

# CODE OF CONDUCT

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## 1. Introduction

Staff, directors and volunteers of Transparency Legal Advice Centre (“TLAC”) are committed to upholding high standards of integrity and accountability; acting according to the core values and guiding principles of TLAC; and promoting those standards, values and principles.

## 2. Scope

This code applies to TLAC’s employees (including executive and non-executive staff). Those working with TLAC as directors, volunteers or paid consultants are expected to observe the spirit of this code insofar as it is relevant to their activities. This code is a living document.

## 3. General principles of TLAC

TLAC is a not-for-profit, independent law centre.<sup>1</sup> Our vision is an Ireland where those who speak up about wrongdoing are treated fairly. We specialise in providing legal advice to anyone who wishes to disclose wrongdoing, particularly under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014.

**Mission statement:** Our mission is to provide legal advice and support to those who wish to speak up about wrongdoing.

Our work is guided by the following **core values**:

- **Co-operation:** we collaborate with other organisations to better achieve our aims.
- **Equality and human rights:** we respect (and encourage respect for) equality and fundamental, universal human rights and freedoms. We will not discriminate on grounds of age, disability, family status, gender, marriage and civil partnership, membership of the Traveler community, race, religion and/or sexual orientation.
- **Independence:** we are not controlled by central or local government or by commercial interests. We are independent from our funders and from any interests unrelated to our charitable purposes. We are democratic, politically non-partisan and non-sectarian in our work.
- **Integrity:** we conduct our work honestly and ethically.
- **Respect:** we respect the individual skills and abilities of our staff, volunteers and interns. We promote and value ethical workplaces, where workers who refrain from participating in and/or speak up about wrongdoing are respected.
- **Transparency and accountability:** we are open and accountable in all of our working relationships.

In addition, we adhere to the following **guiding principles**:

- We will only accept funding that does not compromise our independence.
- We will provide accurate and timely reports of our activities to our stakeholders.
- We will strive for balanced and diverse representation on our Board of Directors.

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<sup>1</sup> Established pursuant to the Solicitors Acts, 1954 to 2002 (Independent Law Centres) Regulations, 2006

## **4. Practical guidelines**

### **4.1 Funder relations**

We will endeavour to respond to all requests from our funders fairly and expeditiously.

### **4.2 Staff and volunteer relations**

- a. We will treat each other with respect and consideration.
- b. We will communicate and consult with each other openly and collegially and in a manner that assists each of us to fulfil our duties and responsibilities faithfully and efficiently.
- c. We will respect the privacy and private lives of our colleagues when dealing with personal information.
- d. We undertake to ensure adequate consultation with any staff member or volunteer before making any decision which may impact upon that staff member or volunteer.

### **4.3 Conflicts of interest**

In our work, conflict may arise between our personal interests and the interests of TLAC or other stakeholders. We will disclose such conflict and resolve it in a transparent manner, in accordance with Policies. Solicitors employed by TLAC must also ensure that they comply with the Law Society of Ireland's rules and guidance on conflicts of interest.

#### **4.3.1 Non-preferential treatment of family and friends/staff recruitment**

We are committed to fair, objective and impartial recruitment, hiring and procurement procedures. In particular:

- a. Family members, friends and organisations with which we or our families or friends are associated will not be accorded preferential treatment.
- b. We will not hire or contract with members of our immediate family (spouse, parent, child or sibling) or the immediate family of members of the Board of Directors, without specific authorisation by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors. Hiring of or contracting with persons related to the Chairperson must be approved by the Board of Directors.
- c. Appointments to all positions will be made on merit and only after due consideration of all applications received following internal and external announcements.

#### **4.3.2 Gifts and entertainment**

As the acceptance of a gift may appear to create an obligation, we will avoid giving or accepting gifts, favours and gratuities in connection with official duties as required by the following policies:

- a. We will not accept directly or indirectly any discount, gift, entertainment, or favours ("Gifts") that may influence or be perceived to influence the exercise of our function, the performance of our duties or our judgement.
- b. Subject to sub-paragraph 1 above, Gifts between the value of €20 and €100 may be accepted if they are registered as provided in the next sub-paragraph. All Gifts of a value of €100 or more will be refused.
- c. All offers of Gifts will be reported to the Managing Solicitor and recorded on a Register of Gifts that is available for inspection. Reasons for acceptance or refusal of each offer must also be recorded.

Solicitors employed by TLAC must also abide by the Law Society of Ireland's rules and guidance on gifts and entertainment. In the event that there is a conflict, the Law Society of Ireland's rules and guidance prevail.

#### **4.3.3 Travel and TLAC property**

- a. Official travel undertaken by us will be directly related to the work of TLAC and will be undertaken only when necessary. Only economical and bona fide travel expenses will be

reimbursed. Only economy airfare will be paid, unless otherwise decided by the Board of Directors.

- b. We will ensure that TLAC resources will be used effectively. Assets under our control will be used for no purpose other than for the advancement of TLAC's objectives.
- c. When private travel is added onto TI related travel, we will notify our manager/the Board of Directors before the trip and will meet any extra costs that this may entail.

#### **4.3.4 Private activities and private property**

- a. We will not engage in any activity or transaction or acquire any position or function, whether paid or unpaid, that is incompatible with or detracts from the proper performance of our duties or that may bring TLAC into disrepute.
- b. We will arrange our private affairs so as not to engage in any activity that might impair the credibility of TLAC by giving the impression that TLAC is fostering individuals, public or private institutions whose behaviour is perceived as not being in accordance with TLAC's values.
- c. We will not use TLAC's business relationships to solicit or obtain favours or improper benefits in private life.
- d. We will not allow our political affiliations and/or activities to unduly influence us or interfere with TLAC's independence.

Solicitors employed by TLAC must also comply with the Law Society of Ireland's rules and guidance on independence.

#### **4.3.5 Remuneration**

Where we receive any remuneration for public speaking, writing for a publication or a media appearance, and TLAC organisational information is involved or the appearance is a result of the individual's employment or association with TLAC, then the remuneration will be paid directly to TLAC. However, the Board of Directors may decide to forward such honorarium, partly or entirely, to the respective staff member.

#### **4.3.6 Post-employment**

We will not allow our actions and decisions in the course of our work to be improperly influenced by the prospect of future employment with others.

#### **4.3.7 Confidentiality and transparency**

- a. We will treat information obtained in the service of TLAC with confidentiality, when its nature calls for it or when this is explicitly requested, and will not use any such information or materials to further a private interest. This obligation continues after an employee's association from TLAC comes to an end.
- b. Subject to the above sub-paragraph, we will be as open as possible about all decisions and actions we take.

#### **4.4 Financial transparency and independence**

- a. We will provide and publish audited financial statements in easily accessible form. Financial reports will be provided and published as appropriate.
- b. We will publish annually our sources of funding exceeding €1,000 and account accurately and promptly to donors in accordance with the terms of their grants.
- c. We will comply with our Donations Policy to maintain our independence.

### **5. Implementation**

#### **5.1 Getting familiar with this code**

- a. TLAC management will actively encourage an internal dialogue on ethics, provide guidance for staff and ensure that internal systems, policies and procedures are consistent with this code.

- b. Copies of this code will be provided to each director, staff member and volunteer for signing and (if possible) displayed online.
- c. This code will be annexed to all contracts of employment and signed along with them.
- d. The Managing Solicitor will conduct an annual review of compliance with this code and evaluation of its impact on the culture of integrity at TLAC. This will include a meeting with all TLAC staff members as a forum for discussion and review of the impact of the code.

**5.2 Raising an issue**

In the event that a staff member or volunteer has any concerns about an interpretation, application or suspected violation of this code, he or she should consult TLAC’s Protected Disclosures Policy.

**Declaration by directors, staff and volunteers of Transparency Legal Advice Centre**

I have read and agree to abide by the terms and principles outlined in this Code of Conduct and Transparency Legal Advice Centre’s Memorandum and Articles of Association insofar as they relate to my activities with TLAC.

Name .....  
Signed .....  
Date .....