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## INDEPENDENT LIVING HOUSING SOCIETY – ETHICAL CODE OF CONDUCT

### INTENT

The Independent Living Housing Society of Greater Victoria (ILHS) is committed to provide comfortable homes where people with diverse abilities are supported to achieve more independent lifestyles. ILHS recognizes the inherent value of each Individual and supports each Individual in their decisions and choices in life. ILHS employees are committed to supporting Individuals to achieve their maximum independence, potential and inclusion in our community through effective and efficient delivery of services.

This Ethical Code of Conduct outlines our commitment to and expectation of ethical conduct and behaviour of all employees. ILHS recognizes this is a living document which will be reviewed annually as we seek to move beyond the legally required codes of conduct.

### FRAMEWORK

Ethics are moral principles that govern a person's behaviour and represents the ideal conduct for a particular group of people. An ethical code of conduct is based on reason, good judgement and an understanding of the difference between right and wrong behaviour while striving to respect the dignity and rights of all people. The Ethical Code of Conduct framework provides guidelines for decision-making that reflect the moral principles and core values of the Independent Living Housing Society.

ILHS employees must be committed to promptly raising concerns when a situation or course of action presents an ethical dilemma. Employees are obliged to consult with a member of the ILHS leadership team for both guidance and resolution and to cooperate fully and honestly in an investigation related to ethical behaviour conduct. When possible, ILHS will protect the confidentiality of an employee reporting a violation of the Ethical Code of Conduct and believes in a no reprisal approach and will make every effort to ensure those who bring forward concerns are not subject to retaliation. Refer to ILHS Policy "Whistleblowing".

ILHS will not tolerate any breach of the Ethical Code of Conduct and will complete a full investigation within thirty (30) days of a violation being reported. In the event of a confirmed breach of the Ethical Code of Conduct, ILHS will take swift and appropriate measures which may include discipline up to and including dismissal.

### PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

As professionals who provide support to Individuals with diverse abilities, all ILHS employees have a duty inherent to their positions within this unique branch of the social services field, to always maintain a standard of ethical conduct and remain within their respective Job Descriptions. This includes but is not limited to:

- Advocacy for unbiased integration, accessibility, and social acceptance;
- Restraint from knowingly or negligently using their professional roles for fraudulent purposes;
- Honest and full disclosure of qualifications and limitations when asked for or when offering professional feedback, opinions or consultations;
- Treating all people supported, employees, stakeholders, and individuals in the general public equally, with fairness, respect, honesty, integrity, regard for diversity, and in a manner free from discrimination;
- Refraining from any form of harassment towards another;
- Recognizing situations that present a clear conflict of interest, avoiding such arrangements or actions, and reporting suspected or known arrangements or actions that constitute a conflict of interest;

While performing the duties and responsibilities of their respective positions, ILHS employees should always:

- Respect the rights, privacy, and dignity of the people we support;
- Ensure the safety and welfare of the people we support;
- Protect the confidential information acquired in the course of performing job duties and responsibilities;
- Abide by their signed Oath of Confidentiality and as per Policy, "Release of Personal and Confidential Information," obtain valid consent prior to sharing or discussing any information pertaining to an Individual supported;
- Acknowledge and respect diversity among the people we support;
- Act honestly and with integrity;

- Contribute to an environment of teamwork, cooperation, collaboration, reciprocity, honesty, and integrity among all participants in the workplace, including Individuals supported, employees, administration personnel, the Board of Directors and all external stakeholders.

## ETHICAL CODE OF CONDUCT

ILHS promotes daily ethical business practices and corporate responsibility through policy development in the following areas:

❖ **Business Activities:** *See policy “Corporate Responsibility”.*

ILHS, in conducting its business activities, will comply with all legal, licensing, and regulatory requirements of the Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments and other agencies, including the Canadian Bill of Rights.

❖ **Marketing Activities:** *See policy “Corporate Responsibility”.*

Marketing activities and efforts will always respect the dignity and privacy rights of those receiving services and ILHS will not engage in any activities that exploit the Individuals we serve. Marketing activities will never knowingly mislead or misinform the public or misrepresent the Independent Living Housing Society. Marketing activities will uphold the integrity of ILHS so as to merit the continued support and trust of the public.

❖ **Contractual Relationships:** *See policy “Contractual Relationships”.*

ILHS will have a written contract or Memorandum of Understanding with any person or firm who is retained to provide materials and/or services to the Society. ILHS will contract only individuals or businesses that carry adequate private liability insurance, private employee accident and injury insurance, and/or current employee accident insurance coverage through WorkSafeBC.

❖ **Social Media:** *See policy “Social and Other Media Platforms”.*

Employees will conduct themselves in a manner that will not create liabilities or violate confidentiality through their use of any social or other media platforms. Employees will neither verbalise nor post negative comments, suggestions or innuendos regarding ILHS, Individual’s we support, employees or any ILHS property on any social media site(s), including their personal media accounts.

Employees will not post photos or identifiable details of the Individual’s ILHS supports, its employees, or any ILHS property on any social media site(s), including their personal media accounts. Employees are reminded that computers and related communication systems may not be used for personal use.

In any circumstance where a media platform requests a comment or statement from any ILHS stakeholder, that person must decline. The Executive Director is the only person authorized to make statements to any media outlet on behalf of ILHS.

❖ **Conflict of Interest:** *See policy “Conflict of Interest”.*

Employees shall not accept or receive any direct or indirect benefit from any Individual supported or their family, or as a result of any transaction involving ILHS. Employees who suspect they are in a conflict of interest must immediately report to the Manager or the Executive Director for support and resolution.

❖ **Exchange of Gifts, Money and Gratuities:** *See policy “Conflict of Interest”.*

Employees shall not offer, or receive, any gift(s) from an Individual supported or their family without the permission of the Manager or Executive Director. The exchange of money is prohibited at ILHS as this practice results in a conflict of interest and is not acceptable.

❖ **Personal Fundraising:** *See policy “Conflict of Interest”.*

Employees, Practicum students, and Volunteers will refrain from enlisting Individual's supported to assist them in raising funds for their own causes or on ILHS's behalf.

❖ **Personal Property:** See policy "*Personal Possessions*".

Employees shall not use the personal property of the Society nor of the Individual's supported for personal use without the approval of the Individual and the Manager. Unauthorized procurement of any property which does not belong to the employee will be defined as theft and is cause for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Employees should be aware of the potential risk to personal property while supporting Individuals. For this reason, it is suggested that you leave valuable items such as jewellery and electronics at home. Property of ILHS should always be used appropriately and safeguarded.

❖ **Setting Boundaries:** See policy "*Interpersonal Boundaries*".

While friendly, professional relationships between employees and Individuals supported are acceptable and expected, appropriate professional interpersonal boundaries are to be maintained at all times.

❖ **Witnessing of Documents:** See policy "*Witnessing Documents*".

While representing ILHS, employees are not permitted to provide a witness signature on an external document. The only exception is the Executive Director who, as the senior employee, may exercise their discretion and provide a witness signature on an external document.

❖ **Professional Responsibilities**

Human Service professionals function in many ways in many roles and enter into professional relationships with Individuals, family members, community groups, and communities as a whole. Human Services is defined as an interdisciplinary field of study with the objective of meeting human needs through an applied knowledge base or in simple terms, it is all about supporting people.

a. **Professional Responsibility to the Individuals we Support:**

- Human Service professionals ensure the Individual supported understands the nature of the relationship prior to its onset as well as the limitations of the relationship.
- Human Service professionals respect the integrity and welfare of the Individuals at all times. If it is suspected that harm or danger may occur to the Individual or to others, the Human Service professional acts in an appropriate and professional manner to protect the safety of those Individuals. This may involve seeking consultation, supervision, and even breaking confidentiality of the relationship especially if an Individual is seeking to self-harm themselves.
- Human Service professionals protect the Individual's right to privacy and confidentiality.
- Human Service professionals protect the integrity, safety and security of the Individual's records.
- Human Service professionals recognize and build on Individuals' strengths, interests and passions.

b. **Professional Responsibility to the Community and Society:**

- Human Service professionals keep informed about current social issues as they affect the Individuals we support and our community.
- Human Service professionals understand the complex interaction between Individuals, their families, the communities in which they live, and society.
- Human Service professionals represent their qualifications to the public accurately.
- Human Service professionals advocate for the rights of all members of society, particularly those who are members of minorities and groups in which discriminatory practices have historically been directed.
- Human Service professionals provide services (in BC) without discrimination or preference based on race, colour ancestry, place or origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, criminal conviction, or political belief.
- Human Service professionals seek the training, experience, education, and supervision necessary to ensure their effectiveness in working with culturally diverse Individuals.

c. **Corporate Responsibility within our Community:**

Is achieved in a variety of different ways including but not limited to:

- Membership with the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce
- Membership with The BC CEO Network
- Membership with Volunteer Victoria
- Participation and leadership in the Victoria HR Network, CARF-philles, and Bean Counters Group.

❖ **Human Resources:** *See policy “Complaints”.*

ILHS has a Leadership Team that includes the Executive Director, Manager of Finance, Human Resources Technician, and six (6) Managers (all non-unionized positions). Our seven (7) residential locations are unionized and represented by the Hospital Employees Union under the Community Living Services Collective Agreement.

The Leadership Team is expected to embody, exemplify and uphold the Ethical Code of Conduct. The Leadership Team will embrace the Ethical Code of Conduct in all aspects of their role, inspiring others to higher levels of performance and behavior.

❖ **Prohibition of Waste, Fraud, Abuse and Other Wrongdoing:** *See policies as listed below.*

The following conduct is prohibited and will subject the employee involved to disciplinary action up to and including termination. ILHS prohibits waste, fraud, abuse and other wrongdoing such as, but not limited to the following:

- Refusal to follow the terms of the ILHS Policy and Procedure Manual and/or the Community Living Services Collective Agreement. *See policy “Discipline”.*
- Abuse or neglect of an Individual supported. *See policy “Abuse and Neglect”.*
- The use or possession of alcohol, non-prescription controlled substances or other performance altering substances on ILHS property. *See policy “Substance Use or Abuse”.*
- The possession of firearms or other weapons on agency property. *See policy “Personal Possessions”*
- Falsifying any record or report, such as, but not limited to, shift documentation, timesheet, or shipping or receiving records (such as for medications or grocery delivery). *See policy “Documentation of Tenant Care”.*
- Failure to report an internal event or critical incident. *See policy “Reporting – Internal Event or Critical Incident”.*
- The use of profanity or of abusive language while on shift.
- Bullying, harassment or physical violence towards a fellow employee. *See policy “Harassment and Bullying”.*
- Theft or misuse of agency property or Individual’s property including copying of agency keys without authorization. *See policy “Theft”.*
- Breach of confidentiality. *See policy “Confidential Information – Collection, Protection and Release”.*
- Failure to abide by safety rules and practices. *See policy section “Health and Safety” and the ILHS Emergency Manual located at each worksite.*

## WHAT ILHS LEADERS MUST DO

ILHS holds its leaders accountable for creating a culture of compliance in which employees understand their responsibilities and feel comfortable raising concerns without fear of retaliation.

- Personally, set the example for integrity, not just through words, but more importantly, through actions.
- Ensure employees understand the importance of ethical conduct and the compliance of ILHS Policies and Procedures.
- Create an open and safe environment in which every employee feels comfortable raising concerns.
- Respond to any employee’s expressed concern and escalating through the appropriate channel.

## WHAT ILHS EMPLOYEES MUST DO

ILHS holds its employees accountable for supporting a culture of compliance and upholding their responsibilities in raising concerns.

- Have a working understanding of the Ethical Code of Conduct and all ILHS Policies and Procedures.
- Promptly raise any concerns about potential violations of local law or ILHS Policies and Procedures.
- Cooperate fully and honestly in an investigation related to ethical conduct.

## THE COST OF NON-COMPLIANCE

ILHS employees who do not fulfill their ethical responsibilities face disciplinary action up to and including the termination of their employment. The following example of conduct can result in disciplinary action:

- Violating local law(s) or ILHS policy or asking that others do the same.
- Retaliating against another employee for reporting an ethical concern.
- Failing to promptly report a known or suspected violation of ILHS' Ethical Code of Conduct.
- Failing to fully and honestly cooperate in an investigation of possible violation.
- Failing as an ILHS leader to diligently ensure compliance with ILHS' Ethical Code of Conduct.