

CODE OF  
**Professional  
Ethics**



# INTRODUCTION

## STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

Maintaining the confidence and trust of the public is essential. As leaders in the community, members of the Ottawa Police Service (the Service) are responsible for the promotion and demonstration of proper conduct, maintaining community safety, and positively contributing to the wellbeing of members of the public. Members of our Service are expected to act ethically, fairly, and professionally.

At the same time, the Service has a duty to all members to ensure a safe, equitable, and respectful workplace and recognizes its responsibility to create and maintain an environment of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of every member.

This Code of Professional Ethics (the “Code”) sets out responsibilities, consistent with section 1 of the *Police Services Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c P. 15, and reinforces the high standard of conduct expected of members of the Service.

The purpose of the Code is to provide all members of the Service with clear guidelines and behavioural expectations as determined by the Service and community. The Code is positive in its approach and:

- Guides the conduct of all members;
- Influences the Service’s workplace culture; and
- Outlines an ethical framework that supports each member in delivering services to the community and interacting with colleagues in a way that is professional, ethical, equitable, and inclusive.

The Code consists of 4 foundational pillars of professional ethics:

**INTEGRITY**

**RESPECT  
AND CIVILITY**

**EQUITY, DIVERSITY,  
AND INCLUSION**

**INTERVENTION  
AND LEADING BY  
EXAMPLE**

## APPLICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This Code applies to every member of the Service both on and off-duty. It will be reviewed and acknowledged by members on an annual basis through the performance management process. Members must maintain a meaningful understanding of this Code and its content.

# INTEGRITY

AT ALL TIMES, I WILL ACT WITH INTEGRITY AND PROFESSIONALISM.

To effectively achieve and maintain the trust of our colleagues and our community, it is vital that every member of our Service act with integrity, and professionalism. Members should be selfless leaders; they must use their position to help others and model positive ethical behaviour.

## You demonstrate integrity when you:

- Are honest and truthful in your day-to-day interactions in the workplace and with members of the public.
- Make professional decisions based on ethical principles, your knowledge and experience, and what is best for your colleagues, the Service and the community.
- Promote openness and transparency when carrying out your duties and responsibilities.
- Ensure that your decisions and actions are responsible and display good judgement and are free of conflicts of interest.
- Follow through on commitments and are true to your word.
- Display courage in doing what you believe is right.

## WHAT IS A CONFLICT OF INTEREST?

A conflict of interest is a situation in which a personal relationship may influence or be perceived to influence the exercise of a member's professional responsibilities.

## PRACTICAL EXAMPLES FOR DISCUSSION

**Example 1:** You are a member of the OPS, but you also enjoy politics. You feel very strongly about certain political platforms and slogans. In your office/cubicle/locker at the station, you have hung banners, posters, and hats, which showcase your political views. These displays may be offensive to some of your colleagues, who may not share or appreciate these views. What should you do?

What are some other examples?

# RESPECT AND CIVILITY

I WILL TREAT COLLEAGUES AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WITH RESPECT AND CIVILITY, AT ALL TIMES AND UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, EVEN IN UNSTABLE SITUATIONS OR WHEN PROVOKED.

I WILL SHOW REGARD FOR THE EXPERIENCES, CONCERNS AND RIGHTS OF ALL MEMBERS.

To effectively interact with members of the public and to contribute positively to a respectful workplace, you have a responsibility to create and maintain an environment of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all members.

## You demonstrate respect and civility when you:

- Actively listen to others and respect different backgrounds, perspectives, communication styles and work styles.
- Manage and resolve conflict with dignity, cooperation, and courtesy.
- Exhibit compassion and empathy towards victims of crime or workplace violence, harassment, or discrimination.
- Carefully consider how your words and actions might impact those around you.
- Refrain from gossip and disparaging or disrespecting members of the Service within the workplace and in the public forum, including social media.

## PRACTICAL EXAMPLES FOR DISCUSSION

**Example 2:** In your platoon/unit/team there is a practice of assigning nicknames, using vernacular language often involving swearing. Although in the past this may have been an acceptable norm, this is not considered acceptable today. What will you do to ensure there is respect and civility? What will you do to ensure that all members feel comfortable, included and treated with respect in the work environment?

What are some other examples?

# EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

IN CARRYING OUT MY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, I WILL DEMONSTRATE A COMMITMENT TO THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION.

I WILL TREAT ALL MEMBERS WITH RESPECT AND DIGNITY AND REFRAIN FROM ALL TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ANY PERSON.

To maximize effective response to community needs and contribute meaningfully to a workplace that exemplifies professionalism, members must display an understanding of, and competence for, the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects their duties. It must be recognized that both Ottawa and the Service are richly diverse and multicultural, and that the ability to be appropriately and respectfully responsive in all that we do is a necessary skill.

## You demonstrate a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion when you:

- Treat all persons with whom you interact in the workplace and community, objectively and impartially.
- Provide services to the public in a manner that is culturally sensitive to the experiences of historically marginalized communities, including but not limited to women, Indigenous peoples, racialized persons, and persons living with a disability, including individuals experiencing mental health issues.
- Follow and uphold the provisions of the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19 and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1
- Create and maintain a work environment that is free of micro-/macro-aggressions, harassment, discrimination, and violence.
- Act and make decisions based on merit rather than personal bias or prejudice.
- Value the various thoughts, perspectives, and experiences within our diverse Service, respecting each member for the unique skills and abilities they bring to the Service.
- Take a proactive approach to opposing microaggressions, harassment, discrimination, and violence, including practicing active bystandership and encouraging the reporting of incidents.
- Use opportunities to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Contribute to an inclusive workplace culture in which everyone feels respected and can be themselves.

## PRACTICAL EXAMPLES FOR DISCUSSION

**Example 3:** In your unit/platoon/team, there are often comments that the promotion of a woman or racialized person is not merit-based. There are many diverse opinions, and some are discriminatory. What do you do when you hear discriminatory comments made against your subordinates or co-workers? How can you turn a negative moment into a teaching moment?

What are some other examples?

# INTERVENE AND LEAD BY EXAMPLE

I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO SPEAK UP WHEN I OBSERVE BEHAVIOUR BY ANOTHER MEMBER THAT IS IN CONTRAVENTION OF THIS CODE, A SERVICE POLICY, OR THE LAW.

AS A LEADER IN THE COMMUNITY, I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO BE A MODEL FOR POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND DEMONSTRATE A COMMITMENT TO PROFESSIONAL ETHICS.

To build a positive and inclusive workplace culture, members must be willing to speak up when they observe behaviour contrary to this Code, a Service policy, or the law, including micro and macro aggressions, harassment, discrimination, violence, bullying, reprisal, abuse of authority, and conflicts of interest. Intervening takes courage and demonstrates your commitment to your colleagues for a safe, equitable, and respectful workplace.

As leaders in the community, and for those in a position of authority within the Service, being a model for professional ethics is vital to inspiring public confidence in the Service and encouraging positive behaviour among your colleagues.

**You demonstrate courage, a willingness to intervene, and effective leadership when you:**

- Take positive action to address and report any incidents you become aware of that may constitute discrimination, harassment, or violence in the workplace, or that are otherwise contrary to this Code, a Service policy, or the law.
- Promote ethical behaviour, including leading by example and integrating this Code into decision-making, formal and informal training, and other opportunities.
- Report unethical and inappropriate behaviour where appropriate.
- Play an integral role in creating and maintaining an organizational culture of respect.
- Act immediately on observations of behaviour contrary to this Code or policies of the Service.

## PRACTICAL EXAMPLES FOR DISCUSSION

**Example 4:** You have a new employee on your unit/platoon/team. This person is having difficulty fitting in. Your team is very close and does not have a good history of welcoming newcomers. How do you integrate this new employee with the rest of the team? As a member of the team, what can you do to welcome this person?

What are some other examples?

# CONCLUSION

Throughout the course of our duties, we are regularly confronted with complex situations requiring difficult and timely decisions. These may range from how to speak to a distressed member of the public to what to do when witnessing inappropriate behaviour from a colleague. To promote ethical and professional service delivery, this Code seeks to establish the standards, values, and principles that guide our judgment.

The Code of Professional Ethics is intended to support members by providing a model applicable to the multitude of ethically challenging situations that they may be faced with in the workplace or on patrol. By adhering to the Code of Professional Ethics, members will be equipped to have open and meaningful discussions, to understand, and to do the right thing.

All employees of the OPS are required to maintain their awareness and knowledge of the Code of Professional Ethics and carry out their responsibilities in a manner that upholds and adheres to these principles.

Despite the broad application of this Code to members and conduct, it is recognized that members holding certain positions or exercising specific police functions, such as police officers acting undercover, will at times not be able or expected to uphold certain principles of this Code.

It is further recognized that applicable legislation may limit the extent to which members can abide by some of the principles of this Code (i.e., upholding confidentiality, should legislation require otherwise). Nothing in this Code shall be interpreted to supersede the obligations that members have pursuant to legislation, Service policy, or orders of the Chief of Police or their designate.

If you have any questions, please contact your Supervisor or the Workplace Conflict Resolution Unit.

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**POLICE**