

# Ethics Complaint Cycle

## Steps of Ethics Commission Review

- ▶ AOTA is a voluntary membership organization.
- ▶ AOTA is only permitted to handle ethics complaints against occupational therapy practitioners and students who were AOTA members at the time of the alleged misconduct.
- ▶ The Ethics Commission (EC) has jurisdiction to enforce the Code of Ethics on members.

### Complaint

1

- Complaints may only be accepted through [ethics@aota.org](mailto:ethics@aota.org) or mailed to AOTA headquarters as "Complaint". **Complaints are confidential and cannot be taken over the phone or submitted anonymously.**
- **Complaint forms** must be signed, **and** include 3-5 key Standards of Conduct for alleged violations, supporting evidence (dates, emails, nonconfidential documents), and attempted resolution.

### Review

2

- Complaints are reviewed by the Ethics Manager for accuracy (signed form, date of allegations, Standards of Conduct violations, written proof).
- AOTA membership database confirms if respondent was a member at the time of the alleged incident.
- Completed complaints are prepared for monthly EC meeting.

### Action

3

- New cases are presented to the EC to vote on taking one of the following actions:
  - **Open investigation** (Respondent must have been a member during alleged violation)
  - **More information** (Ethics Manager contacts complainant for more information for EC review)
  - **Dismiss** (Information provided does not violate Code of Ethics)
  - **No action** (Respondent was not a member at the time of incident and EC cannot take action)

### Inquiry

4

- Ethics Manager drafts inquiry letter for alleged Code violations to respondent with legal and EC Chairperson approvals.
- Inquiry letters for open investigations are confidentially and securely emailed with delivery confirmation.
  - Respondent has **30 calendar days** to respond to inquiries to allegations
  - Complainant has **30 calendar days** to provide any additional information if requested.
- Ethics Manager has **30 calendar days** to conduct confidential investigation.

### Decision

5

- If investigation does not support violation, the EC votes to dismiss. If investigation supports violation the EC votes on sanction.
- Respondent has 30 calendar days to request an appeal.
- If the public sanction stands (either through non-response or appeal loss), the respondent's name, sanction level, and Standard of Conduct violation are placed on AOTA's website, member database, OT Practice, and AJOT for a minimum of 3 years.
- Roster of Fellows and Honors distinctions may be removed during the period of probation, suspension, or permanently for membership revocation.

## Explore more!

### Cases



#### Who can initiate a complaint?

- Individuals
- State occupational therapy boards
- Ethics Commission when proof of evidence is available

### Timeline



#### How long is the ethics process?

- Ethics complaint cycle can be a minimum of **90 calendar days**.
  - **30 days** to investigate
  - **30 days** to appeal sanction
  - **30 days** for appeal & hearing process
- **Timeline depends on the complexity of the case and communication frequency.**

### Nonmember



#### What happens to a complaint for a nonmember?

- AOTA cannot investigate complaints against nonmembers.
- Complainants receive a letter with guidance on further actions to explore.

#### Options

- State licensing boards
- National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc (NBCOT)
- Specialty licensing respondents may hold



Scan to explore  
Ethics resources