

# NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR VICTIM ASSISTANCE®

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## Code of Professional Ethics for Victim Assistance Providers

*Adopted by the NOVA Board of Directors, April 22, 1995*

**V**ictims of crime and the criminal justice system expect every Victim Assistance Provider, paid or volunteer, to act with integrity, to treat all victims and survivors of crime – their clients – with dignity and compassion, and to uphold principles of justice for accused and accuser alike. To these ends, this Code will govern the conduct of Victim Assistance Providers:

### **I. In relationships with every client, the *Victim Assistance Provider shall:***

1. Recognize the interests of the client as a primary responsibility.
2. Respect and protect the client's civil and legal rights.
3. Respect the client's rights to privacy and confidentiality, subject only to laws or regulations requiring disclosure of information to appropriate other sources.
4. Respond compassionately to each client with personalized services.
5. Accept the client's statement of events as it is told, withholding opinion or judgment, whether or not a suspected offender has been identified, arrested, convicted, or acquitted.
6. Provide services to every client without attributing blame, no matter what the client's conduct was at the time of the victimization or at another stage of the client's life.
7. Foster maximum self-determination on the part of the client.
8. Serve as a victim advocate when requested and, in that capacity, act on behalf of the client's stated needs without regard to personal convictions and within the rules of the advocate's host agency.
9. Should one client's needs conflict with another's, act with regard to one client only after promptly referring the other to another qualified Victim Assistance Provider.
10. Observe the ethical imperative to have no sexual relations with clients, current or past, in recognition that to do so risks exploitation of the knowledge and trust derived from the professional relationship.
11. Make client referrals to other resources or services only in the client's best interest, avoiding any conflict of interest in the process.
12. Provide opportunities for colleague Victim Assistance Providers to seek appropriate services when traumatized by a criminal event or a client.

### **II. In relationships with colleagues, other professionals, and the public, the *Victim Assistance Provider shall:***

1. Conduct relationships with colleagues in such a way as to promote mutual respect, public respect, and improvement of service.
2. Make statements that are critical of colleagues only if they are verifiable and constructive in purpose.

3. Conduct relationships with allied professionals such that they are given equal respect and dignity as professionals in the victim assistance field.
4. Take steps to quell negative, insubstantial rumors about colleagues and allied professionals.
5. Share knowledge and encourage proficiency and excellence in victim assistance among colleagues and allied professionals, paid and volunteer.
6. Provide professional support, guidance, and assistance to Victim Assistance Providers who are new to the field in order to promote consistent quality and professionalism in victim assistance.
7. Seek to ensure that volunteers in victim assistance have access to the training, supervision, resources, and support required in their efforts to assist clients.
8. Act to promote crime and violence prevention as a public service and an adjunct to victim assistance.
9. Respect laws of one's state and country while working to change those that may be unjust or discriminatory.

**III. In her or his professional conduct, the Victim Assistance Provider shall:**

1. Maintain high personal and professional standards in the capacity of a service provider and advocate for clients.
2. Seek and maintain proficiency in the delivery of services to clients.
3. Not discriminate against any victim, employee, colleague, allied professional, or member of the public on the basis of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, race, national origin, religious belief, or sexual orientation.
4. Not reveal the name or other identifying information about client to the public without clear permission or legal requirements to do so.
5. Clearly distinguish in public statements one's personal views from positions adopted by organizations for which he or she works or is a member.
6. Not use her or his official position to secure gifts, monetary rewards, or special privileges or advantages.
7. Report to competent authorities the conduct of any colleague or allied professional that constitutes mistreatment of a client or that brings the profession into disrepute.
8. Report to competent authorities any conflict of interest that prevents oneself or a colleague from being able to provide competent services to a client, or to work cooperatively with colleagues or allied professionals, or to be impartial in the treatment of any client.

**IV. In his or her responsibility to any other profession, the Victim Assistance Provider will be bound by the ethical standards of the allied profession of which she or he is a member.**

*By signing below, I am in agreement with the above statements.*

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*Signature*

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*Date*

*Adopted 11/01*