

Spotlight on AAMA Code of Ethics

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Standard Number Five: “Members shall not disparage the work or conduct of colleagues or other members of the Academy, and they should exercise vigilance in uncovering illegal or unethical conduct of fellow members and in reporting such conduct to the Credentials Committee of the American Academy of Medical Administrators.”

Ethics consists of the principles or standards of human conduct, sometimes called morals and, by extension, the study of such principles, sometimes called moral philosophy. As a branch of philosophy, ethics is considered a normative science, because it is concerned with the norms of human conduct, as distinguished from the formal sciences, such as mathematics and logic, and the empirical sciences such as chemistry and physics. Depending on the social setting, when the will of a deity is the authority, obedience to scriptural texts is the accepted standard of conduct. If the pattern of nature is the authority, conformity to the qualities attributed to human nature is the standard. When reason rules, behavior is expected to result from rational thought.

This standard requires making a judgment call. The key words here are, “disparage” and “exercise vigilance”. A judgment call is considered a decision arrived at by either observation or information received. This standard asks for more than should be required. Certainly any illegal or unethical conduct by a fellow member that comes to our attention from either of these sources must be reported to the Credentials Committee of the Academy. However uncovering such activity is the responsibility of a duly appointed investigative committee. Members need only exercise vigilance, not be vigilantes. As members of a prestigious professional society, we have a mutual obligation of respect. We therefore must not speak slightly or otherwise degrade a fellow member. This is disparagement. As Medical Administrators we interact with each other in many ways. We are a community, both local and national. We interact with each other in meetings, correspondence and inter-institutional dealings. At such times and occasions we learn more about each other, not only about our professional lives, but our personal lives as well, and often form opinions. These are evaluations and, good or bad, can readily be regarded as gossip. A good opinion can be flattery and a bad opinion can be disparagement. Neither has a place in professional relationships. We owe one another loyalty, faithfulness and trust as compelling as a sworn vow.

The bed rock foundation of any code of ethics is an amalgam of two fundamental precepts, honesty and trust. The community in which we function, like any other, is defined in several ways; we are defined by what we are, by what we do, but, most importantly we are defined by the people we serve.