

SA Ambulance Service

Code of ethics and conduct for volunteers



Government
of South Australia

SA Health



SA
Ambulance
Service

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Introduction

SA Ambulance Service (SAAS) wants to promote a strong culture of service excellence, founded on a good relationship with patients, other health workers and communities.

Above all, this relationship must be established on trust and the guarantee that SAAS staff (including volunteers) will act effectively and with the utmost professional integrity.

It is intended that the *Code of ethics and conduct for volunteers* will help SAAS volunteers act with professionalism and integrity as they serve the community and the South Australian Government.

This code has been developed to complement and support the *Code of ethics for the South Australian public sector*.

The *Code of ethics for volunteers* has four objectives:

- > to guide and support SAAS volunteers in their activities
- > to strengthen public confidence in SAAS
- > to earn respect from citizens and government
- > to set out the standards of professional conduct expected of every SAAS volunteer.

Application of the code

Responsibility of volunteers

This code applies to, and is binding on, all volunteers who undertake activities for, or on behalf of, SA Ambulance Service (SAAS).

Every SAAS volunteer must familiarise themselves with the content of this code and conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the values, behavioural principles and standards of professional conduct that are set out herein.

Recognising that the code is first and foremost an embodiment of the ethos of the SAAS community, volunteers collectively are encouraged to take ownership of it and to shape its future development as a document which defines what it means to be a SAAS volunteer.

Responsibility of chief executive officer and other SAAS leaders

Strong and visible leadership is a critical factor in achieving support for, and adherence to, the values and professional conduct embodied by this code.

The SAAS chief executive officer and other SAAS leaders have a special responsibility to demonstrate publicly their support for both the spirit and letter of the code through their actions.

In addition to exemplary personal behaviour, the SAAS chief executive officer and other SAAS leaders are responsible for raising awareness of the code, promoting debate on application of its content, and responding to any issue—including requests for guidance—raised by volunteers.

Four foundations

The values and standards outlined in this code build upon four foundations of public service:

1. Democracy

It is the role of the public sector to support the government of the day, under law and the constitution, in achieving the common good, primarily by providing services to the community. An emerging feature of South Australia's democracy is a higher level of collaboration between the public sector and the community in the design and delivery of services and the involvement of people in decisions that affect their lives.

2. Impartiality

SAAS volunteers must be detached from political influence, and the influence of partisan interests within the community. Instead, SAAS volunteers must rely on evidence to provide objective advice to government where required, and implement directions promptly and thoroughly.

3. Accountability

Within a broad system of accountability under which ministers are accountable to parliament, SAAS volunteers are accountable for exercising their delegated authority and for performing their role within the values and standards of conduct outlined in this code.

4. Diversity

The South Australian public sector, and therefore SAAS, should be as diverse as the community it serves. The views and experiences of all people should be respected and allowed to be canvassed freely and openly, regardless of nationality, gender, cultural or social background, sexuality, religion, age, or physical or intellectual ability.





Values

SAAS is committed to ensuring the values of the public sector are incorporated into the ethos of the organisation; and these values are expected from all SAAS staff, including volunteers. These values are:

Service

Proudly serve the community and Government of South Australia.

Professionalism

Strive for excellence.

Trust

Have confidence in the ability of others.

Respect

Value every individual.

Collaboration and engagement

Create solutions together.

Honesty and integrity

Act truthfully, consistently, and fairly.

Courage and tenacity

Never give up.

Sustainability

Work to get the best results for current and future generations of South Australians.

Professional conduct standards

SAAS volunteers must exhibit the highest standards of professional conduct in order to maintain the integrity of SAAS.

Contravention or failure to comply with these professional conduct standards may constitute misconduct. Any SAAS volunteer who contravenes or fails to comply with these conduct standards may be liable to disciplinary action.

This section of the code outlines the standards of conduct in respect of:

- > professional and courteous behaviour
- > public comment
- > handling official information
- > use of government/public resources
- > conflicts of interest
- > acceptance of gifts and benefits
- > criminal offences
- > reporting unethical behaviour.

Professional and courteous behaviour

SAAS volunteers will not at any time act in a manner that a reasonable person would view as bringing them, SAAS, the public sector, or government into disrepute, or that is otherwise improper or disgraceful.

SAAS volunteers will comply with a lawful and reasonable direction given to them as a volunteer by a person with authority to give such direction.

SAAS volunteers will at all times treat other persons with respect and courtesy.

SAAS volunteers will be diligent in the discharge of their role and duties and not act in a way that is negligent.

Public comment

SAAS volunteers will only make public comment in relation to their duties, the public sector or the government—including policy and programs—when specifically authorised to do so by a relevant SAAS manager. Such comment will be restricted to factual information and professional advice and avoid the expression of personal opinion. Public comment includes providing information or comment to (or in) any media (electronic and print), including posting comments on the internet and speaking engagements.

Notwithstanding the above, SAAS volunteers may engage in a private capacity in conduct intended to influence public opinion on an issue, or promote an outcome in relation to an issue of public interest.

Handling official information

By virtue of their duties, SAAS volunteers frequently access, deal with and/or are aware of information about issues, facts and circumstances that they know, or where a reasonable person in the circumstances should know, need to be treated as confidential.

SAAS volunteers will not access or attempt to access official information other than in connection with the performance by them of their duties and/or as authorised.

SAAS volunteers will not disclose official information acquired through the course of their engagement with SAAS, other than is required by law or where appropriately authorised.

SAAS volunteers will not misuse information gained in their volunteering capacity, including, but not limited to:

- > purchasing shares or other property on the basis of confidential information about the affairs of a business or of a proposed government action
- > seeking to use information for personal benefit or gain or for the personal benefit or gain of another.

SAAS volunteers will maintain the integrity and security of official information for which they are responsible. Volunteers will also ensure that the privacy of individuals is maintained and will only release information in accordance with relevant legislation, policy, procedure or lawful and reasonable direction.

Use of government/public resources

SAAS volunteers shall use the government/public resources that are the property of the Crown efficiently and only for appropriate purposes as authorised. Government/public resources (Crown property) include physical, financial, technological and intellectual property. The Crown retains ownership of these resources.

Conflicts of interest

SAAS volunteers will avoid actual or potential conflicts of interest.

SAAS volunteers will ensure their personal or financial interests do not influence or interfere with the performance of their volunteering role. They will ensure the interests of family members, friends or associates do not influence the performance by them of their duties and/or their role as a SAAS volunteer.

SAAS volunteers will disclose in writing to the SAAS chief executive any actual or potential conflicts of interest at the earliest available opportunity and comply with any lawful and reasonable direction issued by a person with authority to issue such direction to resolve the conflict or potential conflict, including written direction.

SAAS volunteers should advise their manager (or if that person is not available, some other person in management in SAAS) if they are engaged in employment or other remunerative activity outside of their volunteering service with SAAS where the activity conflicts, or has the potential to conflict, with their role as volunteer.

SAAS volunteers should tell SAAS if they are, or become, engaged in another government or health service while they are volunteering with SAAS.

Acceptance of gifts or benefits

SAAS volunteers will not seek or accept gifts or benefits for themselves or others that could be reasonably perceived as influencing them in the performance of their duties and functions as a SAAS volunteer.

Non-pecuniary gifts or benefits offered to SAAS volunteers by representatives of other governments may be accepted, as may gifts from non-government sources if they are obviously mementos or gifts of a symbolic nature.

All SAAS volunteers will comply with the SA Health policies in relation to accepting, declaring and/or recording the receipt of gifts or benefits.

Criminal offences

SAAS volunteers will at the earliest possible opportunity advise their manager (or if that person is not available, some other person in management in SAAS) if they are charged with a criminal offence; and, if admitted or proven, there would be a connection between the offending conduct and the volunteer's duties/role or position and/or status.

Reports to a manager or person in management will be in writing.

SAAS volunteers will comply with all legislation, policies and procedures and lawful and reasonable directions relevant to their role as a SAAS volunteer and/or to the performance of their duties.

Reporting unethical behaviour

SAAS volunteers will report to an appropriate authority, workplace behaviour that a reasonable person would suspect violates any law, is a danger to public health or safety or to the environment, or amounts to misconduct. This obligation does not derogate from the obligations on SAAS volunteers under the *Directions and guidelines* issued by the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption.

SAAS volunteers who are potential witnesses, or are otherwise capable of assisting, will actively cooperate and assist with any investigation into the suspected or alleged conduct of a public sector employee or SAAS volunteer that, if proven, would amount to misconduct (including corruption and maladministration as defined in the South Australian *Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2012*) and any other processes relating to the management of such suspected or alleged conduct. This obligation does not impact upon the right against self-incrimination or volunteers suspected of committing or alleged to have committed misconduct.

SAAS will inform volunteers of their rights and responsibilities under the *Whistleblowers Protection Act 1993* (SA).

Further information

Legislation, regulations and documents, including:

- > *Code of ethics for the South Australian public sector*
- > *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (SA)*
- > *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwth)*
- > *Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)*
- > *Freedom of Information Act 1991 (SA)*
- > *Health Care Act 2008 (SA)*
- > *Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2012 (SA)*
- > *Lobbyist code of conduct*
- > *Public Corporations Act 1993 (SA)*
- > *State Records Act 1997 (SA)*
- > *Summary Offences Act 1953 (SA)*
- > *Whistleblowers Protection Act 1993 (SA)*
- > *Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)*
- > any other relevant agency-specific legislation.

Other sources of information are:

- > SAAS- and SA Health-specific policies and conduct standards
- > public-sector-wide policies issued by the SA Government, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Department of Treasury and Finance, and the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment
- > determinations and guidelines issued by the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment
- > guidelines for agencies issued by Cabinet or other relevant sources
- > Treasurer's instructions
- > directions and guidelines issued by the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption
- > Office for Public Integrity and Independent Commissioner Against Corruption
- > South Australia Police Anti-Corruption Branch
- > Crown Solicitor's Office.

For more information

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