



International Society for Sexual Medicine

ISSM Code of Professional Conduct

Introduction

Membership in the International Society for Sexual Medicine (ISSM) entails a professional commitment to uphold and advance the Society's mission, values, and bylaws. This Code of Professional Conduct outlines the expectations for ethical, scientific, and social behavior of all ISSM members.

Disclaimer and Legal Scope

This Code of Professional Conduct is an internal policy of ISSM, intended to guide ethical and professional behavior. It does not constitute a legal contract or confer legal rights. All actions taken are governed by ISSM's Bylaws and the applicable laws of the State of California. Nothing in this Code is intended to be defamatory or prejudicial.

Objectives of the Code:

- To define expected standards of scientific and social behavior;
- To protect ISSM's integrity and prevent reputational harm;
- To foster an inclusive and respectful environment for all members;
- To promote the highest standards of scientific and professional practice.

The Code supplements, but does not override, other relevant policies, regulations, and laws, including those governing venues of ISSM activities (physical or virtual) and applicable local and national laws. ISSM will comply with such laws and policies and will report any significant misconduct accordingly.

ISSM Vision

Every human being has the right to a healthy and satisfying sexual life.

ISSM Mission

To be the most respected and trusted global source of information, education, and professional development in human sexual health, through high-quality publications, research dissemination, and inclusive opportunities for knowledge exchange worldwide.

Building Trust and Credibility

ISSM's success relies on the trust and confidence of its members and stakeholders. We earn credibility through transparency and integrity, reaching our goals solely through honorable conduct. We are committed to building lasting relationships based on mutual trust.



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Members must provide accurate information in all documents, including membership applications, education forms, conflict of interest disclosures, and volunteer agreements. All members must uphold the highest standards of scientific integrity and ethics in conducting, presenting, and publishing research.

ISSM will investigate all allegations of unethical behavior and take appropriate action where necessary. Retaliation against individuals who raise concerns in good faith is strictly prohibited.

Respect for the Individual

All individuals are entitled to interact in an environment of dignity and respect. ISSM is committed to creating such an environment, as it empowers all participants to reach their full potential and strengthens the Society.

Discrimination, harassment, or offensive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Any individual who experiences or witnesses such behavior should report it to the ISSM Ethics Committee (complaints@issm.info).

Anti-Discrimination

ISSM upholds a zero-tolerance policy toward discrimination based on gender, sex, race, religion, socioeconomic status, national or ethnic origin, language, political beliefs, minority status, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

All participants in ISSM activities, including staff, are expected to:

- Treat others with dignity and respect;
- Report inappropriate or discriminatory behavior;
- Encourage diverse perspectives and foster teamwork;
- Avoid culturally insensitive language;
- Challenge biased decisions and behaviors;
- Remain open to feedback regarding their own conduct.

Upholding the Law

Integrity begins with compliance. All members must understand and comply with applicable laws and ISSM policies. When in doubt, members should seek guidance from the ISSM Executive Office. Each of us is responsible for preventing violations and reporting potential misconduct.



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Proprietary Information

We respect intellectual property rights. Members must not improperly acquire, use, copy, or distribute proprietary or confidential information. The unauthorized use of software or other intellectual property is strictly prohibited.

Confidentiality and Selective Disclosure

Confidential or non-public information concerning ISSM must not be disclosed in any forum without authorization. This includes discussions, presentations, and written communications. ISSM will handle member information in accordance with the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) where applicable. Personal data collected in the context of investigations or complaints will be securely stored, with access restricted and retention time limited.

Duty of Care

Members must ensure that their personal, professional, and business activities do not damage ISSM's reputation. Conflicts of interest must be avoided or disclosed. ISSM resources must never be used for personal gain.

Gifts, Gratuities, and Business Courtesies

We must avoid the appearance or reality of unethical influence. Members must not accept or offer gifts, meals, entertainment, or favors that could be interpreted as seeking favorable treatment or unfair advantage. Occasional, modest, unsolicited courtesies that foster professional goodwill may be acceptable if they comply with [ISSM's Conflict of Interest Policy](#).

Accountability

All members are responsible for understanding and complying with this Code. Questions or concerns about adherence should be directed to the ISSM Executive Office. Violations may result in disciplinary action, including removal from leadership or termination of membership. Members subject to disciplinary action will receive at least 15 days' notice and an opportunity to respond, in accordance with California Corporations Code §7341.

Reporting and Whistleblower Protection

ISSM encourages open communication and the prompt reporting of concerns.

- Reports can be made confidentially or anonymously to the ISSM Executive Office.
- Retaliation against good-faith reporters is strictly prohibited.
- In line with California Labor Code §1102.5, ISSM ensures protections for whistleblowers, including safeguards against suspension, removal, or adverse treatment.
- Investigations will be prompt, confidential, and thorough.



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- Members are expected to cooperate fully and truthfully.

To view the reporting process, see page 5-7.

Use of Resources

ISSM resources, including time, data, materials, and reputation, must be used only for official purposes. The use of ISSM platforms for unrelated political, religious, or personal promotion is prohibited. ISSM reserves the right to monitor or review all data and information shared on ISSM platforms, to ensure compliance with this. Misuse of the ISSM name, logo, member data, or materials without approval is not allowed. Please also see the [ISSM Trademark Policy](#).

Professional Conduct

ISSM members must uphold the principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. Scientific misconduct, including plagiarism, unethical authorship, or exploitation of junior colleagues, will not be tolerated.

All ISSM members are responsible for enhancing their professional competence throughout their careers, for promoting others to advance their learning and competence, and not falsely obtaining competency credentials through misrepresentation of experience or misconduct.

ISSM members shall accept responsibility for their actions; seek and acknowledge criticism of their work; offer honest and constructive criticism of the work of others; properly credit the contributions of others; and do not accept credit for work that is not their own work.

Media Inquiries

Only individuals authorized by the ISSM Executive Office may make public statements on behalf of the Society.

Disciplinary Process

Suspected violations should be reported to the independent Ethics Committee via (complaints@issm.info). Following investigation, the committee will recommend appropriate action to the ISSM Board of Directors. Disciplinary measures may include suspension or termination of membership.

Agreement to the Code

By joining ISSM, members agree to abide by this Code of Professional Conduct. Any indictable offense or serious violation of ethical standards may result in termination of membership as outlined in Article IV, Section 4.06 of the ISSM Bylaws.



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ISSM Complaint Reporting Workflow

1. Submission of Complaint

- Complaints must be submitted via email to complaints@issm.info .
- The complaint should include:
 - Complainant identification (optional, but encouraged)
 - Description of events (dates, people involved, context)
 - Supporting evidence, if available
- Confidentiality of the complainant is guaranteed, even if identified.

2. Initial Screening (within 5 business days)

Responsible: Ethics Committee Secretary or designated officer

- Verify:
 - Ethical relevance of the complaint
 - Jurisdiction (Is the accused an ISSM member?)
 - Completeness of the information
- Outcome:
 - If not admissible: case closed with written justification
 - If admissible: move to preliminary investigation

3. Preliminary Investigation (within 30 calendar days)

Responsible: Designated Subcommittee (2–3 members without conflicts of interest)

- Actions:
 - Request additional documents or statements
 - Allow written responses from involved parties
 - Collect evidence (emails, publications, event records, etc.)
- Maintain impartiality and respect throughout the process.

4. Committee Deliberation and Preliminary Report (within 10 days)

Responsible: Full Ethics Committee

- Confidential discussion of findings
- Possible outcomes:
 - Dismissal for lack of evidence



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- Informal warning
- Formal disciplinary recommendation (requires Board approval)
- Report includes:
 - Summary of facts
 - Ethical analysis based on the ISSM Code
 - Reasoned recommendation

5. Right to Defense (within 15 calendar days)

- Accused party receives the preliminary report
- Rights:
 - Submit written defense
 - Request a hearing (optional)
- Defense is reviewed fairly and impartially.

6. Final Decision and Submission to ISSM Board (within 10 days)

- Final review of the case with the defense included
- Final report and recommendation submitted to the ISSM Board
- Board decision is final and binding

7. Sanction Implementation (if applicable)

Possible sanctions:

- Formal written warning
- Suspension of membership rights (defined period)
- Termination of ISSM membership (per Bylaws Art. IV, §4.06)
- Notification of involved parties by official communication

8. Recordkeeping and Reporting

- All documentation is securely stored for at least 5 years
- An anonymous summary may be presented to the ISSM Assembly annually

General Principles

- Confidentiality: guaranteed throughout all stages
- Whistleblower protection: retaliation strictly prohibited
- Impartiality: members with conflicts must recuse themselves
- Timeliness: entire process ideally concluded within 60 days



ISSM Complaint Reporting Workflow Diagram

