



## Ethics Policies for Organizations

Agencies involved in prevention efforts should consider developing new or reviewing existing organizational policies related to ethical issues.

### KEY COMPONENTS

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- **Definitions and principles.** The policy should define what ethics are and which principles the agency values. The policy may choose to reference the Prevention Code of Ethics or other existing professional codes.
- **Expectations for specific behaviors.** The agency policy should clearly note expectations and rules for topics that are most relevant to situations likely to be faced. These expectations are often included in a more general employee handbook or set of workplace policies. A specific policy about ethics may include reference to the employee handbook and a reminder that many rules in that handbook are also ethical obligations.
  - Related policy areas include supervision of and interaction with youth and other vulnerable populations, use of social media, and use of funds and resources.
  - The policy should cover expectations for a variety of roles, including coalition members and volunteers. To what extent does the policy affect non-employee roles? How will the agency deal with unethical behavior of staff or a coalition member or volunteer?
- **Process for reporting unethical behavior.** The agency should outline a process for reporting unethical behavior. It is best practice to have several options, including ways to remain anonymous, so that employees and volunteers can choose one that works best for them.
- **Protections for persons reporting concerns.** The policy should affirm a “whistleblower” policy for people reporting concerns in good faith.
- **Consequences of non-compliance.** A strong policy will articulate how unethical conduct will be handled. It is important that people understand the consequences of unethical behavior.
- **Implementation and Periodic Review.** As with any policy, it is important that the agency takes action to inform and remind staff about the ethics policy. Periodic review should be conducted involving prevention professionals as well as human resources and legal representatives before any policy is implemented and periodically after adoption to ensure that the policy is current and consistent with relevant laws. A process should be outlined as to how staff and volunteers will be informed of new policy and policy changes.