

SSO Code of Conduct

Purpose

The mission of the Society of Surgical Oncology (hereafter “the Society” or “SSO”) is to improve multidisciplinary patient care by advancing the science, education, and practice of cancer surgery worldwide. Achieving this goal requires that the membership adhere to behavioral standards aligned with the Society’s values across the domains of interactions at meetings (whether in-person or virtual); governance; training; research; and above all, delivery of care to patients.

Principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are core components of these values. As stipulated by this Code of Conduct, the Society mandates that DEI principles be upheld through the demonstration of respect, professionalism, and collegiality by all members and between all members regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or other physical/personal characteristics.

Applicability

All SSO members and SSO staff (whether voluntary or salaried) are expected to adhere to this Code of Conduct.

The behavioral standards indicated herein apply to all attendees, sponsors, speakers, media representatives, service providers, commercial vendors, and other stakeholders interacting with the business/administration of the SSO, (hereafter “applicable parties”) regardless of their SSO membership status, and at all types of Society events, meetings, and communications, including but not limited to: conferences (virtual or in-person), telephone conference calls, emails, social media, as well as any non-SSO activities in which a member is representing the Society.

This Code of Conduct is relevant for Society-related academic endeavors, publications, and research activities supported/sponsored by the SSO or where a member represents the Society.

Policy

All SSO members, staff, commercial partners, and other applicable parties will exhibit courtesy, respect, and professionalism. The privacy, dignity, and human rights of all individuals must be respected.

All applicable parties must abide by the following standards:

- Act honestly, truthfully, and with integrity in all professional and SSO transactions and dealings.
- Comply with all laws and regulations that apply to our science and profession.
- Adhere to SSO policies, procedures, and guidelines.
- Report scientific and professional misconduct promptly.
- Disclose all potential conflicts of interest as requested or as required.

- Do not represent any acts or statements in a manner as to lead others to believe that the acts or statements officially represent SSO, unless duly authorized by the SSO Executive Council.
- Ensure that interactions between all applicable stakeholders are fair and free of unwarranted discrimination and harassment.

Unacceptable Behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Discriminatory, racist, or sexist behavior, including verbal, written or visually displayed derogatory or offensive remarks related to the race, color, accent/language, national origin, ethnicity, religious creed, sex, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, sexual orientation, age, disability, physical characteristics, veteran or active military status, or immigration status of an individual or a group of individuals.
- Disruptive behaviors such as shouting/yelling, harassment, or deliberate interruption of Society presentations or events.
- Verbal or written threats or threatening gestures.
- Any unwelcome verbal, written, or physical contact, including but not limited to sexual advances or requests for sexual favors.
- Any violent behaviors, physical assault, or attempted assault.
- Any verbal, written, or visually displayed comments/images that create a hostile, intimidating, or offensive environment.

The SSO Code of Conduct includes but is not limited to the guidelines and actions within this document and may be modified as appropriate at any time at the discretion of the Executive Council.

Compliance and Enforcement

SSO reserves the right to take any action that is reasonably necessary, in the sole judgment of SSO, for the protection of SSO, its members, volunteers, staff, and event participants. SSO will maintain full discretion in the interpretation and enforcement of this Code of Conduct. All compliance issues will be addressed consistently in accordance with the Violation Resolution section below.

Individuals who violate this Code of Conduct will be asked to cease any unacceptable behaviors and are expected to comply immediately. This Code of Conduct provides general guidelines and cannot cover every possible type of unacceptable behavior. SSO reserves the right to apply corrective action to instances other than the specific examples noted and to exercise some or all the following remedies when an individual or group of individuals violate the Code of Conduct:

- Counseling and warning regarding zero tolerance of unacceptable behavior.
- Revocation of SSO event registration.
- Termination of contractual or business relationship.
- Removal of presentation, display, or poster.
- Revocation of SSO membership.

- Notifications of appropriate parties as required by law.

The severity of the punitive action shall be commensurate with the degree of disruption and the response necessary to restore a safe and respectful environment for all parties involved.

Reporting

Any possible conflicts of interest or other possible violations of the SSO Code of Conduct by any member or persons as identified within the Code of Conduct must be reported to the SSO via email at conduct@surgonc.org.

If any SSO member has a complaint or concern about harassment, discrimination, bullying, or any other conduct which may violate this Code of Conduct, they are encouraged to notify SSO via email at conduct@surgonc.org. Members may request that their report remain confidential and only be shared with those on a “need to know” basis, and these wishes will be honored to the safest extent possible.

Notification of such concerns to the SSO does not constitute or replace notification to local law enforcement. This Code of Conduct does not replace any rules that are part of SSO’s contracts with its vendors, exhibitors and/or sponsors.

Violation Resolution

The alleged incident must be reported in writing to both SSO CEO and President via email at conduct@surgonc.org. If requested, reports will remain anonymous. The SSO CEO, HR Staff, and SSO President will determine whether the complaint will be reviewed by the following governing bodies:

- Alleged violation by an SSO staff member will be reviewed by the CEO and HR staff. The suggested course of action is to be reviewed by the SSO Executive Council and the Constitution & Bylaws Committee is to be informed.
- Alleged violation by attendees, sponsors, speakers, media representatives, service providers, commercial vendors, and others, regardless of their SSO membership status, at all types of Society meetings will be reviewed by the CEO, the Senior Director of Scientific Meetings & Education, and additional senior staff members at the discretion of the CEO. The suggested course of action will be reviewed by the Executive Council and the Constitution & Bylaws Committee is to be informed.
- Alleged violations by SSO CEO will be reviewed by the Executive Council. The suggested course of action will be determined by the Executive Council and the Constitution & Bylaws Committee is to be informed.
- Alleged violation by an SSO Member will be reviewed by CEO and the Executive Council. The suggested course of action will be determined by the Executive Council and the Constitution & Bylaws Committee is to be informed. *Should the complaint be against a member of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee Member, that member will recuse themselves from reviewing the incident and providing input to the suggested course of action.*

- Alleged violation by an SSO Executive Council Member will be reviewed by the CEO and the Constitution & Bylaws Committee is to determine the suggested course of action.

Once proper governing body is determined the following actions will be taken:

1. Incident is investigated.
2. Alleged violations of the Code of Conduct are examined.
3. If the governing body finds the alleged violations have occurred, the accused will receive an email notification of the alleged conduct and violation, with information about the violation process and providing the opportunity to respond to the allegation. Email notification will also inform the individual that an investigation may include contacting witnesses and collecting other documents or other items to determine course of action. The individual will receive a summary of the investigation once concluded.
4. If the governing body determines there is enough information to move forward, the accused will be notified of the suggested course of action as determined by the governing body in accordance with this policy.
5. Should the complaint include illegal or possible illegal activity, law enforcement will be contacted immediately without notice to individual that the complaint was filed against.
6. SSO Staff or the Executive Council may at any time obtain legal counsel at their discretion and approval through proper fiduciary processes.
7. Once resolution has been determined, the individual will be provided a summary of the investigation and decision by the governing body.

Disciplinary actions include, but are not limited to:

- Counseling and warning regarding zero tolerance of unacceptable behavior.
- Revocation of SSO event registration.
- Termination of contractual or business relationship.
- Removal of presentation, display, or poster.
- Revocation of SSO membership.
- Notifications of appropriate parties as required by law.

The severity of the punitive action shall be commensurate with the degree of disruption and the response necessary to restore a safe and respectful environment for all parties involved.

Results of the investigation and its conclusion will be noted in member or commercial vendor's file.

Violators of the Code of Conduct will have ten (10) business days to appeal the decision to the governing body as deemed by the Code of Conduct Violation Resolution section.

False Claims

If it is alleged that any complaint or portion of the violation report is false, the findings of the investigation will be reviewed to determine if there is proof that the allegations are false and if so, whether the accuser genuinely believed them to be true, or if they pursued a vexatious complaint.

If the evidence suggests the accuser did believe and understand the allegations to be true, this would not be grounds for disciplinary action against them. Where the evidence is clear that the allegations were deliberately made by the accuser and known by them to be untrue, then appropriate action under the Code of Conduct Violation Resolution section will be taken.

If, following the investigation, the complaint is deemed to have been false, then the accused individual may raise their own grievance which will be investigated.