



# SERVICE COORDINATORS PROFESSIONAL CODE OF ETHICS



Developed and Edited by the  
American Association of Service Coordinators  
Standards of Practice Committee

# Message from the President...



This handbook was created by members of the American Association of Service Coordinators (AASC), a national nonprofit membership association whose mission is to advance the interests of the service coordinator profession and provide guidance in the creation and maintenance of service-enhanced housing to families, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Our desire is to establish the highest ethical conduct for all service coordinators in an effort to assist them in serving their clients.

Every day, our members serve thousands of families, seniors and persons with disabilities nationwide, linking them with health care and supportive services that help them achieve self-sufficiency while maintaining their dignity and autonomy. As consumer preferences for service-enriched residential options continues to grow over the coming decades, AASC will remain at the forefront, providing a foundation of leadership and direction to this new and exciting field.

We hope you find this handbook, along with the companion AASC Program Manual, useful as you go about your work serving the people whose lives you touch.

Janice C. Monks, President

# Service Coordinators Professional Code of Ethics

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# Overview

Service coordinators (SCs) are an integral part of residential communities that house families, elders and persons with disabilities. SCs link residents with supportive services allowing them to maintain self-sufficiency in their homes. Some of the typical services arranged on behalf of residents include: meals, transportation, health care and homemaking as well as other health and supportive services available through local aging and family services networks.

In service-enriched housing, the primary goal is to empower residents and promote independence. For the elderly, this may include linkages to services to increase mobility or assistance with activities of daily living so they can age in their own residences and remain independent for as long as possible. For family housing, this may include employment and education strategies (such as job counseling, training, placement, help with child care, and financial management) as well as securing provisions for food, health care, and transportation. Persons with disabilities may be interested in job training and placement, education, transportation, and referral to supportive services and arrangement of medical appointments.

It is most important that the SC understand the characteristics of the resident population and property in which they serve. Issues that may impact the differential use of services are socio-economic, age, culture, gender, race, sexual orientation, and others. Service coordination is based on the recognition that a trusting and empowering relationship between the SC and residents is essential

to expedite the use of services and to restore or maintain the resident's independence and quality functioning to the fullest extent possible.

This handbook offers a set of values and principles to guide decision making and conduct when ethical issues arise. It does not provide a set of rules that dictate how service coordinators should act in all situations. This document has been created in accordance with established social work practice addressing the ethical standards that all service coordinators serving families, seniors, persons with disabilities, and/or other population groups in housing should adhere to as professional conduct.

Furthermore, the handbook does not specify which values and principles are most important and outweigh others in instances when they conflict. It is up to the individual service coordinator to make informed, ethical decisions in any given situation.

The American Association of Service Coordinators (AASC) recognizes that each SC works with a variety of populations in different settings and demographic areas. This code of ethics is intended to serve as a guide to the professional conduct of the SC in the housing environment. Therefore, AASC believes that by following these values and principles, all service coordinators will uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge and mission of the profession. AASC hereby establishes the following code as standard protocol for the ethical behavior of all service coordinators.

# *Mission and Core Values*

The primary mission of the service coordinator profession is to serve residents who need and desire services, while empowering them to remain self-reliant whenever possible. Particular attention is paid to the preservation of independent, affordable housing and enhancing the quality of life for the resident population at large.

The mission of the service coordination profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values are the foundation of the service coordinator's purpose and perspective:

- Service
- Social justice
- Dignity and worth of the person
- Importance of human relationships
- Integrity
- Competence



# Purpose

This profession has an obligation to articulate its values and ethical principles. The ethical foundation of the service coordinator profession is vital to its credibility and standing as a significant and irreplaceable part of the supportive housing team and is relevant to all service coordinators, regardless of their professional functions, their work setting, or the population they serve.

This code of ethics serves the following purposes:

- Identifies the core values on which the service coordination mission is based
- Establishes a set of ethical standards that should be used to guide the practice of service coordination
- Provides ethical standards to which service coordinator professionals should be accountable
- Familiarizes new service coordinators and other professionals with the mission, values and ethical principles of service coordination
- Aids service coordinators in identifying relevant considerations when professional obligations conflict or ethical questions arise

# *Ethical Standards*

## **Residents' Rights and Needs**

The service coordinator (SC) shall use his/her skills and competence to advocate on behalf of the residents, preserve their civil rights and take no actions that place the resident at risk of harm.

## **Self-Determination**

The SC shall work in tandem with residents to empower them to utilize their own abilities and provide them with choices to make decisions regarding the services they receive. The SC shall ensure that residents are involved in the linkage and/or coordination of their services and will respect and promote their right of self-determination. SCs will assist residents in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals and shall not impose their opinions or preferences on a resident.

In issues involving a resident's right to freedom of choice over personal safety, the resident has a right to choose to live at risk of harm or leave needs unmet, providing he/she is capable of making that choice, harms no one, and commits no crime. All residents have a right to choose their own life-style, as long as there are no lease violations and they are fulfilling their obligations of tenancy. In instances where the SC's or resident's safety and/or well being is threatened, the SC may need to take action to make linkages to services that may limit the resident's right to self determination.

It must be noted that the resident has the right to refuse the services of the service coordinator or the service coordination program if they so choose.

## **Privacy and Confidentiality**

The SC shall ensure the resident's right to privacy and ensure appropriate confidentiality when information is released to others. All information obtained by a SC about a resident is to be held in the strictest possible confidence. Additionally, the SC shall not discuss confidential matters in public or semipublic areas.

## **Informed Consent**

Service coordinators shall assist and link residents to services only in the context of a professional relationship based, when appropriate, on valid informed consent (release of information). The SC may disclose confidential information only when legally necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable and imminent harm to themselves or someone else (this can include medical emergencies, domestic violence, mental health crisis, etc.)

## **Service Coordinator Professional Characteristics and Attributes**

The SC shall provide assistance and linkages to services and represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of the role of the service coordinator position.

## **Competence**

The SC shall endeavor to be proficient in professional service coordination and in the performance of appropriate functions striving to improve in the proficiency, effectiveness, and quality of services acquired for residents. SC's shall have a knowledge base of their residents' cultures and background and be sensitive to the diversity of their residents, encouraging acceptance among different cultural groups.

## Respect

The SC shall treat colleagues and residents with courtesy and respect and strive to enhance communication and cooperation among all parties. The SC shall maintain the integrity of the position by upholding and advancing the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession.

## Communication with Management/Owner

The SC is obligated to communicate information to management staff regarding the following:

- the service coordinator job description/job duties;
- the service coordinator role at the property;
- SC obligations as a mandated reporter;
- requirements of the HUD service coordinator program and other important information related to the role of the SC.

The service coordinator should strive to assure lines of communication with management are timely and appropriate related to pertinent resident issues, educational programming and other service issues related to management/ building policy.

**The Service Coordinator should avoid any personal interest or activity that conflicts or interferes with the welfare or best interest of his/her residents/ clients.**

# *References and Resources*

Code of Ethics, National Association of Social Worker (NASW, revised 1999 NASW Delegate Assembly)

The Management Agent Handbook, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Chapter 8 4381.5 / REV-2 / CHG-2

A How to Guide: Service Coordination, Elderly Persons and People with Disabilities, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 1999. Prepared by Susan Lanspery Ph. D., HUD Contract Number DU100C000005980, Task Order No. 4, National Neighborhood Networks.

Program Manual for Service Coordinators, American Association of Service Coordinators, March 2002

The Manager/Service Coordinator Relationship Policy Recommendations, American Association of Service Coordinators, Updated January 2006

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*Conduct*

*Principles*

*Conscience*

*Leadership*

*Dignity*

*Integrity*

*Objectivity*

*Competency*

*Confidentiality*

*Experience*

*Professionalism*