated with Family Advocates, Inc. when that relationship has a negative impact on work and responsibilities performed at Family Advocates, Inc.

## **PROHIBITED CONDUCT**

### **Drug Free Workplace**

All paid and unpaid staff are prohibited from using, possessing, distributing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs while on duty. (Illicit drug is described as non-prescribed and illegal).

No staff shall unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense or use a controlled substance in any agency facility or office; in any agency-owned vehicle or any other agency-approved vehicle used to transport clients to and from agency facilities or activities; or, off agency property during any agency-sponsored or agency-approved activity, event or function where clients are under care of the agency.

In addition, any employee convicted of a criminal drug statute violation in which the violation has been determined to have occurred in the workplace or while on paid agency work time shall report such conviction to the Executive Director no later than five days after such conviction. Upon receiving this report, the Executive Director shall notify any appropriate federal agency. The notification shall be made within ten days.

An employee who has been convicted of a criminal drug statute violation or illicit drugs occurring in the workplace or found to have violated this policy shall be disciplined in accordance with provisions of any applicable employee agreement or other applicable disciplinary procedure. Employees may be disciplined, including termination, or may be required to satisfactorily participate in a Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCHO) licensed treatment and continuing care programs as recommended by the treatment program of any applicable Employee Assistance Program.

### **Abusive Behavior**

Abuse of a client or of paid or unpaid staff will not be tolerated and anyone who engages in such prohibited conduct will be subject to disciplinary action including, but not limited to, reprimand, suspension and/or dismissal. Any disciplinary action taken shall be in accordance with the nature, severity and frequency of the offense as stated in Family Advocates' Personnel Policy.

I have read or have had read to me and I understand and agree to abide by this Code of Ethics Policy.

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Signature

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Printed Name

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Date