



Justice Information Resource Network

# CODE OF ETHICS

Created 1994

Revised 2004

Revised 2012

Revised 2023

Justice Information Resource Network  
1000 Vermont Ave, NW, Suite 450  
Washington, DC 20005  
Phone: (202) 842-9330; Fax (202) 304-1417  
[www.jirn.org](http://www.jirn.org)

## **Acknowledgments**

The Justice Information Resource Network appreciates the work of the following SAC directors who drafted the Code of Ethics in 1994: Carle Jackson, Louisiana; William Holmes, Massachusetts; Kim English, Colorado; Michael Overton, Nebraska; and Jack O'Connell, Delaware. JIRN also acknowledges the following SAC Directors who revised the Code in 2004: Doug Yearwood, North Carolina; Jack O'Connell, Delaware; and Paul Steele, New Mexico.

The 2011-12 Executive Committee updated the Code in 2012: Philip Stevenson, Arizona SAC Director; Stephen Haas, West Virginia SAC Director; Carmen Dorsey, Maine SAC Director; Lisa Broidy, New Mexico SAC Director; Lisa Shoaf, Ohio SAC Director; Jackie Vandercook, Tennessee SAC Director; and David Olson, Loyola University.

## Table of Contents

Purpose of the Code of Ethics.....	4
Terms and Definitions.....	5
Enforcement.....	5
CODE OF ETHICS.....	6
I.    Maintain the Integrity of Research and Analysis.....	6
A.    Neutrality.....	6
B. <i>Professional Integrity</i> .....	6
II.   Promote Professionalism.....	8
A. <i>Professionalism in Conduct of Research and Analysis</i> .....	8
B. <i>Promote Professionalism in the Conduct of Research and Analysis</i> .....	9
C.    Protect Colleagues and the Public from Incompetent Research Analysis.....	9
D.    Protect Colleagues and the Public from Unethical Researchers.....	10
III.  Officers Keep Interests of Members Paramount.....	10

## **Purpose of the Code of Ethics**

The membership of the Justice Information Resource Network is composed primarily of criminal justice analysts and researchers working for state-level public institutions on problems of broad social and political concern. A fundamental purpose of the Network is to promote the use of empirical analysis in criminal justice policy decision making at the state level and, in furtherance of this, to promote the development and continued improvement of State Statistical Analysis Centers. Additionally, the Network has a role in the larger community of criminal justice policy analysts and researchers to serve as the institutional center for the promotion of applied research and policy analysis to the problems of crime and criminal justice. In this role, the Network has an interest in the conduct of both basic and applied research as these relate to criminal justice policy issues confronted at the state, local, and national levels.

The Code of Ethics for the Justice Information Resource Network is intended as a guide to the membership of the Network, its employees, and contractors for the proper conduct of research and analysis. While the Code is advisory for the membership, it is intended to be binding upon employees and contractors of the Network. It acknowledges the responsibilities of those who seek to participate in the life of the criminal justice research and policy analysis community through active membership in the Network, by clearly articulating standards which reflect the best interests of that community and the clients it seeks to serve. The standards of the Code are based on the principles of integrity and professionalism as they pertain to the applied social sciences. The Code recognizes peer review as a primary safeguard to insure integrity and professionalism. Although the Code applies only to members of the Network, it is expected that individual members will require employees under their authority and members of any research team of which they may be a part to act in accordance with its provisions to the extent permitted by law. Further, the Code defines the level of professional conduct which JIRN members have a responsibility to demand of all other professionals with whom they have dealings.

The Network recognizes that its members work in inherently political environments, and that it is almost impossible to achieve complete neutrality in the conduct of policy-relevant research. The selection of data, of sampling methods, and of presentation of findings all create the chance for bias to be introduced. The goal, therefore, for researchers and analysts, is to avoid bias to the extent possible, and to document known biases where they are introduced.

The Network Bylaws state that "it is the mission of the Justice Information Resource Network is to promote the effective and efficient administration of criminal and juvenile justice through the objective analysis of data and the dissemination of research that informs policy and practice." The Code of Ethics was developed to further the mission of the Network by making explicit the ethical principles that will promote the highest professional standards for its members.

## **Terms and Definitions**

"Association," as used herein, applies to the Justice Information Resource Network (JIRN).

"Member" means any member or employee of the Network. This includes all categories of membership as the Bylaws of the Network may define. It also includes all employees of the Network, part-time or full-time, contractors to the Network, or any other party with whom JIRN has a professional or business relationship.

"Research" refers to all aspects of the research process, including, but not limited to, problem definition, measurement, data collection, sampling, analysis, and interpretation.

"Researcher/Analyst." JIRN recognizes that researchers and analysts have different but overlapping roles; in the Code, the terms are used interchangeably and all aspects of the Code are meant to apply to both types of positions.

The remaining terms should be given the broadest possible interpretation consistent with the statement of purpose given above and the Bylaws of the Network.

## **Enforcement**

Because the Justice Information Resource Network does not have any formal disciplinary authority over its membership, it is the responsibility of each individual member to follow the prescriptions of the Code and to assist other members in doing so. In the case of employees and contractors of the Network, it is the responsibility of the Executive Director to enforce the provisions of the Code, with the advice and consent of the JIRN Executive Committee and subject to the review of the voting membership.

## **CODE OF ETHICS**

### **I. Maintain the Integrity of Research and Analysis**

A member should assist in maintaining the integrity of the criminal justice research community.

#### **A. Neutrality**

Analysts should always strive for neutrality in the conduct of their work and in the presentation of finding

1. In the conduct of research or analysis, analysts should not knowingly do or fail to do anything which would bias the results of their work.
2. In the presentation of findings, an analyst should not knowingly do or fail to do anything which would bias the interpretation, understanding, or application of the findings by the intended audience.
3. An analyst is obliged to present professional and unbiased work to the policy makers requesting such work.
4. Analysts should not allow their personal interest or the interests of their own organizations or any other groups to influence their professional judgment in the conduct of research and/or analysis and in the presentation of findings to the policy makers requesting them.

#### **B. Professional Integrity**

Analysts should maintain the highest standards of professional integrity in all matters relating to the conduct of analysis and the presentation and publication of findings.

1. Analysts should always recognize their duty to provide the highest quality of analytical work within the constraints present in a given situation and should:
  - a. recognize their limitations and seek the advice of colleagues who are better versed in areas of research, analysis, or policy which they deem critical to the analysis at hand, whenever it is appropriate to do so;
  - b. decline work beyond their competence when it is possible to do so. When it is not possible, the analyst should seek such assistance as may be available from persons competent in the specific area, and should advise policy makers as to the limitations of the research whenever appropriate in such cases where no assistance is available; and
  - c. seek peer review of their work whenever it is practical to do so
2. Analysts should respect the rights to privacy of both clients and subjects of analysis. All applicable federal and state laws pertaining to the privacy of individuals, informed consent dissemination, and the security of privileged and personally identifiable information should be rigorously followed during all phases of research and analysis. In addition to such legal and other requirements, such as Institutional

Review Boards, the following principles should guide analysts in dealing with privacy issues:

- a. They should never use their position or role as researchers in order to obtain information for other than professional purposes
  - b. They should always respect the privacy of subjects of any research project with which they are involved. It is incumbent upon analysts to prevent direct or collateral harm to the subject of any research project. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:
    - making full disclosure to research subjects of the entities and individuals to whom personally identifiable information on the research subjects will be shared and the manner in which information directly pertaining to them will be used during the course of a research project, the presentation of findings, and publications;
    - giving subject-specific information only to persons authorized to receive it under the terms and conditions of the research project (i.e., the terms and conditions presented to the subject);
    - maintaining in a secure manner all files, databases, tapes, or other medium which contains specific information about research subjects;
    - obtaining prior informed consent of the subject when subject-specific information will be used in any publication;
    - obtaining signed consent forms in those cases where individual subjects are to be identifiable in the published report; and
    - neither offering nor permitting to be offered any undue inducement to obtain informed consent from a subject.
  - c. They should only release research findings or publish the results of a research project or analysis with the prior notification and, whenever appropriate, the consent of the client or sponsor.
3. An analyst should formally acknowledge in any published report or professional paper all persons who collaborated on or assisted in a substantial way with a research project.
  4. An analyst should formally acknowledge in any published report or professional paper material explicitly borrowed from the analyst's past work which was supported or sponsored by a person, organization, or agency different from the current sponsor.
  5. An analyst should fully report all sources of financial support and note any special relations to sponsor(s). When financial support has been accepted, the analyst must make every reasonable effort to complete the proposed work on schedule, including providing copies to the funding source.

The Code generally recommends the use of peer review as the best means of promoting professionalism within the analytic community, and improving research products utilized in the policy making process. In those cases where a formal peer review is not possible or practical, members are encouraged to utilize the informal networks within the Network to obtain feedback from their colleagues. The Code recognizes that all analysts, as well as the analytic community as a whole, benefit

from knowledgeable and well-meaning feedback. It is a primary responsibility of the Network to facilitate opportunities both for formal peer review and informal consultation among the members.

## **II. Promote Professionalism**

A member should assist in maintaining the professionalism and competence of the criminal justice research community.

### ***A. Professionalism in Conduct of Research and Analysis***

An analyst should conduct research and analysis according to the highest standards of the profession applicable under the conditions of the project.

1. Analysts should always exercise due care and diligence in the collection, processing, analysis, and distribution of data, taking all reasonable steps to assure the accuracy of the results.
2. Analysts should always exercise due care and diligence in the development of research designs and in the analysis of data and should:
  - a. employ only those tools and methods which, in their best professional judgment, are well suited to the research or analytical problem at hand and are appropriate under the conditions of the project;
  - b. select research tools or methods of analysis without regard to their special capacity to yield a desired conclusion;
  - c. apply analytical tools objectively without the intent to obtain a desired result or derive a predetermined conclusion from any research or analytical effort;
  - d. not knowingly make interpretations of research results which are inconsistent with the data available;
  - e. not knowingly misinterpret data or analytical results in order to reach a desired result or conclusion;
  - f. not knowingly state or imply that results, findings, or interpretations of research are accorded greater confidence than the data actually warrant; and
  - g. not knowingly misstate the results of any research or analytical effort in order to support a desired conclusion.
3. Analysts should describe their findings accurately and in appropriate detail to allow the typical member of the intended audience to develop conclusions relative to the research and its applicability to any related decision making functions which are consistent with the data.
  - a. They should take care to insure that all generalizations presented in their findings are appropriately supported by the data and should:
    - o insure that generalizations are properly drawn from the data presented, and that reasonable competing hypotheses of equal weight given the evidence, are presented or noted; and
    - o not generalize their findings to an inappropriate population.



- b. They should take care to avoid biased or prejudicial language in the writing of the report.
- c. They should be explicit concerning the applicability of their research to any policy questions being discussed and should:
  - o state the limits of the research and its applicability; and
  - o clearly state the assumptions made to arrive at any conclusions drawn.

### ***B. Promote Professionalism in the Conduct of Research and Analysis***

Analysts have an affirmative duty to promote professionalism in the conduct of research and analysis and should

1. willingly assist any colleague in the conduct of a research program or analytical project to the maximum extent possible whenever requested to do so;
2. promote and actively participate in peer-review activities whenever it is possible to do so;
3. actively assist in the development of training programs in their area of expertise whenever it is possible to do so;
4. willingly assist any colleague in building the research and analytic capacities of their organization whenever it is possible to do so;
5. publish and distribute the results of their work whenever it is possible to do so;
6. document and publish notes on new methods or techniques, or fresh applications of old methods or techniques whenever it is possible to do so; and
7. cooperate in efforts to make raw data and pertinent documentation collected and prepared at public expense available to other analysts, at reasonable costs, except in cases in which confidentiality, the client's rights to proprietary information and privacy, or claims of a field worker to the privacy of personal notes necessarily could be violated.

### **C. Protect Colleagues and the Public from Incompetent Research Analysis**

Analysts have an affirmative duty to protect colleagues and the public from work that is unprofessional, substantially misleading, or obviously incompetent.

1. They should recommend for employment or consultation only persons or organizations known to them to be qualified and competent in the specific areas of expertise required.
2. They should expose, with reasoned argument in the most appropriate forum available, research or analysis in which due diligence has not been exercised in the collection and analysis of data or the presentation of findings. In cases where this has occurred and analysts have substantial reason to believe that the failings of the analysis are intentional, they should:
  - a. seek consultation from colleagues with expertise in the field in which the questionable analysis was conducted before proceeding with any formal action on the matter; and

- b. exhaust all lesser means available to correct the problem before considering public exposure. Such lesser means include:
      - o discussion of the analyst's concerns with the principal investigator involved in the work;
      - o documenting the analyst's concerns and requesting a response from the principal investigator; and
      - o referring the matter to a peer-review committee established under the auspices of the Network to adjudicate the matter, if such a procedure has been mutually agreed to by all parties involved.
  3. They should seek the assistance of their colleagues and the Network whenever confronted with a demand to produce research or analysis which, in their best professional opinion, is substantially and intentionally flawed.
  4. They should assist their colleagues in such matters when, in their professional judgment, such assistance is warranted and would be beneficial.

#### **D. Protect Colleagues and the Public from Unethical Researchers**

Analysts have an affirmative duty to protect their colleagues and the public from researchers who knowingly engage in unethical research practices. In this context, an unethical research practice is a practice which substantially injures research subjects or violates their privacy without their informed consent, and when the researcher knew or should have known that the practice in question would have this result.

1. Analysts who have knowledge of unethical research practice have an affirmative obligation to present their concerns to the researcher engaging in the questionable practices.
2. Analysts should not participate in a research project which involves data, -II- information, or analysis obtained in whole or in part through unethical research practices.
3. Analysts should not refer to, cite, or build further research upon studies or analyses which, in their best professional judgment, involved substantial unethical research practice.
4. Analysts serving on a peer-review panel should not approve for publication any article or study which, in their best professional judgment and supported by evidence, involved substantial unethical research practices.
5. The Network should not permit the presentation of any report, study, or findings based on unethical research practices at any meeting of the Network or in any Association-sponsored publication, except for the purpose of exposing unethical research practices.

### **III. Officers Keep Interests of Members Paramount**

Members of the JIRN Executive Committee, including elected officers of the Network and Appointed Delegates, should maintain the interests of the membership, the organization,

and the good of the larger community of criminal justice policy analysts and researchers as the guiding principles of their deliberations and in the conduct of Association affairs.