



Human
Resources
Professionals
Association

HRPA Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct

Table of Contents

HRPA Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct	1
Introduction.....	3
Guidance Hierarchy.....	3
Code of Ethics.....	5
Resolving Ethical Conflicts.....	6
Rules of Professional Conduct.....	7
I. Professionalism	7
II. Trustworthiness.....	10
III. Respect.....	13
IV. Competence	15
V. Equity and Fairness.....	17
VI. Best Interest of Others.....	18

Introduction

The Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct applies to all HRPA members, registered firms and students. It identifies the expectations of all HRPA members, registered firms, and students who perform in the human resources sector that they are expected to comply with. Members of the public should expect HRPA members, registered firms and students to uphold the Code of Ethics and Rules set out herein at all times.

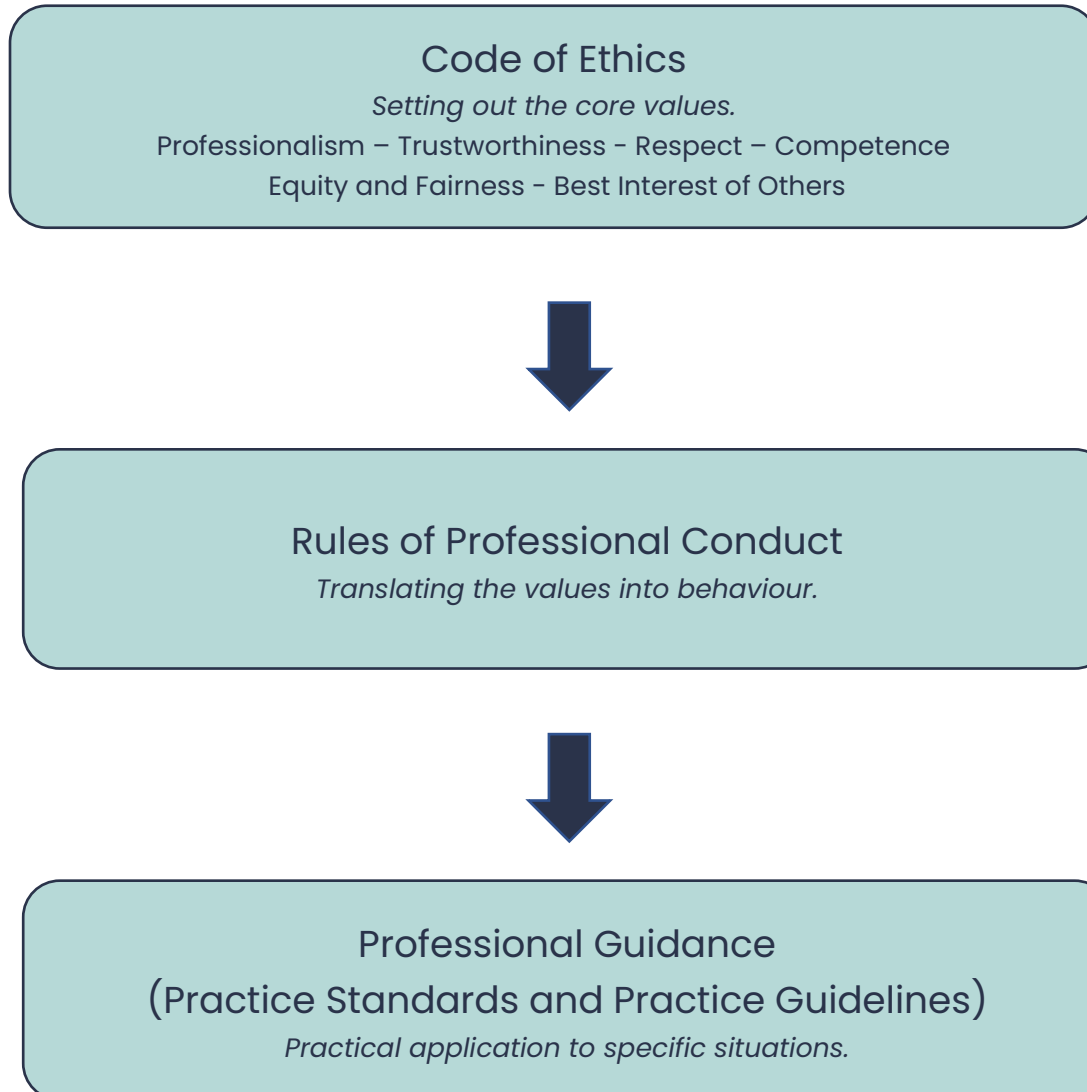
Should any members, registered firms or students be the subject of a [complaint](#) to the HRPA, they will be expected to be able to demonstrate their compliance with the Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct as set out here. Failure to comply may result in discipline, including termination of registration.

The Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct will be reviewed regularly and amended as needed to ensure currency and continued relevance. HRPA may, at any time, in its sole discretion, modify or vary anything stated in this Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct.

Guidance Hierarchy

The guidance hierarchy diagram set out below explains how the Code of Ethics, Rules of Professional Conduct and Professional Guidance connect to one another.

The Code of Ethics is the foundation, setting out six core values that the HRPA expects members, registered firms, and students to demonstrate when providing human resources (HR) services. The Rules of Professional Conduct translate these values into behaviour by providing parameters for professional conduct to assist HR professionals. Professional Guidance, including practice standards and practice guidelines, is underpinned by these values and rules. They are separate documents that assist with practical application to specific situations, including high-risk practice areas and/or “grey” areas of practice.



Code of Ethics

Consideration of ethical issues is an essential component of providing human resources services. Human resources professionals are in a position where they may encounter ethical conflict and duress in their everyday practice. HRPAs has identified the following ethical values that the HRPAs expects members, registered firms and students to demonstrate when providing human resources services in Ontario. The Rules of Professional Conduct, set out below, expand on each ethical value and provide examples and real-life guidance to assist human resource professionals. For the purposes of this document, "human resources professionals" means all HRPAs members, registered firms, and students.

These ethical values constitute HRPAs's Code of Ethics:

- **Professionalism:** Human resources professionals are committed to creating and implementing policies, practices, and processes to effectively organize and manage human resources. This is achieved through ethical practice, high personal standards of behaviour, and accountability to the best interests of individuals and the public (including employers and the working population).
- **Trustworthiness:** Human resources professionals ensure they preserve the highest standards of ethics, transparency, and truthfulness in all work-related activities.
- **Respect:** Human resources professionals value and consider the needs and rights of all and treat all with dignity.
- **Competence:** Human resources professionals are the experts in applying human resources knowledge, skills, and professional values when providing high-quality human resources advice and services. Human resources professionals demonstrate a lifelong commitment to excellence in practice through continuous learning and by teaching others.
- **Equity and Fairness:** Human resources professionals promote and create opportunities to ensure equal treatment and inclusion for all in the workplace.
- **Best interest of others:** Human resources professionals demonstrate a commitment to the parties whose interests they serve by acting on behalf of, and for the benefit of those they serve.

Resolving Ethical Conflicts

Working through and understanding ethical situations is an ongoing part of human resources work. It is not always possible to achieve an outcome that satisfies everyone. At these times, the best possible approach will be to ensure, at a minimum, that the legal rights of the employee(s) are upheld, the employer's legal obligations are followed, and all parties have been provided with objective and fact-based advice

Rules of Professional Conduct

The Rules of Professional Conduct expand on each ethical value in the Code of Ethics. HRPAs members, registered firms and students are expected to align with all the Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct.

I. Professionalism

Human resources professionals are committed to creating and implementing policies, practices, and processes to effectively organize and manage human resources. This is achieved through ethical practice, high personal standards of behaviour, and accountability to the best interests of individuals and the public (including employers and the working population). A human resources professional's conduct should reflect positively on the human resources profession, their employer and/or client, inspire the respect and trust of their employer and/or client, and avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

1. You know, understand your obligations to, and practice under the spirit and rule of, relevant laws and regulations, HRPAs Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct, and any additional professional directives, standards or guidance issued by the HRPAs. You know and understand your obligations relating to same.
2. You do not practice or perform HR-related services, acts, and/or responsibilities under conditions or in situations which could impair the dignity of the profession or the quality of services you provide.

Additional Guidance

Throughout their careers, many human resources professionals will encounter employer resistance to their advice. There may be situations where the employer's behaviour is so contradictory to laws that, the human resources professional will feel compelled to report it to a legal authority (for example, allegations of sexual assault, racial discrimination and harassment). In other circumstances, the human resources professional may find that if they follow the requirements set by their employer, they will not be able to meet the requirements set out in the HRPAs Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct.

What can you do if you find yourself in this troubling situation?

- Make sure that you clearly explain to the employer the issues and risks associated with their direction.
- Encourage the employer to comply with its legal obligations.
- Provide your employer with a copy of this document and explain your obligation to comply with them.

- Ensure that your advice to your employer is in writing and properly filed. You may wish to retain a copy in your personal records.
 - Be transparent in your interactions with individual employees, explaining why there are limitations of information you can share with them, and provide them with information about any options that may be available to them.
 - Call the HRPA to discuss the situation and obtain advice about how best to proceed.
 - If the situation becomes unsustainable, and it is a feasible option, you may consider looking for alternative employment.
3. You accept responsibility for your actions and decisions.
 4. You ensure that all communications related to your professional activities, including those made on social media, reflect the high standards and accountability expected of the profession.
 5. You contribute to the body of knowledge, the evolution of the profession, and the growth of those with whom you are professionally involved through dissemination of knowledge appropriate to your work setting and experience.
 6. Within the authority you have in your role, you make best efforts to prevent inappropriate use and application by others of the tools, techniques, and processes used in the practice of human resources management.
 7. You shall not knowingly assist in, encourage or condone illegal activity, including, but not limited to, crime, fraud, dishonest practices, or advise the employer how to violate or avoid the law.
 8. If you discover that dishonesty, fraud, crime, or illegal conduct has been occurring in connection with your employment or the scope of work you perform for your client, you shall take every reasonable step to identify your concerns, explain the risks and attempt to stop the dishonest, fraudulent, criminal, or illegal conduct.

See guidance set out in paragraph 1.2 above regarding encountering employer resistance to advice.

9. Where there is an imminent risk of serious bodily harm or death, you shall immediately report it to the appropriate authorities, and keep a written record of all relevant information in connection with the matter. You may disclose confidential information, but not more than what is required.

Additional Guidance

Many regulatory bodies have a rule regarding the duty to report the risk of (serious) bodily harm or death, as courts have understood that in some serious cases, privilege and confidentiality must be waived for the safety of a target individual or group.

Factors to consider include:

- Whether there is a clear risk to an identifiable person or group of persons (e.g. saying "I'm going to cause harm" is by itself not sufficient as there is no identifiable individual or group but "I'm going to cause harm to my colleague Sandy" clearly targets an individual person and would therefore require confidentiality to be waived);
- Whether there is a risk of serious bodily harm or death (serious bodily harm includes serious psychological harm where the psychological harm substantially interferes with the health or well-being of the person); and
- Whether the danger is imminent.

These factors are to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Typically, the authorities in these types of matters are the police. If the clear and imminent risk of serious bodily harm or death relates to a child, a report should also be made to the Children's Aid Society.

An example of a clear and imminent risk of serious bodily harm or death is someone laying out in detail how they will go to a colleague's house tonight and beat them with a baseball bat for ruining their reputation and their career.

- 10.** You shall not retaliate or condone retaliation or reprisal of any type against employees for exercising their rights under the applicable employment standards, occupational health and safety and/or human rights legislation, including, but not limited to, their right to file a complaint or grievance, reporting serious misconduct in good faith, participating in an investigation, or questioning your practices.
- 11.** You respond promptly and cooperatively to all correspondence related to HRP, including any requests for information.
- 12.** You ensure that all information you provide to HRP is accurate, complete and not misleading.
- 13.** You cooperate with any investigation by HRP into your conduct or competence, or the conduct or competence of others, and you refrain from activities that may be construed as interfering with the investigation or parties to it.

- 14.** You comply with the regulatory authority of HRPAs and promptly and faithfully abide by any sanctions that may be imposed as a result of a disciplinary process.
- 15.** You tell HRPAs as soon as possible if:
- you are found guilty of a criminal offence;
 - another court, tribunal or regulatory agency has initiated a proceeding about, or made a finding of professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity against you in Ontario or any other place;
 - you or your firm experience a bankruptcy or filed a consumer proposal;
 - you are under investigation by your employer for professional misconduct or incompetence and/or placed on leave by your employer while under investigation for activities that would be considered professional misconduct or incompetence;
 - you are dismissed from employment because of, or leave your employment while under investigation for, activities that would be considered professional misconduct or incompetence;
 - you become aware that a person not registered with the HRPAs is presenting themselves as, or attempting to present themselves as, a member or student;
 - in the course of the performance of your duties, you acquire reasonable grounds to believe that another member or student of the HRPAs has contravened these rules; or
 - you are aware of any conduct that raises a substantial question about your capacity to provide human resources services in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct.

Why is a human resources professional required to declare personal or firm bankruptcy?

This requirement was established by legislation in section 40 of the Ontario Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, 2013. Human resources professionals must comply with all provisions of this law.

Human resources professionals under intense financial pressure may find it difficult to maintain their independence or otherwise to perform their essential responsibilities. When a person or firm is in this position, workplace records may be subject to disclosure to creditors, including confidential information. A few other regulators have this requirement, which helps to protect the public by ensuring that the regulator is aware of this potential risk.

II. Trustworthiness

Human resources professionals ensure they preserve the highest standards of ethics, transparency, and truthfulness in all work-related activities.

1. You identify and explain the risks associated with individual and group conduct and/or actions that are incompetent, unethical, or unlawful.
2. You strive to balance organizational and employee needs and interests in the practice of your profession.
3. You do not use your position, especially access to personal information, private and/or confidential information, for personal, material or financial gain or the appearance of such, or to provide an unfair advantage to any party in any situation.

Additional Guidance

Any time an individual is in a position to derive personal benefit from a decision made in their professional capacity, there is a potential for a conflict of interest. Some people might think that you influenced the decision for personal reasons. The type of benefit could be financial, social, or otherwise.

It would never be appropriate for human resources professionals to influence, or attempt to influence, an outcome for the purpose of personal gain, or to give another person the opportunity to benefit at the expense of others. This does not mean that you are prohibited from benefiting from outcomes in which you are involved. Human resources professionals are often employees, for example, so decisions that benefit all employees will also benefit them. There is nothing wrong with that. As long as you continue to offer objective, fact-based advice and services and ensure that all parties are treated equally, you will be meeting this expectation. If you are in doubt about whether you might be seen to be in a conflict of interest, discuss it with your superior or client and ensure that everyone is comfortable with your involvement in the matter. Any conflicts of interest should be clearly mentioned to the parties involved.

4. In any situation where you are in a position to derive personal benefit from actions or advice made in your professional capacity, you will disclose this conflict or potential conflict of interest to relevant stakeholders and either withdraw from the situation or ensure that the potential for you to derive personal benefit does not cloud your judgement.
5. You inform individuals of the purpose of collecting their personal and/or private information, how the information will be used and stored, and who will have access to the information.
6. You acquire and disseminate information through ethical and responsible means.

7. You consider the accuracy and source of information before allowing it to be used in employment-related decisions.
8. You ensure that information you provide is truthful, accurate, and contains all relevant details.
9. You take reasonable steps to correct false or misleading statements or reports within your control if you become aware of them in the course of your professional activities.
10. You safeguard restricted or confidential records and information. You ensure that access is provided only to those who are entitled and need to know the information. You ensure this applies to records and information in all formats, while in the office or working remotely.
11. You disclose confidential information only if you have permission, the law allows or requires it, or it is necessary to protect public safety or prevent harm to other people. You take care to ensure that no more information is provided than is required.
12. If you become aware of a confidentiality or privacy breach, you report the breach to the appropriate authorities, if applicable, and those whose privacy may have been breached.
13. You are transparent about the limits on your ability to maintain confidentiality with those who wish to share information with you.

Additional Guidance

HR practitioners frequently work with information that is sensitive. Clearly outlined policies identifying when private and/or confidential information may be collected, used and/or shared, such as ongoing abuse of an employee, or a court order, should be established and communicated to all employees in writing. If you need further guidance, consider seeking legal advice.

14. You provide employees with, or ensure that they are provided with, access to their own personal information, meaning any recorded information about an identifiable person, such as employee records, performance reviews, and employment history.
15. You preserve information, and shall not use, remove, cause to be removed, or destroy any information unless you have express authorization from your client or employer and such actions are in accordance with the law and your professional obligations.

16. If you are an independent practitioner or practice through a registered firm, you make best efforts to ensure that any promotional activities you are connected with are accurate, easily understood, and are not likely to mislead or deceive a member of the public.

III. Respect

Human resources professionals value and consider the needs and rights of all and treat all with dignity.

1. You treat all third parties with whom you interact in your professional activities, regardless of your relationship to or with them, with courtesy and in accordance with the values and rules contained here.

Additional Guidance

The third parties with whom human resources professionals are most likely to interact include commissions, tribunals, bargaining agents, and courts of law. All the Rules here apply to interactions with these entities, just as much as with employers, clients, and employees.

2. In your professional activities, no matter who has retained or employed you, you understand that you have duties to all parties involved in human resources activities.

Additional Guidance

Human resources professionals may struggle with maintaining trust and fairness in situations involving employee dismissals. Remember that your obligation is to provide objective, fact-based advice and to ensure that all parties' rights are upheld. Employees often form the impression that human resources professionals are their advocates. If you ensure that this misunderstanding is not perpetuated in your workplace, and you are transparent about what employees can expect from you, this will be helpful in managing employee expectations in difficult situations.

If an employee must be dismissed, your role is to ensure that the dismissal is carried out respectfully and that the employer's legal obligations are met.

3. You promote and maintain a healthy, safe and inclusive workplace. You do not engage in or condone any acts of harassment, intimidation, discrimination, physical or psychological violence.

Additional Guidance

Psychological violence in the workplace can manifest in many different ways. This can include intentionally bothering or upsetting another employee, acting hostile, purposely excluding a person or group of people when they reasonably should be included, making vexatious comments – such as for the purposes of humiliation of others and being offensive. Psychological violence can also include acting aggressive, threatening, and belittling others.

4. You are alert to, and make appropriate accommodations for those who are vulnerable, who have suffered trauma or who are entitled to accommodations under the law.
5. You, as within your authority, separate or provide a safe space in the workplace for impacted individuals of harassment or physical or psychological violence, including sexual harassment and abuse, where required and as appropriate.
6. If you think that your employers, clients, or colleagues may have engaged in unethical practices against an individual or individuals, you make those whose behaviour is concerning aware of the issue, the associated risks, and any disciplinary actions that could be taken.

Additional Guidance:

In Ontario, the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) details employers' obligations in managing workplace harassment and violence. Key obligations for employers under the OHSA related to harassment and violence include:

- setting policies on workplace violence and workplace harassment that are reviewed at least once a year;
- setting programs to accompany and implement workplace violence and harassment policies. Workplace violence and harassment programs have specific criteria that must be met under the OHSA;
- providing all workers with appropriate information and instruction on all workplace violence and harassment programs;
- investigating incidents and complaints of workplace harassment or violence and providing the worker who has allegedly experienced the harassment or violence, and the alleged harasser/respondent, with the results of the investigation and any corrective action that has been taken in writing;
- assessing risks of workplace harassment and violence and measures to control identified risks; and
- taking every reasonable precaution to protect a worker who an employer is aware of or ought to be reasonably aware of, being a victim of domestic violence.

Please note that there may be additional and/or differing provincial or federal laws if your organization is federally regulated or operates in provinces outside of Ontario. Registrants are expected to be aware of and follow all applicable legislation.

See [also section i.2 guidance](#), above, about what to do when your employer resists your advice.

7. When acting as a mediator, you must remain objective and unbiased, ensure that all legal obligations are understood and adhered to, and make a good faith effort to achieve a resolution that is fair and reasonable for both parties.
8. You make decisions and allocate resources objectively in your work, without any regard to personal relationships or biases, subject to applicable human rights legislation.

IV. Competence

Human resources professionals are the experts in applying human resources knowledge, skills, and professional values when providing high-quality human resources advice and services. Human resources professionals demonstrate a lifelong commitment to excellence in practice through continuous learning and by teaching others.

1. You practice only in the areas in which you have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and available resources.

Additional Guidance

Special skills and training are required to manage the complexities associated with some areas of practice. Before engaging in recruitment or termination activities, you should ensure that you have had the opportunity to attain the appropriate training and are current in terms of legal and regulatory requirements. Workplace investigations also require a level of specialized knowledge and training that most human resources professionals would not be expected to have. The consequences of error or omission in these areas of practice can be catastrophic for all parties, and the individual human resources professional should consider carefully before accepting responsibilities that they are not confident they can execute in accordance with legal requirements and with the highest level of quality.

2. You keep up to date with the law, HRPA's guidance, and other requirements relevant to the practice of human resources.

3. You direct anyone who is under your supervision or authority only in the performance of human resources functions for which they have been adequately trained and are competent to perform.
4. You commit to continuous learning, skills development and application of new knowledge related to both human resources management and the organizations you serve, and you participate in HRPA's continuing professional development ("CPD") program as required.

Additional Guidance

All human resources professionals are expected to engage in lifelong learning and continuous professional development. Members of the HRPA who have been granted the Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP), Certified Human Resources Leader (CHRL) and/or Certified Human Resources Executive (CHRE) designation are required to meet HRPA's CPD requirements.

More information about HRPA's Professional Development requirements can be found [on HRPA's website](#).

5. You ensure that human resources information and records within your control are maintained and up to date, including, but not limited to, as required by applicable employment standards and occupational health and safety legislation.
6. You make a reasonable effort to ensure that you have all relevant information before you provide an opinion. When representing persons or organizations you make sure that you are sufficiently prepared to undertake this representation and will have obtained the necessary training, assistance or information to do so.
7. If the services or expertise required by your employer or client are outside of your knowledge or skills, you take action to ensure that they receive the level of service or skill required or refer them to another professional, if possible.

Additional Guidance

As indicated above, there are many areas of human resources practice which require specialized knowledge. To ensure that you can provide the highest quality of service, consulting with a specialist in areas you feel you may not have the required competence may be valuable. This will help you to develop your skills and ensure that your employer or client gets the best possible advice. If this situation arises, you might consider seeking consent to ask for advice before referring your employer or client to another professional.

If you cannot offer the level of expertise that you think that your employer or client requires, and obtaining external advice is not an option, then you should do your best to identify the appropriate professional or enterprise for a referral.

8. When formulating a recommendation, you will also inform the client or employer of any significant inherent and reasonably foreseeable risks associated with a proposed solution to any situation.

V. Equity and Fairness

Human resources professionals strive to ensure that people are treated fairly by ensuring that all policies, rules, regulations, and laws are applied appropriately, equally, and without bias.

1. You will respect principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging by fostering an environment that offers safety, belonging and inclusion for all, valuing differences between each unique individual and understanding, accepting, and treating everyone fairly.

Additional Guidance

In Ontario, the [Human Rights Code](#) guarantees every person equal treatment without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, record of offences or disability.

In Ontario, the Human Rights Code has primacy, or takes precedence over, all other legislation, unless that legislation specifically states that the Code does not apply. As a human resources professional, you will be expected to be familiar with the requirements and obligations under the Code and the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging and make your best efforts to foster an environment that offers safety, belonging, and inclusion for all.

Please note that there may be additional and/or differing provincial or federal laws if your organization operates in provinces outside of Ontario or is federally regulated. HRPA members, registered firms, and students are expected to be aware of and follow all applicable legislation.

See guidance set out in section I. 2 above regarding encountering employer resistance to advice.

2. You promote and educate employers to make fair and equitable treatment of everyone in the workplace a key priority.
3. You develop, administer, and advocate for policies and procedures that foster fair, consistent, inclusive and equitable treatment for all.
4. You are alert to potential biases, including unconscious biases, and ensure that your personal views do not affect your professional relationships, obligations or the advice that you provide. You prevent and discourage the use of or reliance on stereotypes in the workplace.
5. You are alert to the potential for systemic biases or discrimination built into policies and procedures and work proactively to identify these, bring them to the attention of the organization and address them to the extent within your control.

VI. Best Interest of Others

Human resources professionals demonstrate a commitment to the parties whose interests they serve by accepting responsibility to act on behalf and for the benefit of those they serve.

1. In all your professional activities, you bear in mind the central role that work, and the work environment plays in employees' lives, and you do everything you reasonably can to ensure that the environment adheres to all policies and legal requirements to support individual well-being.

Additional Guidance

For more details related to this Rule, please see HRPAs' Practice Guidelines' on Fostering Mental Health in the Workplace and Addressing Racism and Racial Discrimination in the Workplace, available at hrpa.ca/guidance.

2. In all your professional dealings, you emphasize the importance of addressing the impact of management plans and decisions on people.
3. You provide full and accurate information and do not withhold information from parties with whom you interact professionally and who have a need or a right to know.
4. You do not refuse to counsel or represent someone on the sole ground that they filed a claim against another member of the HRPAs.

5. If you are an independent practitioner or practice through a registered firm and find yourself in a position where you cannot meet the expectations of the parties while maintaining your professional responsibilities, you should inform those who have retained you, withdraw from the service if possible, and assist them in finding appropriate assistance elsewhere.