

Norms of Board Conduct

Board members have endorsed the idea of norms of conduct that will help promote trust and encourage respectful communication and behavior consistent with the ACA Traditions and Concepts. We recognize that none of us is perfect; we are above all Adult Children who each bring our own challenges with interpersonal communication. Service work can provide many important opportunities for us to grow personally and spiritually if we are willing to look at ourselves honestly.

The central goal of the norms is not to eliminate differences, but to support Trustees in resolving conflicts in a healthy manner that references Program tools. Each Board member shares individual and collective responsibility in upholding the agreed-upon norms of Board behavior listed below.

1. Communication/Potentially Contentious Issues

- a) Address contentious issues directly with the other Trustee(s) before taking conflicts to the Board as a whole.
- b) If a Trustee feels it is necessary to consult the Board as a whole about a matter, they will let the other affected Board member(s) know before escalating the dispute.
- c) Avoid harsh, judgmental comments, and especially be cautious when expressing differences in writing. Use neutral language.
- d) Before communicating a disagreement in writing, first call the other Trustee(s).
- e) Listen receptively and respectfully during disagreements. When upset, pause and reflect before responding. Avoid reacting. Try to stay centered and calm. (Trait 14)
- f) Per the Tenth Step, make sincere and prompt amends, if needed, to the affected parties. Per the Ninth Step, not only do we make apologies, we strive to make behavioral changes.

2. Board Unity/Mutual Respect

Unity is the core principle of the First Tradition. This does not preclude us from expressing differences, but it reminds us that we rely on one another to serve the fellowship, which is our primary responsibility.

We agree to keep the following in mind:

- a) Weigh a conflict's importance against the damage it may cause to ourselves, the other individuals involved, and the Board's ability to do its work. Ask yourself "How important is this?"
- b) Refrain from jumping into a conflict that doesn't involve you directly.

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- c) Place principles before personalities in resolving conflicts.
- d) In meetings, strive to listen to all opinions respectfully. Avoid speaking a second time until all others have spoken.
- e) Except as permitted by Robert's Rules, avoid interjecting.
- f) Ensure that the voice of the minority is heard and respected.
- g) Show respect for the committee process. Ensure that no Board member or Committee Chair remains uninformed about situations that can adversely affect their ability to do their work.
- h) Avoid secrecy about internal issues that affect the whole Board. We should not be afraid to surface issues that are important.

3. Resolving Conflicts/Enforcement of Norms

- a) The Board will use the norms in this document, along with the Traditions, the Concepts and the OPPM to help clarify and resolve differences.
- b) Although one-on-one resolution is preferred, the Board has final responsibility to enforce these norms. The Board will strive for a calm, principle-based discussion of all relevant views and information.

The Board recognizes that many norms include some subjective terms, which will be applied in widely varied situations. They will, therefore, regularly review implementation of the Norms of Board Conduct and make changes as needed. The Board also will develop OPPM language to define potential consequences for any Trustee found by the Board to repeatedly violate the norms.