

# National Advocacy Credentialing Program • National Organization for Victim Assistance

Adopted by the NOVA Board of Directors, April 22, 1995; Revised January 2021

## CODE of PROFESSIONAL ETHICS for VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS

*Victims of crime and the criminal justice system expect every paid or volunteer Victim Assistance Provider to act with integrity, to treat all victims and survivors of crime—their clients—with dignity and compassion in an inclusive, equitable, anti-racist and accessible manner, 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, Victim Assistance Providers shall:***

1. Recognize the interests of the client and client empowerment as a primary responsibility.
2. Respect and take steps to 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, inclusive, equitable, anti-racist, anti-oppressive and accessible services, recognizing the power and privilege differentials present within the helping relationship.
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, regardless of the client's conduct 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 through client-centered advocacy.
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. In the event one's 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. Protect client privacy and safety when communicating with clients and other service providers using technology (i.e., phone, e-mail, text messaging, online chats and video calls), working within agency guidelines to explain relevant risks to clients and mutually agree upon safe ways to communicate.
11. Establish and maintain professional boundaries with current clients at all times, including actively avoiding dual relationships (such as personal friendships or romantic relationships) and observe the ethical imperative to have no sexual relations, in recognition that to do so risks exploitation of the knowledge and trust derived from the professional relationship.
12. When interacting with former clients, refrain from personal and romantic relationships and observe the ethical imperative to have no sexual relations for at least five (5) or more years after the termination of the professional relationship, recognizing that to do otherwise risks exploitation of the knowledge and trust derived from the professional relationship.
13. Recognize the signs and impact of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma and make client referrals as appropriate to other resources or services only in the client's best interest, avoiding any conflict of interest in the process.
14. 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, Victim Assistance Providers shall:***

1. Conduct relationships with colleagues in such a way as to promote mutual respect, public respect, and improvement of service.
2. Provide constructive and informed critical feedback to colleagues when determined necessary for the betterment of services.
3. Conduct relationships with allied professionals such that they are given equal respect and dignity as professionals in the victim assistance field.
4. Share knowledge and encourage proficiency and excellence in victim assistance among colleagues and allied professionals, paid and volunteer.
5. 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.
6. Seek to ensure that volunteers in victim assistance have access to the training, supervision, resources, and support required in their efforts to assist clients.
7. Act to promote anti-racist, inclusive crime and violence prevention as a public service and an adjunct to victim assistance.
8. Respect laws of one's state and country while working as agents of change on those that may be unjust or discriminatory.

### ***III. In their professional conduct, Victim Assistance Providers shall:***

1. Maintain high personal and professional standards in the capacity of a service provider and advocate for clients.
2. Remain committed to their own professional education to ensure proficiency in services and adhere to best practices and evidence-based research.
3. Not discriminate against any victim, employee, colleague, allied professional, or member of the public on the basis of age, ability, ethnicity and ancestry, race, national origin, religious belief, sexual orientation or gender identity.
4. Not use personal social media platforms to interact with clients or to share client or agency information which may jeopardize client boundaries, privacy and safety.
5. Not reveal the name or other identifying information about a client to the public through any means without clear permission or legal requirements to do so.
6. Clearly distinguish in public statements representing one's personal views from positions adopted by organizations for which the professional works or is a member.
7. Not use their official position to secure gifts, monetary rewards, or special privileges or advantages.
8. 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.
9. Report to competent authorities any conflict of interest that prevents oneself or a colleague from being able to provide competent services to a client, to work cooperatively with colleagues or allied professionals, or to be impartial in the treatment of any client.

### ***IV. In their responsibility to any other profession, Victim Assistance Providers will be bound by the ethical standards of the allied profession of which they are a member.***

I, the undersigned applicant, hereby certify that I have read and agree to follow the *Code of Professional Ethics for Victim Assistance Providers*.

Print Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_