

Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association Code of Conduct, Personal Conduct, Conflict of Interest, and Commitment to Excellence, Fair Representation, and Ethical Advocacy Policy

TCDLA Code of Conduct Policy

Adopted by the Board of Directors on June 20, 2018.

A director, officer or employee of the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association ("TCDLA"), when acting on behalf of TCDLA, must comply with the law, act in an ethical manner, and avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest. Specific guidance applicable to financial matters and employees is contained in the Bylaws of the Association, the Employee Personnel Manual and the Policies and Procedures Manual.

This Code of Conduct applies to directors, officers and employees of TCDLA.

Legal Obligations of Directors and Officers

The obligations of directors and officers to TCDLA is governed by Chapter 22 of the Texas Business Organization Code as well as precedents construing that law. The law establishes that the directors and officers owe a fiduciary duty to TCDLA, including the duty of care and the duty of loyalty. Nothing in this Code of Conduct is intended to reduce the duties of disclosure as may be required by law.

The duty of care concerns a director's or officer's competence in performing his or her functions as a director or officer. A director or officer must exercise his or her responsibilities in good faith and with that degree of diligence, attention, care and skill that an ordinarily prudent person would exercise under similar circumstances in a like position.

The duty of loyalty owed by a director or officer to a non-profit organization requires that the director or officer act in a manner that does not harm the corporation. The duty of loyalty requires the faithful pursuit by the director or officer of the interests of the corporation rather than the financial or other interests of the director or another corporation he/she serves. It further requires a director or officer to avoid using his or her position to obtain improperly a personal benefit or advantage that might more properly belong to the corporation. To satisfy the duty of loyalty, the director or officer must act in good faith and in a manner he or she reasonably believes to be in the best interests of the corporation.

Conflicts of Interest A

Except with disclosure of the conflict to and consent of TCDLA, a director, officer or employee may not act in carrying out his or her TCDLA responsibilities if he or she may be affected by a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest arises when a personal, business, financial, or, in the case of a lawyer, client interest of the director, officer or employee may affect the objectivity of the director's, officer's or employee's actions on behalf of TCDLA or conflicts with the interests of TCDLA. A personal interest may arise from the director's, officer's or employee's association with another bar association or non-profit corporation. A business interest arises when the director, officer or employee is an employee or consultant to or has another business arrangement with, another public or private concern. A significant financial interest includes an ownership interest in the securities of a public or private concern. A concern in which a director or officer has a personal, business or financial interest is referred to in this Code of Conduct as an "Entity." For purposes of this Code of Conduct, a business or financial interest of the spouse or any family member who lives in the individual director's, officer's or employee's household is attributed to the individual. A business or financial interest of a partner, associate or employer, or a more remote relative, of an individual director, officer or employee, is not automatically attributed to the individual. However, as a matter of good practice, where the individual is aware of such a business or financial relationship that conflicts with the interests of TCDLA, the individual should disclose it to and obtain the consent of TCDLA in order to avoid the potential for subsequent embarrassment.

Situations in which a conflict of interest may arise include, but are not limited to, those where the individual:

1. Approves or recommends the purchase of major equipment, materials or other items for TCDLA from an Entity.
2. Negotiates or influences the negotiation of contracts between TCDLA and the Entity.
3. Accepts gifts, gratuities or special favors from any person or Entity that does or is attempting to do business with TCDLA, other than gifts with a fair market value in any year of \$50 or less.
4. Uses his or her position or activities for TCDLA to further the interests of a particular client or other person or Entity.
5. Espouses a position (by speaking or voting for the position) that the lawyer knows would benefit a particular client without disclosing such fact (but not necessarily the name of the client).

Recognizing that business relationships routinely exist between and among directors, such relationships do not constitute a conflict of interest, or the appearance thereof, unless such a relationship could impact a director's judgment on a matter affecting TCDLA.

Conflicts of Interest B

Adopted by the Board of Directors on March 8, 2008.

Officers, board members, committee chairs, committee members, and employees of TCDLA have a fiduciary duty to

conduct themselves without conflict with the interests of TCDLA. Regarding matters relating to TCDLA, they must act at all times in the best interest of TCDLA. This includes, but is not limited to, financial interests, policies, and official positions of TCDLA. All actual and potential conflicts of interest, whether financial or otherwise, shall be disclosed or reported to the President of TCDLA and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at the time such a conflict arises or when the officer, board member, committee chair, committee member, or staff member becomes aware of the conflict. Conflict of interest issues or allegations that cannot be resolved informally by the President and CEO shall be referred to the Executive Committee for determination; and any sanction necessary to correct a conflict of interest. The TCDLA member subject to an adverse determination or sanction may appeal the Executive Committee decision to the Board of Directors, at its next scheduled meeting.

Misuse of Confidential Information of TCDLA

Except with disclosure to and consent from TCDLA or in furtherance of TCDLA activities in which he or she is authorized to act, a director, officer or employee shall not reveal to any third person or use for his or her own purposes any of TCDLA's proprietary business or financial information, records, results, work product or other information acquired in connection with the director's, officer's or employee's TCDLA activities that is not generally available.

Preservation of Tax Exemption

Directors and officers should be aware that TCDLA is a charitable organization and that, in order to maintain its federal tax exemption: (i) it must engage primarily in activities that accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes, (ii) it may not allow a substantial part of its activities to consist of carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation (except as otherwise provided by Internal Revenue Code Section 501(h)), and (iii) it may not participate in or intervene in (including the publication or distribution of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidates for public office.

TCDLA and its Board members shall not be bound by any political statements or activity of any director or officer. No director or officer who makes a political statement or engages in political activity shall state or imply that such statement or activity is on behalf of TCDLA.

Restrictions on Representing TCDLA

Each director, officer or employee when acting as a representative of TCDLA shall conduct himself or herself consistent with the fiduciary duty of a Board member so as not to adversely affect TCDLA's public image or credibility or hinder the accomplishment of its mission. In any interaction with the public, press or other entities, a director, officer or employee may not speak for TCDLA other than to repeat explicitly stated Board positions. However, a director, officer or employee who is a member of a TCDLA committee or section may state the views of the committee or section as authorized by the President or duly adopted policies.

A director, officer or employee of TCDLA may not use TCDLA stationery for personal correspondence or to conduct business or marketing on behalf of his/her law firm, employer or other organization.

Administration of Code of Conduct

Whenever this Code requires a director or officer to make disclosure to and obtain the consent of TCDLA, such disclosure shall be to and such consent from the Board of Directors. Whenever this Code requires an employee to make disclosure to and obtain the consent of TCDLA, such disclosure shall be to and such consent from the CEO. If a director, officer or employee has reason to believe that another director, officer or employee has an undisclosed conflict or potential conflict of interest or other violation of this Code, he/she should disclose the reason for such belief to the President, who will, in consultation with the CEO, advise the Board of Directors on the existence of a violation.

The Secretary, annually and at other times on request from any member of the Board, shall make available to the members of the Board and officer's copies of this policy and forms for disclosing conflicts. The CEO shall do the same with respect to the permanent staff. The members of the Board, officers, and staff members shall sign and deliver to the CEO those forms on an annual basis. Any officer, director or employee may request a determination from the Board as to the existence of a conflict of interest. The Board's decision, by majority vote, shall be determinative.

All officers, directors and employees shall be advised of this policy and must acknowledge in writing their willingness to abide by it as a condition of service as an officer or director or of employment.

TCDLA Personal Conduct Policy

Adopted by the Board of Directors on June 20, 2018.

Applicability

This Personal Conduct Policy applies to all officers, past presidents and members of the Board of Directors ("Board") of the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association ("TCDLA").

This policy does not address issues related to legal and ethical duties the officers and Board members owe to TCDLA as they are addressed in the Code of Conduct ("Code") adopted by the Board on March 8, 2008, nor to the procedure for

raising complaints of violations of the Code by officers, past presidents, members of the Board or staff addressed in the Whistleblower Policy adopted by the Board, nor does it address inappropriate workplace conduct by employees of TCDLA (including TCDLA's prohibition of harassment and discrimination), which are covered by separate policies adopted by TCDLA.

Prohibition on Misconduct that is Equivalent to Discrimination and Harassment

Officers and members of the Board are expected to act in accordance with the highest level of businesslike conduct. Just as TCDLA prohibits conduct that would constitute unlawful discrimination or harassment by its employees in the workplace, and understanding that its Board officers, past presidents and Board members are not employees of TCDLA and therefore not covered by employment laws, it will not tolerate equivalent conduct by its officers, past presidents or Board members. In their dealings with each other, with TCDLA employees and members, and with members of the public in their capacity representing TCDLA, officers and Board members must avoid any conduct that a reasonable person could interpret as discrimination or harassment if this were in an employment context.

Discrimination includes taking negative actions based on an individual's "protected status" which includes, but is not limited to, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by law, and/or encouraging or assisting anyone in taking such discriminatory action.

Harassment based on an individual's protected status is also prohibited. Such prohibited harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- sexually suggestive statements, questions, insults or jokes, or sexual innuendos;
- repeated unwanted sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions;
- pressuring for sexual activity, including offering benefits in exchange for sexual favors or denying benefits in response to a refusal to provide sexual favors;
- comments of a sexual nature about a person's physical attributes;
- offensive touching or assault, obscene gestures, or suggestive sounds;
- use of slurs or negative stereotyping;
- using TCDLA e-mail or Internet resources to receive, view, or send offensive jokes, pictures, posters, or other similar material;
- intimidating acts, such as bullying or threatening based on an individual's protected status;
- circulating or displaying offensive pictures, letters, notes, e-mails, invitations, or other similar materials;
- any other conduct that shows hostility toward, disrespect for, or degradation of an individual based on the individual's protected status.

Any officer or Board member that experiences, observes, or becomes aware of any conduct he or she believes would be the equivalent of discrimination or harassment (were this in an employment context) must immediately follow the Reporting Procedure described below.

Reporting Procedure

To ensure the Board knows of any such misconduct and can respond appropriately, officers and Board members must report any possible violation of this policy to a member of the Internal Complaint Committee ("Committee") which shall consist of the President, and three of the President's designees, at least one of which shall be a past president, none of whom may be employees of TCDLA.

Reports must be made to any of these Committee members. A member of the Committee will take the lead to promptly and thoroughly investigate any report of harassment or discrimination. The investigation will be kept confidential to the extent possible, and information relating to the investigation will be disclosed only on a need- to-know basis. If the investigation confirms this policy has been violated, appropriate corrective action will be taken to prevent its recurrence. If the Committee concludes that corrective action warrants that the person who was accused of misconduct be removed from the Board, then it will refer the matter to the full Board consistent with the removal procedures set forth in TCDLA's bylaws.

TCDLA Policy Implementation

1. A complaint is made to the Internal Conduct Committee (ICC). (which shall consist of the President, and three of the President's designees, at least one of which shall be a past president). The complainant shall be advised of the composition of the Committee within 5 days of the receipt of the written complaint. Thereafter, the complainant has 5 days to object to any member(s) of the Committee on the basis of bias, or for other reasons. If such objection is raised regarding a Committee member(s), the president may appoint a replacement for the challenged member(s).
2. The ICC investigates the complaint by interviewing witnesses and taking other appropriate action. The complaint and investigation remain confidential at this point.
3. If ICC determines that the investigation substantiates the complaint, the Committee will decide on a proposed corrective action to prevent reoccurrence.
4. The subject of the investigation shall be notified in detail of the complaint, findings by the Committee and the

proposed action. The subject is informed as follows:

- a. If the subject of the complaint desires to accept this resolution, he/she will be instructed to so indicate by signing the signature line in the proposed complaint resolution and shall return the signed document to the president (who shall serve as Committee chair) within 10 days of receipt of this letter. If this resolution is accepted this investigation will remain confidential, to the extent that remains possible, except that staff and Committee members who are necessary to implement this agreement shall be informed by the ICC as necessary. The board shall simply be informed that the ICC received a complaint, an investigation was conducted, and a confidential resolution was reached with the subject of the complaint.
 - b. If the subject of the complaint desires to contest the findings of the ICC or submit information to the Committee that he/she believes would be relevant to a fair resolution of this matter, the subject is to notify the president in writing within 10 days of receipt of the document providing notice of the complaint. Thereafter, a conference call shall be set up with the ICC to discuss how to proceed depending on what sort of information is proposed to be presented. The ICC may decide to do this telephonically and through the submission of documents or in person as ICC deems appropriate under the circumstance. The ICC may also give both the complainant and the subject an opportunity to provide additional information prior to reaching a conclusion.
 - c. If the subject of the investigation contests ICC's finding that the evidence substantiates the allegation concerning the purported conduct, the review shall be through a de novo review by the Executive Committee. If the subject of the complaint wishes to "appeal" ICC's findings that the evidence substantiates the allegation concerning the alleged conduct, the subject may then present additional information to Executive Committee that may suggest another resolution would be appropriate.
5. If the sanction involves removal from the board, the removal action shall occur in accordance with TCDLA's bylaws. The full board would necessarily be informed of the matter at that point.
 6. The complainant shall also be advised of the progress of the investigation, along with the ICC's conclusions and resolution.
 7. This policy does not prohibit the Executive Committee (with approval from the ICC) from appointing independent counsel to investigate the conduct and make recommendations to the ICC and/or to the Executive Committee.

TCDLA Commitment to Excellence, Fair Representation, and Ethical Advocacy
Adopted by the Board of Directors on June 16, 2025

The Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association (TCDLA) is proud to be the largest state organization dedicated to the practice of criminal defense. Since 1971, TCDLA has been dedicated to safeguarding the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Texas and U.S. Constitutions.

TCDLA recognizes the ongoing challenges and disparities within the criminal justice system. To uphold the highest standards of advocacy, our Board Members are dedicated to fostering professional environments that respect every individual we serve and represent. We acknowledge the historical and ongoing inequities that impact many communities across Texas and commit to ensuring that all clients receive the strongest, most informed, and principled defense.

We believe the strength of our legal defense community lies in the broad range of experiences and perspectives among our members. To effectively serve all Texans, we must continue to cultivate awareness, encourage critical thinking, and support legal education that addresses unequal treatment and structural barriers within the system. We encourage everyone in the profession to unite as one and join our efforts.

TCDLA Board Members commit to identifying and confronting issues, advocating for fairness, and ensuring that all voices—especially those too often overlooked—are considered in our efforts. This commitment guides our programs, leadership decisions, and professional development efforts as we work to strengthen criminal defense practice across the state.

Disclosure: _____

TCDLA's Code of Conduct, Personal Conduct, Conflict of Interest, and Commitment to Excellence, Fair Representation, and Ethical Advocacy Policy

Statement of Board Member/Employee

I hereby certify that I have read and understand TCDLA's Code of Conduct Policy, Personal Conduct Policy, and Commitment to Excellence, Fair Representation, and Ethical Advocacy Policy. To the best of my knowledge and belief, I do not have any interest that would constitute a conflict of interest hereunder, nor will I knowingly take any action that would constitute or appear to constitute a conflict of interest except upon matters that I have disclosed hereunder, and for which I have received a clearance from the Board of Directors to proceed.

Date _____

Name _____

Signature _____