

## SPOTLIGHT ON THE AAMA Code of Ethics

By Charles C. Freeman, Past Chairman of the Board, AAMA

### **Standard # 3: Members shall, at all times, faithfully further the mission, goals and objectives of the American Academy of Medical Administrators.**

When you install a new package of software, there is always that climatic moment when you are asked to check the box saying you have read and accept the terms under which you may use the software. If you don't check the box, you can't run the program. Similarly, when you become a member of the AAMA, you are asked to read the AAMA Code of Ethics and commit yourself to the standards of conduct specified therein. Unfortunately, we sometimes check the box without reading the contract; or join AAMA without studying the code or making a commitment.

In 2001, the *AAMA Executive* initiated this series of articles “spotlighting” each of the eight standards in our code of ethics. In 2003, as this professional ethics series concludes, our nation is coping with major political and economic crises caused by lapses of moral and ethical standards. At no time in history has it been more important for every individual to examine his/her value system and define and commit themselves to a set of moral and ethical principles. As a human being, as a leader, as a professional, you are constantly challenged to take a firm stand on the moral and ethical “*high ground*.”

The **purpose** of the AAMA Code of Ethics is to guide and assist YOU in attaining ethical conduct in the practice of medical administration. The “*Spotlight*” articles were conceived to focus membership attention on ethical professional behavior, to familiarize every member with the code, and to discuss and illustrate each standard. Because this is an ongoing process, the AAMA website (located at <http://www.aameda.org/AboutAAMA/codeofethics.html>) now includes the Code of Ethics and the related articles. Seven articles related to Standards 1-2 and 4-8 are already available.

You may well wonder at the sequence. Why was Standard #3 left for last? Well, the other seven standards are “*self-contained*” and largely self-explanatory. These seven deal with members' ethical responsibilities toward their colleagues, their patients, their communities, and society as a whole. **Standard #3** deals with the relationship between the member and the AAMA, and references concepts not stated in the standard.

**Standard # 3 states:**

**Members shall, at all times, faithfully further the mission, goals and objectives of the American Academy of Medical Administrators.**

The operative terms here are “*mission*” and “*goals and objectives*.” The AAMA mission, goals and objectives are not immutable, but grow and change over time. The mission statement, and the goals and objectives are regularly reviewed, and revised or updated as required. In May of 2001, the AAMA Board of Directors held a Planning Retreat to facilitate this process. The

resulting “**Strategic Plan**” was presented to the membership, and approved by the AAMA Board of Directors on October 24, 2001.

The mission statement adopted in 2001 is clear, concise, and brief:

**The Mission of the AAMA is to develop excellence in healthcare and leadership.**

Every member should commit the mission statement to memory. When we begin with this statement it is easy to see that every standard in the code of ethics, and every objective in our strategic plan is directly related to this simple, succinct declaration of our purpose. This is the core, the heart, the essence of the AAMA. It explains why the AAMA exists, why you have chosen to affiliate yourself with the organization, and why you are willing to dedicate your efforts to advancing its goals and objectives.

The *AAMA Strategic Plan* is organized around six GOALS (summarized on the AAMA web site, <http://www.aameda.org/AboutAAMA/strategicinitiatives.html>). Each of these Goals is to be achieved through specific OBJECTIVES. The methods for achieving each objective are described as STRATEGIES. Thus strategies for achieving specific objectives, which lead to the attainment of global goals, constitute the STRATEGIC PLAN. The strategic plan is a statement of our mission, goals, objectives, and methods. Objectives and strategies are developed annually by the AAMA Board of Directors to carry out the goals.

In order to “*faithfully further*” the goals of the AAMA, a member must be familiar with these goals. Toward that purpose, we briefly review the **AAMA GOALS**:

**Goal I: Professional Development** -- Establish processes and programs to enhance the competence and productivity of medical administrators.

**Goal II: Membership Development, Interaction, Participation, and Recognition** – Ensure the vitality and strength of AAMA through a sound, growing membership base; foster professional relationships, respect and support among members; provide opportunities for enhanced member participation, and recognize member’ contributions and achievements.

**Goal III: Information and Services** – Develop AAMA as a source of information and services for medical administrators, students, educators, suppliers, the media, and other publics.

**Goal IV: Organizational Effectiveness** -- Ensure sound administrative and financial management to support AAMA’s mission.

**Goal V: Professionalism** – Foster members’ professional excellence and ethical behavior.

**Goal VI: External Relations** – Develop and maintain relations between AAMA and other healthcare organizations, associations and accrediting bodies, governmental agencies, and corporations serving the healthcare community.

There is a rich and resonant redundancy in these goals and objectives. For example, Information and Services (Goal III) is an integral part of Professional Development (Goal I) and of External Relations (Goal VI). Our goals and objectives are mutually interrelated rather than independent entities. Thus, achieving one goal will advance the achievement of other goals.

There are many ways in which members can “*faithfully further the mission, goals and objectives of AAMA.*” These include attending professional conferences, serving as a board or committee member; pursuing credentials and honors; recruiting new members; being a mentor, a colleague, and a role model.

You can also further the AAMA mission by supporting the **AAMA Research and Educational Foundation**. This non-profit corporation raises money to fund education and research related to the art and science of healthcare operations and administration. The AAMA Foundation is an essential element in achieving the AAMA mission. Tax-deductible donations to the AAMA Foundation may be made in memory or honor of colleagues or friends. Or you may stipulate a donation is to support an AAMA education initiative. AAMA members who donate \$1,000 will become Life Members of the Foundation. Those contributing \$5,000 will become Lifetime Sustaining Members of the Foundation. You can learn more about the Foundation at the AAMA web site ([www.aameda.org/AboutAAMA/aboutfoundation.html](http://www.aameda.org/AboutAAMA/aboutfoundation.html)).