

# ADSO Code of Ethics

## PREAMBLE

America's dental services market is evolving to meet the dental needs of the nation's growing population. Dental Support Organizations (DSOs) help dental care professionals meet those needs by assisting dentists with non-clinical business and administrative functions of operating a dental office. Every year, an increasing number of practicing dentists maximize their professional potential by choosing to be supported by a DSO for non-clinical services, or deciding to work as an associate in a dental practice that has contracted for dental support services, so that they may focus on providing dental care to their patients.

The purpose of the Association of Dental Support Organizations (ADSO) *Code of Ethics* (the Code) is to serve as a standard of conduct for all member companies. Company compliance with the ADSO Code of Ethics is a requirement for membership in the ADSO. This Code of Ethics embodies ADSO's mission and confirms that member companies shall act with fairness, honesty, and the highest ethical standards in all business activities; for ADSO member companies, upholding the highest ethical standards comes before everything else.

By abiding by the ADSO Code of Ethics, each ADSO member company affirms that its objective is to support dentists so that they may focus on improving the quality of dental care for their patients and the quality of life for themselves and their dental professional colleagues. ADSO member companies have an obligation to act in ways that will merit the trust, confidence, and respect of dental professionals and the general public. By engaging an ADSO member company, dental professionals can be sure they are dealing with an organization committed to providing quality business service and supporting ethical conduct at the highest levels.

## CODE OF ETHICS

### I. Principles of Member Company Conduct

#### A. ADSO Member Companies Act with Integrity

ADSO member companies act with honesty, integrity, fairness and respect towards all. It is important for ADSO member companies to act in a manner that supports the dental profession by performing administrative functions with the utmost care while refraining from engaging in activities that damage the credibility of the dental business support services industry. ADSO member companies will be truthful in all communications. All ADSO member companies must comply in good faith with all material requirements of law in any city, county and state in which they do business. Therefore, this Code does not restate all legal obligations.

#### B. ADSO Member Companies' Focus on Meeting the Needs of Dentists

As health professionals who dedicate their careers to meeting patients' oral health needs, dentists play a vital role in society. DSOs exist to provide non-clinical support services which enable dentists to serve their patients and communities as effectively and efficiently as possible and increase access to dental treatment.

## C. ADSO Member Companies Never Interfere with Dentists' Clinical Decision-Making and Treatment Services

ADSO member companies recognize and support the clinical autonomy of dentists and respect that only licensed medical professionals should engage in clinical decision-making and the delivery of dental treatment services. DSOs provide administrative support services for providers. ADSO member companies never set quotas or support dental practices that set quotas on providers based on the number of procedures or types of procedures. ADSO member companies will never interfere with the efficient and effective access to patient records by a dentist or dental practice.

## D. ADSO Member Companies Employ Qualified Staff and Use Proven Methods to Deliver Effective Support

Thousands of dentists engage ADSO member companies to provide state-of-the-art non-clinical support services. ADSO member companies view this relationship as both a privilege and a responsibility. As a result, ADSO member companies endeavor to employ qualified, dedicated staff and deploy appropriate technologies, administrative methods, and supply-procurement and other processes and skills to enable their dentist-clients to operate supported practices as efficiently as possible.

## E. ADSO Member Companies Provide a Variety of Business Support Services to meet the Needs of Dentists

ADSO member companies meet the needs of dentists in a variety of practice settings. As such, ADSO member companies serve dentists operating as solo providers, in small dental groups, and in large dental group practices. ADSO member companies provide a variety of models to meet dentists' unique needs.

## F. ADSO Member Companies Are Dedicated to Supporting Dentists as They Meet Needs at Home and Abroad

ADSO member companies are privileged to support dentists who are committed to meeting critical societal needs. From charitable action in their communities, to addressing America's dental care access, to making a difference around the world, dentists play a vital role. ADSO member companies share this commitment and are proud to both support dentists in their charitable endeavors and engage directly in humanitarian action at home and abroad.

## II. Member Company Governance

### A. Self-Regulation

This Code of Ethics is not law, but its obligations require a level of ethical behavior from its member companies. Non-observance of this Code does not create any civil responsibility or liability whatsoever; however, suspension or termination of ADSO membership and the benefits thereto and the cessation of all references to or use of the ADSO name or logo may result.

## B. ADSO Member Company Responsibilities and Duties

### **1. ADSO Member Company Ethics Officer**

- a. Each ADSO member company shall designate an ADSO Ethics Officer (DEO). The DEO is responsible for facilitating compliance with the ADSO Code of Ethics by their company and responding to inquiries by the Ethics Committee. He or she will also serve as the primary contact at the company for communicating the principles of the ADSO Code of Ethics to their company officers, partners, employees, contractors, clients, vendors, clinicians and the general public.
- b. Every year at renewal, member companies are asked to reaffirm the selected DEO or designate another individual to serve as DEO.
- c. Each year at renewal, the DEO for each ADSO member company shall execute an attestation of the member's compliance with this Code.

### **2. Internal Regulation**

- a. Each ADSO member company shall establish, within the member company complaint handling procedures to assist prompt resolution of complaints regarding an ADSO member company's relationship with its supported dentists.
- b. In the event any individual or entity complains directly to an ADSO member company that it believes that the member company has engaged in any improper course of conduct pertaining to the services provided or offered to its DSO supported dentists, the ADSO member company shall promptly investigate the complaint and shall take such corrective actions as it may find appropriate and necessary.
- c. The ADSO member companies subscribing to this Code recognize that its success will require diligence in creating awareness among supported dentists, contractors, employees, officers, directors, partners, and/or agents of the ADSO member companies' obligations under the Code. No ADSO member shall in any way attempt to persuade, induce or coerce another ADSO member to breach this Code, and the ADSO members hereto agree that the inducing of the breach of this Code will be considered a violation of the Code.

## C. ADSO Administration

### **1. Interpretation and Execution**

The Board of Directors of the ADSO shall appoint an Ethics Committee to serve for a fixed term to be set by the Board prior to appointment. The Ethics Committee will be responsible directly and solely to the Board. The Board of Directors will establish all procedures necessary to administer the provisions of this Code.

## **2. Ethics Committee**

- a. The Ethics Committee shall be comprised of an odd number between five and nine members of the Board of Directors, or others appointed in the discretion of the Board of Directors, and shall be appointed for staggered three-year terms.
- b. The Ethics Committee shall review annually the Code of Ethics and make recommendations.
- c. The Ethics Committee shall answer as promptly as possible all queries posed by member companies relating to the Code and its application, and, when appropriate, may suggest, for consideration by the Board of Directors, revisions to the Code to make it more effective.
- d. The Ethics Committee shall participate in the new member application process by undertaking an ethics review of all applicant companies as directed by the Board of Directors.

## **3. Complaint Processing**

- a. The Ethics Committee may establish, publish and implement transparent complaint handling procedures to the ADSO member companies to ensure prompt resolution of all complaints regarding an ADSO member company's relationship with its supported dentists. In determining such complaint procedures, the Ethics Committee shall endeavor to ensure that the complaint handling procedures provide, in the Ethics Committee's opinion, fair notice to member companies of any complaints made against them and are afforded due process in the complaint handling procedures.
- b. The Ethics Committee, in accordance with the complaint handling procedures, shall hear and determine all charges against member companies, affording such member company an opportunity to understand all allegations against the member and to be heard fully in response to the allegations.
- c. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Ethics Committee shall undertake to determine whether a violation of the Code has occurred.
- d. Upon completion of its review, the Ethics Committee shall make a recommendation to the Board of Directors. The recommendation may include one or more of the following actions.
  - i. If, in the judgment of the Ethics Committee, a complaint is beyond its scope of expertise or resources, the Ethics Committee may decline to exercise jurisdiction in the matter and may, in its discretion, recommend to the complainant another forum in which the complaint can be addressed.
  - ii. The Ethics Committee may determine that a complaint is invalid and dismiss it or may issue a "no finding" decision, if appropriate in the Ethics Committee's sole discretion.

- iii. Require the accused member company to submit to the Ethics Committee a written commitment to abide by the ADSO Code of Ethics in future practices, behaviors and/or transactions and to exercise due diligence to assure there will be no recurrence of the practice leading to the subject Code complaint.
- iv. Reprimand the Member.
- iv. Suspension of the Member.
- v. Termination of the Member.

### **III. Amendments**

This Code may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Board of Directors.