



APPNA Oklahoma
Chapter

Policy Title: APPNA-OK Ethics, Professionalism, and Grievance Policy

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I. Policy Statement:

The Association of Pakistani Physicians of North America-Oklahoma Chapter (APPNA-OK) is committed to upholding high ethical and professional standards that are core to the practice of medicine in Oklahoma, USA.

II. Purpose:

The Ethics, Professionalism and Grievance (EPG) Policy is intended to provide members of the Oklahoma Ethics & Grievance Committee (OEGC) with a set of guidelines that outline APPNA-OK expectations with respect to ethical and/or professional conduct, what constitutes a violation of expected conduct, the Complaint/Grievance procedure, and the subsequent disciplinary process.

III. Acknowledgement:

The OEGC acknowledges that the EPG policy, like most ethical/professional standards, cannot anticipate all violations of member conduct that may have ethical implications. Therefore, it may, if needed, review each case presented to OEGC in consideration of any unique circumstances presented and shall apply any of the following individually or in combination:

- A. APPNA-OK ethics/professionalism policies & procedures,
- B. APPNA ethics/professionalism policies and procedures,
- C. American Medical Association's (AMA) Code of Medical Ethics and AMA policies, rules, and guidelines on ethics, professionalism, and disciplinary affairs, all of which shall collectively be referred to as "THE RULES" (and incorporated herein by reference) as deemed appropriate by OEGC.

IV. Definitions:

For the purpose of the EPG Policy, the following definitions are applicable:

A. Unprofessional Conduct is defined as any breach of THE RULES by an APPNA-OK member, such as disruptive behavior, unethical conduct, professionalism concerns, member impairment due to drugs or alcohol use, or any other concern in violation of THE RULES which may in any way affect or impact APPNA-OK or its members and may be brought before OEGC as a grievance. Examples of Unprofessional Conduct include but are not limited to:

- i. Physical or verbal harassment, threats, or assault.
- ii. Profanity or similarly offensive language.
- iii. Failing to comply with Oklahoma medical licensure Practice Standards.
- iv. Unauthorized handling/sale of any drugs, etc.
- v. Engaging in conduct which results in being arrested and/or charged with a crime.
- vi. Conviction or confession of, or plea of guilty, or nolo contendere plea for a criminal offense, felony, or any offense involving moral turpitude.
- vii. Embezzlement or misuse of funds of APPNA-OK or engaging in activity which may raise the concern of conflict of interest by a member or officer of APPNA-OK.
- viii. Impairment due to the use of alcohol, habitual use of habit-forming drugs, etc.
- ix. Mental illness resulting in safety concerns for APPNA or APPNA-OK members or the general public.
- x. Dishonorable or immoral conduct, which is likely to deceive, defraud, or harm APPNA or APPNA-OK members or the public.

B.

i. Complaint/Grievance: For the purpose of the EPG policy, a Complaint/Grievance is defined as a written allegation made by a member of APPNA-OK (complainant) alleging a grievance of Unprofessional Conduct in violation of "THE RULES" by another member of APPNA-OK (respondent). In processing a grievance, the EGC will follow the process defined in this policy.

ii. In cases where the current APPNA-OK policy does not address specific conduct issues, the EGC will refer to APPNA and AMA policies for guidance. This will be done without altering the procedures and steps outlined for handling grievances in the existing policy, ensuring consistency and transparency throughout the process.

iii. Ineligible Complaints/Grievance:

The APPNA-OK Ethics, Professionalism, and Grievance Policy recognizes that not all grievances warrant formal investigation. Complaints based solely on personal disputes, such as interpersonal conflicts, personality clashes, or non-professional disagreements, as well as those

based on hearsay, including second-hand accounts, rumors, or gossip, are ineligible for consideration. To ensure a credible and efficient grievance process, members are encouraged to provide direct evidence and details supporting their allegations, rather than relying on unverified information or personal grievances.

iv. Frivolous Complaint/Grievance:

A Complaint/Grievance may be deemed frivolous if it is determined to lack substantial merit, is filed without a reasonable basis, or appears to be motivated by personal animus or the intent to harass another member. The OEGC will carefully evaluate such claims and reserves the right to dismiss any Complaint/Grievance that does not align with the principles of good faith and integrity. Members found to submit frivolous claims may be subject to appropriate measures, ensuring the credibility of the grievance process

C. Disciplinary Action: For the purpose of the EPG Policy, disciplinary action is defined as APPNA-OK sanctions imposed by the APPNA-OK Executive Council (EC) pursuant to the recommendations of the Board of Trustees (BOT) and/or opinions of the OEGC against the respondent. The sanctions shall be imposed upon determination of unprofessional/unethical conduct violating THE RULES that caused harm to and/or discredited APPNA, APPNA-OK, or its members in any manner. Depending upon the severity of the violation, disciplinary actions may include but are not limited to denial of renewal of APPNA-OK membership or expulsion from APPNA-OK, suspension, probation, and reprimand as defined below, or any other sanction deemed appropriate by the EC and/or BOT imposed for Unprofessional Conduct violating THE RULES:

- i. Written Warning by OEGC and/or APPNA-OK is a disciplinary measure to alert the respondent that their actions noted in a Complaint/Grievance against them to APPNA-OK may be perceived as a violation of THE RULES but currently lack sufficient evidentiary support for other disciplinary action at the time.
- ii. Written Reprimand by OEGC and/or APPNA-OK is a disciplinary measure for a first, minor determination of Unprofessional Conduct in violation of THE RULES.
- iii. Probation status in APPNA-OK may be imposed upon a member who recognizes their wrongful actions and is willing to improve their conduct. OEGC will provide the member an opportunity to correct their unprofessional/unethical conduct over a period of time not to exceed one year, with stipulations to meet with OEGC as directed during the probationary period and submit written progress reports that attest to observable and measurable changes in actions and conduct, such as enrollment in Oklahoma Health Professional Program, Counseling Program like Anger Management, etc.

- iv. Offer to Mediate may be recommended to a member prior to placement on suspension of APPNA-OK membership if the member is willing to participate in organized mediation conducted by an ad-hoc mediation sub-committee appointed by the BOT.
- v. After review, OEGC may recommend and forward any case to the BOT for Mediation or Arbitration.
- vi. Suspension of APPNA-OK membership is a temporary hold (not to exceed six months) on all rights and privileges of the APPNA-OK membership of the member that may be imposed while investigating allegations of serious Unprofessional Conduct that violates THE RULES.
- vii. Denial of renewal of APPNA-OK membership or revocation of membership leading to expulsion from APPNA-OK sanction may be imposed for serious Unprofessional Conduct violating THE RULES. If the member is denied renewal of their membership or expelled from APPNA-OK, the member may reapply to APPNA-OK after a gap of a full calendar year post the date of when the disciplinary action became effective against the respondent. However, acceptance or denial of the membership reapplication shall be at the discretion of APPNA-OK's EC.

V. Process of Filing Complaint/Grievance

A. Filing Complaint/Grievance with OEGC

- i. Any member of APPNA-OK may file a Complaint/Grievance (complainant) with OEGC against another member(s) of APPNA-OK for unprofessional/unethical conduct in violation of THE RULES (respondent).
- ii. The Complaint/Grievance must be in writing and must be signed by the complainant specifically stating the facts supporting the allegation (including such information as date, time, location, witnesses, etc.) and the specific proposed violation of THE RULES.
- iii. The Complaint/Grievance must be submitted on the APPNA-OK Complaint/Grievance form (attached in Appendix "A" and incorporated herein by reference) within 30 business days of the alleged unprofessional/unethical conduct that is in violation of THE RULES.

B. Processing The Complaint/Grievance

- i. Upon receipt of Complaint/Grievance, the OEGC committee chair shall assign a Complaint/Grievance file tracking number to the Complaint/Grievance and within three business days either independently or in consultation with the OEGC committee to determine if the Complaint/Grievance warrants further action by the OEGC.
- ii. Within 10 business days of receiving the Complaint/Grievance, the OEGC shall either:
 - a. inform the complainant in writing of the OEGC decision not to pursue further action if Complaint/Grievance warrants no action by the OEGC;

b. or inform the complainant & the respondent in a written Notice of Action of OEGC decision to refer the case to the BOT for consideration of mediation or arbitration process. The BOT can then appoint an independent sub-committee for mediation/arbitration or refer the case back to the OEGC for further investigation.

c. Or inform the complainant & respondent in a written Notice of Action to investigate the allegations of the received Complaint/Grievance if the Complaint/Grievance warrants further action by the OEGC.

d. inform the respondent of their right to respond to the Notice of Action about the alleged Complaint/Grievance in writing to the OEGC within 10 business days of receiving the Notice of Action.

iii. Upon receipt of written response from respondent, the OEGC may:

a. conduct further investigations into the allegations, hold hearings, or take other actions as needed to determine outcome of Complaint/Grievance; and

b. inform BOT of its opinions on the Complaint/Grievance in writing within 35 days of receipt of initial Complaint/Grievance.

iv. The BOT shall within 45 days of receipt of initial Complaint/Grievance by OEGC either:

a. approve recommendations of OEGC with a simple majority vote and forward to EC for approval; or

b. approve recommendations of OEGC with modifications with a simple majority vote and forward to EC for approval; or

c. reject recommendations of OEGC with recommendation for mediation with a two-third majority vote and forward to EC for approval; or

d. reject recommendations of OEGC with recommendation to dismiss Complaint/Grievance with a two-third majority vote and forward to EC for approval.

e. If mediation and arbitration are recommended, the Board of Trustees (BOT) will establish a three-member subcommittee from its membership within five business days. This subcommittee will have 40 days to complete the mediation and arbitration process and report the findings to the BOT, which will subsequently forward the report to the Executive Committee (EC).

v. The EC shall within 60 days of initial receipt of Complaint/Grievance by OEGC either:

a. approve recommendations of BOT with a simple majority vote; or

b. approve recommendations of BOT with modifications with a simple majority vote; or

c. reject recommendations of BOT with a two-third majority vote; or

d. reject recommendations of BOT and impose other disciplinary actions as deemed appropriate by the EC with a two-third majority vote.

vi. The EC shall within 60 days of initial receipt of Complaint/Grievance by OEGC inform all named parties above of its decision and shall advise respondent in a written Notice of Decision:

a. of their right to appeal the decision before the EC within 10 days of receipt of Notice of Decision; and

b. that after the EC appeal process is concluded, the decision rendered by the EC shall be final.

c. Effective Date of Disciplinary Action:

The disciplinary action decision rendered by the EC shall become final and effective as follows:

i. at day 70 after initial Complaint/Grievance was filed with OEGC if respondent does not file an appeal to the EC; or

ii. on the day when a decision on appeal is rendered.

d. Record of Disciplinary Action:

Upon the date of the Disciplinary Decision Action becoming final:

i. OEGC and BOT shall forward all written documents collected and generated as part of the respondent's disciplinary process to the EC for confidentiality reasons; and

ii. EC shall forward only the final decision rendered by the EC to the APPNA-OK membership committee to be made part of the respondent's APPNA-OK membership file for record keeping.

VI. Responsibilities of EGC Members:

i. Members of the EGC are expected to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and impartiality in their deliberations.

ii. EGC members who may have potential conflict of interest in the handling of grievances should follow the bylaws and report to the Board of Trustees, reinforcing the commitment to an equitable grievance process.