



**Association of Child Life Professionals  
Child Life Certification Commission  
Operational Policy and Procedure**

**SUBJECT: 6.0 ETHICS VIOLATIONS AND DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS**

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**RATIONALE:**

Holding the CCLS credential is not a guarantee of individual job performance outcomes, however, the Child Life Certification Commission (CLCC) enforces ethical practice standards in order to promote the protection of the public and advance the credibility of the Certified Child Life Specialist (CCLS) credential.

The policies contained herein have been adopted to allow consumers and others to report complaints related to the conduct of CCLS credential holders and certification candidates.

All CLCC members, ACLP staff, and other individuals engaged in investigations or decision-making with respect to actions precipitated by the policies and procedures of the Child Life Professional Certification Program may be protected and defended by ACLP against liability to the extent permitted by law.

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**POLICY**

Both application for the CCLS credential and maintenance thereof require compliance with the Child Life Code of Ethics. Candidates and certificants who fail to abide by the code may be subject to disciplinary action by the Ethics Committee. Decisions made by the Ethics Committee may be appealed as described in this document.

**Responsibility for Notification**

Candidates for certification and recertification must truthfully complete and sign the application provided by CLCC, submit any required fees, and provide additional information as requested by the commission.

Candidates and certificants shall not make inaccurate, untrue, or misleading statements concerning the candidate’s or certificant’s status and shall immediately correct any statement which becomes inaccurate, untrue, or misleading.

Candidates and certificants are required to notify CLCC through the ACLP headquarters staff of any changes to the following within thirty (30) days of the event: name, email address, mailing address, telephone number, and any other occurrences that affect the individual’s eligibility for certification or recertification (including but not limited to: filing of any criminal charge, indictment, or litigation; conviction; plea of guilty; plea of nolo contendere; or disciplinary action by a licensing board or professional organization.

**Exam Score Validity**

Should questions arise about the validity of an examination score through either misconduct or other circumstances beyond the individual’s control, all individuals shall fully cooperate in any investigation conducted either by ACLP, CLCC or its committees, and/or the ACLP-authorized test administration agency. If it is determined that there is adequate reason to doubt the validity of an examinee’s score, cancellation or modification of any examination score at any time may result at the sole discretion of the aforementioned parties. In such cases, CLCC may decide to either (i) allow the individual the opportunity to retake the examination, or (ii) proceed as described in this document

**Submission of an Ethics Complaint**

Any individual or entity may submit a complaint related to certification violations. Formal complaints must be made in writing through the Request for Ethics Review form located on the ACLP website. Inquiries other than formal complaints will be reviewed and acted upon at the discretion of CLCC leadership.

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Formal complaints must be as detailed and specific as possible with respect to the identity of the persons alleged to be involved and the details of the alleged conduct. Additional clarifying information may be requested.

In addition to formal complaints, CCLSs and candidates are required to answer background questions and agreement with the Statements of Understanding is provided as requested by CLCC. This is done at the time of application for the certification exam, the payment of certification maintenance fees, and application for recertification through professional development.

If an individual answers affirmatively to any of the background questions or refuses to abide by the Child Life Code of Ethics, ACLP staff will request additional information including relevant court documents. For alcohol-related convictions, ACLP staff will make a determination as to whether to move the issue forward to the Ethics Committee or to allow the candidate or certificant to proceed. For all other positive answers to the attestation questions, the matter will be referred to the Ethics Committee for review.

### **Notification of Allegations**

If the Director of Certification and the Ethics Committee Chair(s) conclude that further investigation may result in the denial of eligibility or disclose a violation of CLCC policies, the Ethics Committee Chair(s) shall communicate the matter to the Ethics Committee for action.

If allegations of a mental or physical disability that could prevent the administration of child life services appropriately are brought forth, the candidate or certificant may be required to submit a physical or mental examination report from a qualified healthcare professional. The cost of such examination shall be borne by the candidate or certificant.

A certified letter apprising the candidate or certificant of his or her right to request a review of the Ethics Committee's investigatory documents, and/or a telephone conference in which to dispute the allegations, and/or comment on possible sanctions, with or without the presence of legal counsel will be sent. If he or she intends to execute these rights, the candidate or certificant shall have fifteen (15) days after receipt of the certified letter in which to notify the Ethics Committee. This notification shall be by traditional or electronic mail only. If the individual fails to submit this notification within the allotted time, the individual shall forfeit these options, and the Ethics Committee will render a decision and apply sanctions deemed appropriate at their sole discretion. (See below for details on sanctions available to the Ethics Committee.)

If the allegations indicate criminal activity, the matter shall be reported to the appropriate federal, state, or local government agency authorized to administer the law.

### **Threat of Immediate or Irreparable Harm**

If the appropriate ACLP staff and the Ethics Committee Chair(s) determine that there is good cause that a threat of immediate and/or irreparable harm to the public exists, the allegations shall be immediately forwarded to the Ethics Committee for immediate review. If such expediency is warranted, notification of the candidate or certificant may be executed telephonically or through

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other expedited methods. Pursuant to such communication and the opportunity for the candidate or certificant to challenge the allegations, if the Ethics Committee concludes that there is a reasonable likelihood that an immediate and/or irreparable threat to the public exists, certification may be suspended for a period of up to ninety (90) days pending a full review as provided for herein.

ACLP, its Board of Directors or staff, CLCC, and its committees may consult legal counsel to determine appropriate actions in such matters.

### **Investigation by the Ethics Committee**

Valid and actionable complaints will be investigated by the Ethics Committee to clarify, expand, or corroborate the information provided by the complainant.

Once a complaint has been referred to the Ethics Committee for further review, the time frame for actions and responses shall be established by the committee. The committee may elect to request the assistance of members of the ACLP headquarter staff and/or legal counsel in the conduct of its investigation. The Ethics Committee Chair(s) shall oversee the proceeding of all investigations.

The Ethics Committee, CLCC, or other individuals appointed by CLCC may contact involved parties who could provide pertinent information regarding the incidents in question. This includes, but is not limited to, the complainant, the candidate or certificant who is the focus of the investigation, his or her employer, or other implicated parties.

ACLP, its Board of Directors or staff, CLCC, and its committees may consult legal counsel at any point in the investigation of alleged policy or procedure violations. However, involved parties are not expected to be represented by counsel and no formal hearings are held.

The investigation and all deliberations of the Ethics Committee and the Executive Committee of the Commission with respect to allegations shall be conducted in an impartial, objective, and confidential manner without bias.

### **Sanctions**

Any imposed sanctions must bear a reasonable relationship to the nature and severity of the violation and should be selected with the intent of altering the conduct of the individual involved and deterring others from such violations.

Sanctions may include one or more of the following actions. Following each are general guidelines of their application however, at its sole discretion, CLCC may impose any sanctions deemed appropriate in specific circumstances.

#### **A. Written reprimand**

Written notice from the Ethics Committee is intended as a warning and is normally sent to a candidate or certificant who has received his or her first substantiated complaint. This document is to be maintained in the candidate's or certificant's permanent file.

#### **B. Non-renewal of certification**

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Certificant is not permitted to recertify, but may reapply for certification; normally applied if certificant is deemed ineligible for recertification as defined in this document as well as the Child Life Professional Certification Program Maintenance and Recertification Manual.

### **C. Mandatory education, treatment, and/or supervision**

Mandatory education, treatment, and/or supervision may be imposed in cases of habitual use of substances including alcohol and drugs which may impede competence in professional practice, or any physical or mental condition that impairs professional objectivity or proficiency.

### **D. Suspension of certification for a specific time period**

Suspension may be imposed at any time but shall normally be imposed on a certificant who has received two substantiated complaints

### **E. Denial or suspension of eligibility**

Temporary disqualification from certification is normally applied if a candidate is deemed ineligible for certification as defined in this document as well as the Child Life Professional Certification Program Candidate Manual. Permanent disqualification from certification is normally applied if a candidate or certificant has been found to be in serious violation of the ACLP Child Life Code of Ethics or other CLCC policy.

### **F. Revocation of certification**

Revoking certification may be imposed at any time but is normally applied when a certificant has received three or more substantiated complaints or two substantiated complaints within a two-year period. Certificants who have their certification revoked will only be considered for reinstatement under the conditions set forth in this document.

### **G. Other corrective action as deemed appropriate to the violation at the discretion of ACLP, CLCC and its committees**

In cases of revocation of certification, permanent disqualification, or other sanctions, CLCC will publish via the ACLP website and other means deemed appropriate, the individual's name and a summary of the disciplinary action.

## **Request for Review by the Executive Committee of the Commission**

A candidate or certificant who receives notification that the Ethics Committee has determined that a violation of the ACLP Child Life Code of Ethics occurred may submit a written request for review by the CLCC Executive Committee. Requests for Executive Committee review must be made in writing within 15 days of receipt of the final decision letter.

The Executive Committee shall review the determination of the violation of the Child Life Code of Ethics. The focus of the review will be on the appropriateness of the decision as it relates to its consistency with published criteria, policies, and/or procedures, or factual errors.

The Executive Committee shall review and render a decision through majority vote within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the request for review. The Executive Committee's decision shall either

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affirm or overrule the original determination. The Executive Committee may accept, reject, or alter sanctions to be imposed.

The candidate or certificant shall be notified of the decision via certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision shall be reported to CLCC and is binding to all involved parties.

### **Voluntary Divestiture**

If a certificant who is the subject of a complaint elects to voluntarily divest him or herself of the CCLS credential, the complaint shall be dismissed and ACLP, CLCC, or its committees shall not take further action unless required by law. The individual shall be permanently disqualified from eligibility for certification.

If the certificant surrenders his or her certification, the certificant's employer and the complainant shall be notified of the date of resignation and that as a result CLCC will take no further action.

### **Release of Information**

By virtue of their application for certification or recertification, all candidates or certificants consent that ACLP or CLCC may, at their sole discretion, communicate to state and federal authorities, licensing boards, employers, and the public information related to the status of pending allegations brought against the candidate or certificant resulting in disciplinary proceedings, or sanctions levied.

### **Waiver**

With submission of an application for certification or recertification, candidates and certificants release, discharge and exonerate ACLP, its officers, directors, employees, committee members and agents, and any other individuals for actions taken pursuant to the policies, and procedures of CLCC from any and all liability, including but not limited to liability as a result of supplying or inspection of documents, records, or other information, and/or the investigation and review of application or certification made by CLCC.

### **Re-evaluation of Eligibility and Reinstatement of Certification**

Individuals who have had their eligibility or certification denied or revoked, may be reevaluated as follows:

When eligibility has been denied because of a criminal conviction, the individual bears the burden of demonstrating by clear and convincing evidence that he or she has been rehabilitated and does not pose a danger to others. Re-evaluation may not occur earlier than five (5) years from the final decision of ineligibility or revocation

When eligibility has been denied for any other reason, re-evaluation may not occur earlier than three (3) years from the final decision of ineligibility or revocation. After this period, the individual bears the responsibility of presenting the original circumstances of the decision as well as all pertinent facts and conditions occurring in the intervening time period that bear upon his or her eligibility for certification.

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**DEFINITIONS:**

- Child Life Professional Certification Program – all activities related to child life certification administered by the CLCC.
- Credential holders are referred to as “certificants.”
- All references to “days” in CLCC policies and procedures refer to calendar days.
- Complainant is the individual or entity that brings forth the allegation of wrongdoing.

**PROCEDURE****Process following Complaint Submission**

Formal, written complaints will initially be reviewed by the Director of Certification and the Ethics Committee Chair(s). After consultation with individuals deemed qualified to comment on the complaint, including but not limited to legal counsel, a determination as to the substance of the allegations will be made by the Director of Certification and the Ethics Chair(s) within forty-five (45) days of receipt of the complaint. At the discretion of the appropriate ACLP staff and the Ethics Chair(s) it may be determined that the submission is: (1) unreliable, frivolous, inconsequential, or lacking sufficient information; or (2) valid, and merits further investigation.

In either case, the appropriate ACLP staff will notify the complainant and the implicated party of the decision to dismiss the allegations or continue with an investigation. The charges and resulting decision for action shall also be reported to the ACLP Board of Directors. Notification may also be made to the implicated party’s employer if applicable. The Ethics Committee, in instances that involve the management of a child life clinical program, internship program, or academic program will determine whether other ACLP committees should be notified and will do so via memorandum when appropriate. This may affect endorsement and accreditation processes.

**Notification**

Notification to the candidate or certificant shall be made via certified mail, with return receipt requested. The intent of the letter shall be to initiate a reciprocal channel for communication between the party in question and the Ethics Committee, facilitated by the Ethics Committee Chair(s).

The letter shall state with specificity the details of the alleged violation and available sanctions that may result if the allegations are found to be true.

**Procedures of the Ethics Committee**

1. After receipt of the documentation from the Ethics Committee Chair(s), the Ethics Committee shall seek substantiating evidence, through interviews with involved individuals and any other research methodology warranted by the circumstances.
2. The committee shall schedule a written review, or telephone inquiry (if requested by the candidate or certificant). The candidate or certificant shall be permitted to request a change of the date and/or time for good cause. An audio recording or verbatim written

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transcript shall be made of the proceedings. All parties are permitted to consult with and be represented by legal counsel. Formal rules of evidence shall not apply. Relevant evidence may be admitted.

3. Through majority vote, the Ethics Committee shall decide all matters relating to the allegations and sanctions to be applied. Proof shall be by preponderance of the evidence.
4. If it is determined that no violation has occurred, no further action shall be taken other than the notification of the ACLP Board of Directors including the CLCC Chairperson, the implicated party, and the complainant.
5. Should it be determined that a violation has occurred, the Ethics Committee will notify via memorandum any other ACLP committees whose work may be impacted by the decision.
6. All written communications shall be sealed and marked "Confidential."
7. All pertinent documentation will be permanently recorded at the ACLP headquarters office.

### **Alcohol-related criminal convictions**

If an applicant/CCLS answers affirmatively to the background question, "Have you been convicted of criminal charges?" ACLP staff will follow up with the individual for additional details including pertinent disciplinary, court, or other documents, and/or an explanatory letter.

If the applicant/CCLS was found guilty of an alcohol-related offense, ACLP staff will review the materials submitted for any irregularities. If it was a first offense which resulted in no injuries and the individual completed all of the court-mandated requirements, the applicant/CCLS will be permitted to proceed with the certification process or the maintenance/renewal of the credential.

For this type of offense only, the Ethics Committee will not be convened. Should staff have any question as to whether the case can be resolved as per this policy, he/she will consult with the Ethics Committee Chairperson.

ACLP staff will scan all the materials submitted, upload them to the individual's database record, and notify the applicant/CCLS of the decision. Additionally, a note will be attached to the database record and documentation of the review will be kept in the ACLP official ethics records.

### **Determination of Violation**

If the Ethics Committee determines that a violation of the ACLP Code of Ethical Practice or other requirements of the certification process has occurred, the decision of the Ethics Committee shall be communicated as follows:

1. The ACLP Board of Directors including the CLCC Chairperson shall be provided with a written report of the determination made by the Ethics Committee including any sanctions to be applied as well as a written summary of the Committee's deliberations.
2. The individual whose actions have been called into question will be provided via certified mail, return receipt requested, the determination made by the Ethics Committee including any

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sanctions to be applied as well as a description of the process of final appeal to the ACLP Board of Directors as described herein.

3. The complainant will be provided via certified mail, return receipt requested, the determination made by the Ethics Committee only.

**SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION**

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