

# DIGNITY Code of Conduct

## Introduction

All staff in DIGNITY, Danish Institute Against Torture, and staff in organisations that are contractually associated with DIGNITY, must conduct themselves in a way that demonstrates respect for the dignity and integrity of all human beings and in a way that upholds DIGNITY's and its collaborators' integrity and reputation.

## Purpose

DIGNITY's Code of Conduct (CoC) serves first and foremost to ensure that beneficiaries<sup>1</sup> of interventions implemented by DIGNITY – often in partnership with other collaborating organisations – are treated with respect for their dignity and integrity at all times. No person affected by torture or violence and no person involved in preventing or combating torture should suffer any harm as a result of our work.

Moreover, the CoC serves to protect individuals from inhuman, degrading and discriminatory treatment when working for or in collaboration with DIGNITY and its partners. Lastly, the CoC serves to protect DIGNITY's and its collaborators' organisational integrity and reputation.

## Scope of Application

The Code of Conduct is binding for:

- Persons on permanent or temporary employment contracts with DIGNITY and DIGNITY board members
- Interns and volunteers at DIGNITY
- Consultants and service providers when delivering services or other inputs to DIGNITY's work with beneficiaries
- Persons working in other organisations when they are directly involved in activities with beneficiaries, implemented in a contractual agreement with DIGNITY

Breaches of the CoC can be grounds for disciplinary action for staff and/or for termination of operational contracts with collaborating organisations and consultants. Severe violations can lead to legal action. DIGNITY's partner organisations are not bound by this CoC for activities that go beyond the mutual agreement established with DIGNITY. However, DIGNITY's partners are expected to commit to the core values and guiding principles of the CoC. If not already in place, partners have the responsibility to develop their own organisational CoC.

## Core Values, Guiding Principles and Obligations

DIGNITY is committed to the spirit and letter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Human Rights conventions.<sup>2</sup> As such, DIGNITY requires its staff and staff in organisations contractually associated with DIGNITY (henceforth 'collaborators' or 'collaborating organisations'), to respect the dignity, integrity, and inherent value of every human being.

DIGNITY staff and staff of collaborating organisations must ensure that their actions and attitudes do not cause any harm or humiliation to other individuals. Children must be particularly protected.

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<sup>1</sup> Beneficiaries include here survivors of torture and violence as well as human rights defenders engaged in the fight against torture

<sup>2</sup> International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1965; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979; Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984; Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, 2006; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006

DIGNITY's Code of Conduct is based on the **following guiding principles:**

1. DIGNITY does not tolerate any form of abuse of power, exploitation, or other ill-treatment, including harassment - be it physical, psychological, or sexual. Children must be particularly protected.
2. DIGNITY opposes all forms of discrimination and works to promote equality, participation, and inclusion.
3. DIGNITY is committed to transparency and accountability for resources and has no tolerance towards corruption.
4. DIGNITY is committed to quality and learning and always welcomes critical feedback from beneficiaries, partners, staff, and other key stakeholders.
5. DIGNITY wants to maintain a productive working environment in which staff feel safe, respected, and included.
6. DIGNITY is obliged and open to receive and process complaints in a fair, safe, and transparent manner, and to assist persons who have suffered harm due to misconduct by DIGNITY staff or staff of collaborating organisations.

## Code of Conduct standards

### 1. All persons must be treated with respect for their dignity and integrity and without any form of discrimination

Persons covered by this CoC shall comply with the following standards of behaviour

- Treat all persons with respect for their dignity and integrity.
- Treat all persons without discrimination on any ground, such as race, colour, language, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, disability, or any other status or personal characteristics.
- Value diversity and promote inclusion and broad participation
- Pay due respect to cultural norms and traditions, which are in accordance with international human rights principles and standards.

Prohibited behaviour, which constitutes grounds for possible disciplinary and/or legal action:

- Intentionally subjecting individuals to any form of physical or psychological pain or suffering, including sexual and verbal abuse.
- Intentionally, exposing individuals to any form of discrimination.

### 2. All forms of abuse, exploitation and harassment must be prevented and combated

Persons covered by this CoC shall comply with the following standards of behaviour

- Refrain from engaging in any form of abuse of power, exploitation, and harassment towards beneficiaries, partners, staff, and any other stakeholders.
- Refrain from engaging in sexual relations with beneficiaries.

Prohibited behaviour, which constitutes grounds for possible disciplinary and/or legal action:

- Sexually harassing individuals, such as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, inappropriate comments and other verbal or physical abuse of a sexual nature.

- Abusing a position to withhold assistance, or give preferential treatment to solicit sexual favours, gifts, payments of any kind, or advantage.
- Buying sexual services while acting in an official capacity, including on missions.
- Using language, making suggestions, or offering advice which is abusive, belittling or degrading.
- Harassing a person who in good faith submits complaints.

Prohibited behaviour, explicitly to safeguard children (persons under the age of 18), which constitutes grounds for possible disciplinary and/or legal action:

- Physical ill-treating or imposing any form of corporal punishment on a child.
- Engaging in any type of intimate, sexual, or romantic relationships with a child.
- Psychologically ill-treating, including intimidating, bullying or threatening children, including online or via SMS
- Possessing child pornography or showing pornographic photos, videos, to children or asking children to perform pornographic acts.
- Contributing to children’s behaviour and/or actions that are illegal, unsafe, abusing and are prohibited by law, whether national or international law

### 3. The integrity and reputation of DIGNITY and its collaborators must be upheld

Persons covered by this CoC shall comply with the following standards of behaviour:

- Comply with applicable laws that are in accordance with international human rights standards
- Be truthful and strive for the highest possible level of transparency in communications with beneficiaries, partners, staff, and other stakeholders
- Declare any potential conflict of interest which may conflict with the values and principles of this CoC
- Have appropriate authority to act or commit DIGNITY and its collaborators in what is written, said, or in another way communicated to others
- Protect, and process data according to applicable laws and regulations.

Prohibited behaviour, which constitutes grounds for possible disciplinary and/or legal action:

- Being under influence of alcohol and/or drugs during working hours.
- Engaging in activities that are unlawful according to national legislation that is in accordance with international human rights standards.
- Lying or in other ways deceiving beneficiaries, partners, staff, or other stakeholders against their best interest.
- Communicating or in other ways disclosing sensitive information that may put beneficiaries, partners, staff, or other key stakeholders at risk, violate confidentiality, or in other ways neglect data protection standards.

### 4. Corruption is never tolerated

Persons covered by this CoC shall comply with the following standards of behaviour:

- Adhere to DIGNITY’s anti-corruption policy, which prohibits all forms of bribery, extortion, fraud, embezzlement, gift-making, nepotism, kick-back, and favouritism.

Prohibited behaviour, which constitutes grounds for possible disciplinary or other action:

- Accepting conflicts of interest – real or potential – between personal interests and the interests of DIGNITY.
- Accepting bribery in any form.
- Using professional position to influence any person or body for private purpose or gain.
- Using deception, trickery, or breach of confidence to gain an unfair or dishonest advantage.
- Misappropriating or otherwise divert property or funds entrusted to DIGNITY and its collaborators.
- Soliciting or receiving, directly or indirectly, any gift or other favor that may be seen to influence the exercise of the function, performance of duty or judgement. This does not include conventional hospitality or minor gifts.
- Favoring friends, family or other close personal relations in recruitment, procurement, aid delivery, consular services, or other situations.

## 5. Health, safety, security, and welfare of staff & colleagues must be secured

Persons covered by this CoC shall comply with the following standards of behaviour:

- Adhere to safety, security, and health standards in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. DIGNITY staff must comply with policies in DIGNITY's Staff Handbook
- Maintain open and professional relationships
- Promote a trustful and motivating work environment

Prohibited behaviour, which constitutes grounds for possible disciplinary action:

- Intentionally exposing beneficiaries, partners, staff, and other stakeholders to unnecessary risks to their health, safety, security, and well-being
- Intentionally undermining a productive and safe work environment by spreading rumors and false allegations or engaging in harassment

Managers in DIGNITY have a specific obligation to act as role models and foster a healthy and safe working environment.

## Enforcement

**DIGNITY' management** has responsibility to ensure compliance with the CoC for the persons covered by it. Ensuring compliance entails the following obligations:

Ensure informed and active consent: All staff will be introduced to the CoC when employed in DIGNITY. The CoC is a part of DIGNITY's Staff Handbook. Regular awareness raising will be implemented. Consultants and service providers to DIGNITY's work with beneficiaries must sign the CoC as an annex to their service contract with DIGNITY. Collaborating organisations directly involved in implementing projects with beneficiaries in cooperation with DIGNITY will be introduced to the CoC and be obliged to sign it as part of the contractual agreements.

Receive and process complaints in a fair and transparent manner: DIGNITY maintains a complaints handling and reporting mechanism (CRM) for serious CoC violations. The CRM complies to international standards for whistle-blower arrangements, incl. due process, confidentiality, data protection and impartiality. **Complaints can be submitted to [complaints@dignity.dk](mailto:complaints@dignity.dk)**. Anonymity is an option. More information about DIGNITY's complaint mechanism can be found on [www.dignity.dk](http://www.dignity.dk) including how complaints will be handled and processed.

Provide information to beneficiaries, partners, staff, and other key stakeholders: the CoC is publicly available on DIGNITY's website. DIGNITY is obliged to ensure that beneficiaries of interventions where DIGNITY is directly involved, are pro-actively and meaningfully provided with information about the CoC and the channel available for submitting complaints. Exact modalities for disseminating information to beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders about the CoC and CRM will be agreed on a case by case basis with the collaborating organisation.

Regularly review CoC based on lessons learnt: DIGNITY's complaint registrar will produce an annual report on the complaints received as a basis for an annual learning event (involving partners) and reporting to DIGNITY's management. Based on learnings, the CoC will be subject to review at least every three years.

**DIGNITY staff** that experience, witness or are alerted to a violation of the CoC are obliged to report it to DIGNITY's management or through the CRM. Failure to act and report on prohibited behaviours can itself be considered as misconduct.

**Staff of collaborating organisations** are similarly obliged to report misconduct occurring in a project or collaboration where DIGNITY is involved. Reporting must be done either to DIGNITY's management or via DIGNITY's CRM. If not already in place, DIGNITY's partner organisations are expected to establish their own complaints handling and reporting mechanism.