

Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct: Guide for the Public

If you are a member of the public, such as an employee, jobseeker or employer, you can expect a registered HRP A member, firm or student to comply with our *Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct*. We have developed the FAQs below to answer important questions you may have, including what the Code and Rules are, their relevance to you, what you can do if you believe a registered HR professional is practicing unethically, and more.

What are the Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct?

The HRP A *Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct* set out ethical guidance and professional expectations for all registered HRP A members, students and firms. While they are not intended to provide a substitute for professional judgment, they do provide guidance to HR professionals on how to act in particular circumstances. To access the Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct, please click [here](#).

How is this relevant to me as an employer or an employee?

The *Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct* establish a baseline of ethical and professional expectations for all registered HRP A members, students and firms. As an employer or an employee, this means that you can refer to the *Code of Ethics and the Rules of Professional Conduct* to determine what you should expect from a registered HR professional within your organization – and when that HR professional may fall short of those expectations. The key word here is registered: only registered HRP A members, students and firms have agreed to be bound by the *Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct*. HR professionals not registered with HRP A are not bound by the same professional obligations, and as such it may be more challenging to hold them accountable for potential unethical or unprofessional behavior.

To determine if an HR professional is registered with HRP A, simply check out our public register [here](#).

How do I use the *Code of Ethics and the Rules of Professional Conduct* to determine what I can expect from a registered HR professional?

The *Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct* are divided into two major parts. The Code of Ethics comes first and sets out six foundational core values for registered HR professionals – professionalism, trustworthiness, respect, competence, equity & fairness and best interest of others. The Rules of Professional Conduct give life to those core values by translating them into behaviors.

To use the *Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct*, start by asking yourself which of the six core values may be engaged by the HR professional actions. You can use the definitions of the values that are included in the Code as your guideline.

Then, have a look at the relevant sections of the Rules of Professional Conduct to determine whether any of the behavioral expectations set out in the Rules may conflict with the actions of the registered HR professional.

For some of the Rules, you will find that additional guidance has been provided to address specific challenges or grey areas, or to address common questions. Sometimes, the additional guidance will go one step further and direct you to either a Practice Guideline or a Practice Standard specific to a particular Rule. The purpose of a Practice Guideline or a Practice Standard is to apply the Rule to specific situations. The benefit of a Practice Guideline or a Practice Standard is that they can go into much more detail and are more practical in nature. They are generally developed for areas where the potential misbehavior of a registered HR professional could have the most impact on an employer or an employee. For quick access to all Practice Guidelines and Practice Standards issued by HRP, please click [here](#).

What can I do if I believe a registered HR professional has done something unethical or unprofessional?

We understand that potential professional misconduct by an HR professional can be extremely challenging – especially for employees, who may worry about their job security if they speak up. That being said, if you do believe that an HR professional has acted unethical or unprofessional, then we would strongly encourage you to consider filing a complaint with HRP.

First, check the [public register](#) to confirm the HR professional is registered with HRP. Unfortunately, HRP can only accept and investigate complaints against a registered member, student or firm.

Second, review the *Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct* and note any sections that you believe may have been breached by the registered HR professional's actions.

Third, complete the professional complaints form to share your experience – what happened, when did it happen, who may have witnessed the situation and what supplementary documents do you have that may support your statements. You can find a copy of the professional complaints form [here](#).

Once you've written out your experience, link your allegations and any supporting documents or witness statements to the sections of the *Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct* you had previously identified as having been breached.

Finally, submit your assembled complaints package to registrar@hrpa.ca.

What happens after I have submitted a professional complaint against an HR professional?

Once you have submitted an official complaint against an HR professional, the staff liaison for HRPAs Complaints Committee will acknowledge receipt and ensure the complaint is complete. For transparency, the entire complaint package is then shared with the HR professional for their response. You will receive a copy of the HR professional's response, and you will have an opportunity to address any additional issues or new information the HR professional has raised. The HR professional then has one last opportunity to comment, before the complaint is provided to the Complaints Committee for review.

If the Complaints Committee feels like it requires further information to review the complaint, it may hire an investigator. Alternatively, if the Complaints Committee is satisfied that it has all the relevant information, it can proceed directly to making a decision.

The Complaints Committee can make the following decisions:

1. Dismiss the Complaint.
2. Order a Caution or Advice.
3. Negotiate a settlement agreement and refer the agreement to the Discipline Committee for approval.
4. Refer the Complaint to the Discipline Committee.

What happens once the Complaints Committee has made a decision about my complaint?

It depends on the nature of the decision. If the Complaints Committee has determined that the allegations are serious and there is sufficient evidence, and the matter has been referred to the Discipline Committee, then a Discipline Hearing would be scheduled. At this stage, you

would no longer be actively involved, though you may be called as a witness. Instead, HRPAs will present the allegations you raised in your complaint to the Discipline Committee, while the HR professional will have the opportunity to represent their side directly to the committee.

If the Complaints Committee determines though that there isn't sufficient evidence for a referral to discipline, or that a caution would be sufficient to address the alleged misconduct by the HR professional, then the complaint would be closed. If you disagree with the closure of the complaint, you do have the option to appeal the Complaints Committee's decision to HRPAs's Appeal Committee. You can find information about the appeals process [here](#).