

# CODE OF ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

## OVERVIEW

The HR Certification Institute's Code of Ethical and Professional Responsibility has been adopted to promote and maintain the highest standards of service and conduct for all persons it has recognized and certified to use any of its certification marks: PHR, GPHR, SPHR, PHR-CA, SPHR-CA, PHRi, and SPHRi.

The HR Certification Institute's Board determines who is certified and thus authorized to use the marks. Implicit in the acceptance of this authorization is an obligation not only to comply with the mandates and requirements of all applicable laws and regulations but also to take responsibility to act in an ethical and professionally responsible manner. Adherence to these standards is expected from all who hold an HR Certification Institute credential and serves to ensure public confidence in the integrity of these individuals.

Those holding an HR Certification Institute credential commit to the following:

## 1. PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

As an HR Certification Institute certificant, you are responsible for adding value to the organizations you serve and contributing to the ethical success of those organizations. You accept professional responsibility for your individual decisions and actions. You are also an advocate for the HR profession by engaging in activities that enhance its credibility and value. You will:

- Adhere to the highest standards of ethical and professional behavior.
- Measure the effectiveness of HR in contributing to or achieving organizational goals.
- Comply with the law.
- Work consistently within the values of the profession.
- Strive to achieve the highest levels of service, performance and social responsibility.
- Advocate for the appropriate use and appreciation of human beings as employees.
- Advocate openly and within the established forums for debate in order to influence decision making and results.

## 2. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As an HR Certification Institute certificant you must strive to meet the highest standards of competence and commit to strengthen your competencies on a continuous basis. You will:

- Commit to continuous learning, skills development and application of new knowledge related to both human resource management and the organizations you serve.
- Contribute to the body of knowledge, the evolution of the profession and the growth of individuals through teaching, research and dissemination of knowledge.

## 3. ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

As an HR Certification Institute certificant you are expected to exhibit individual leadership as a role model for maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct. You will:

- Be ethical and act ethically in every professional interaction.
- Question pending individual and group actions when necessary to ensure that decisions are ethical and are implemented in an ethical manner.
- Seek expert guidance if ever in doubt about the ethical propriety of a situation.
- Through teaching and mentoring, champion the development of others as ethical leaders in the profession and in organizations.

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### 4. FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE

As an HR Certification Institute certificant you are ethically responsible for promoting and fostering fairness and justice for all employees and their organizations. You will:

- Respect the uniqueness and intrinsic worth of every individual.
- Treat people with dignity, respect and compassion to foster a trusting work environment free of harassment, intimidation and unlawful discrimination.
- Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to develop their skills and new competencies.
- Assure an environment of inclusiveness and a commitment to diversity in the organizations you serve.
- Develop, administer and advocate policies and procedures that foster fair, consistent and equitable treatment for all.
- Regardless of personal interests, support decisions made by your organizations that are both ethical and legal.
- Act in a responsible manner and practice sound management in the country or countries in which the organizations you serve operate.

### 5. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

As an HR Certification Institute certificant you must maintain a high level of trust with our stakeholders. You must protect the interests of those stakeholders as well as your professional integrity and should not engage in activities that create actual, apparent or potential conflicts of interest. You will:

- Adhere to and advocate the use of published policies on conflicts of interest within your organization.
- Refrain from using your position for personal, material or financial gain or the appearance of such.
- Refrain from giving or seeking preferential treatment in the human resources processes.
- Prioritize your obligations to identify conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof. When conflicts arise; you will disclose them to relevant stakeholders.

### 6. USE OF INFORMATION

As an HR Certification Institute certificant you must consider and protect the rights of individuals, especially in the acquisition and dissemination of information while ensuring truthful communications and facilitating informed decision making. You will:

- Acquire and disseminate information through ethical and responsible means.
- Ensure only appropriate information is used in decisions affecting the employment relationship.
- Investigate the accuracy and source of information before allowing it to be used in employment related decisions.
- Maintain current and accurate HR information.
- Safeguard restricted or confidential information.
- Take appropriate steps to ensure the accuracy and completeness of all communicated information about HR policies and practices.
- Take appropriate steps to ensure the accuracy and completeness of all communicated information used in HR-related training.

## **DISCIPLINARY PROCESS AND PROCEDURES**

The HR Certification Institute Board's disciplinary procedures have been devised to ensure a fair and reasonable process for any professional holding one of the HR Certification Institute's credentials against whom allegations of Code of Ethical and Personal Responsibility violations are brought.

### **1. NATURE OF THE PROCESS**

These procedures are the only means to resolve all HR Certification Institute ethical charges and complaints. The HR Certification Institute has the exclusive authority to end any ethics inquiry or case regardless of circumstances. By applying for certification or recertification, HR professionals agree that they will not challenge the authority of the HR Certification Institute to apply the Code of Ethical and Personal Responsibility, the Disciplinary Case Procedures or other policies, and will not challenge the results of any HR Certification Institute action taken under these policies in a legal or government forum. These disciplinary procedures are not formal legal proceedings, thus many formal rules and practices of a court proceeding are not observed. The rules are intended to afford due process and fairness.

### **2. REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION**

Upon receipt of written complaint, the HR Certification Institute staff will review the allegation to determine if further investigation is warranted. No investigation will be made if the individual's certification has expired or the allegation occurred more than 24 months prior to the expiration unless the HR Certification Institute determines there is just cause for the complaint to be reviewed.

### **3. INVESTIGATION**

If staff determines to proceed with an investigation, the accused individual holding one of the HR Certification Institute's credentials will be given written notice of the investigation. That notice will contain the general nature of the allegations. That individual will be given 30 days within which to file a written response. If no response is received within the allotted 30 days, the complaint will be presented to a Staff Review Panel based on the information submitted. The Staff Review Panel made up of senior staff is empowered by the Board of Directors to review the complaint and make a final decision. If the decision is that no action will be taken, then the accused and the party making the complaint will be notified of the panel's final decision.

### **4. HEARING PANEL**

If the Staff Review Panel determines that discipline is merited, a hearing will take place before a Hearing Panel. The accused is entitled to appear in person or be represented by counsel at the hearing. After final deliberation by the panel, the accused and the party making the complaint will be notified of the Hearing Panel's final decision.

The panel will be comprised of a minimum of three individuals. At least one member of every Hearing Panel will be a member of the HR Certification Institute Board and at least two members of the panel will hold at least one of the HR Certification Institute's credentials. The panel will be appointed by the HR Certification Institute's Governance Committee using the same criteria it uses for selection of Board members.

The Hearing Panel will submit its findings and recommendations for action to the full HR Certification Institute's Board of Directors which, after considering all of the facts and recommendations will render a final decision.

### **5. RESOLUTION**

The accused and the accuser will receive written notification of the panel's decision.

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## **FORMS OF DISCIPLINE**

If grounds for discipline are deemed warranted, the HR Certification Institute Board of Directors may impose any of the forms of discipline below:

- Private written censure
- Public letter of admonition
- Suspension of the right to use the HR Certification Institute mark for a specified period of time
- Permanent revocation of the right to use the HR Certification Institute mark

## **GROUNDINGS FOR DISCIPLINE**

- Any act or omission that violates the criminal laws of any state or country in which that individual resides or is employed.
- Any act that is the proper basis for suspension of a professional license.
- Any act or omission that violates the HR Certification Institute's rules and procedures for obtaining or maintaining certification or is considered a material violation of this Code of Ethical and Personal Responsibility.
- Failure to respond to a request for information concerning an ethics violation allegation by the HR Certification Institute's Board or the HR Certification Institute's Hearing Panel without just cause.
- Obstruction of the HR Certification Institute Hearing Panel's performance of its duties.
- Any false or misleading statement made to the HR Certification Institute Board or the HR Certification Institute Hearing Panel.
- This list is not exclusive and there may be other acts or omissions amounting to unprofessional conduct that may also constitute grounds for discipline.