

## **AACAP's Policy on Management of Individual and Organizational Relationships with External Entities: Transparency, Disclosure, and Mitigation of Conflict of Interest**

Approved June 2025

### **Purpose**

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry's (AACAP) Policy on Management of Individual and Organizational Relationships with External Entities: Transparency, Disclosure, and Mitigation of Conflict of Interest ("Policy") serves two distinct purposes: governing how individual AACAP members in leadership roles and other key positions manage their relationships with external entities and establishing procedures for AACAP's organizational interactions with external entities. External entities include [ineligible or eligible companies](#), as defined by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) and adopted by AACAP.

While AACAP recognizes potential benefits of member relationships with external entities, all AACAP policies, publications, and activities must remain unbiased and consistent with AACAP's [mission](#). Although AACAP allows members who have relationships with external entities to hold AACAP leadership roles and other key positions, it requires transparency, disclosure, and mitigation of conflicts of interest.

AACAP acknowledges that it is important for the organization itself to have collaborative relationships with external entities to provide expert input into advancing new treatments for children and adolescents as well as provide accurate information to the membership. Therefore, AACAP will develop relationships with external entities that are aligned with its mission and will manage these relationships with transparency, disclosure, and mitigation of conflict of interest.

This policy is intended to supplement, but not replace, any applicable laws governing conflicts of interest applicable to nonprofit organizations. This policy also applies to the American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the affiliated organization to AACAP, and its leaders.

### **Oversight and Management**

The policies outlined in this document are managed by AACAP's Conflict of Interest (COI) Group. This 5-member group reports directly to the AACAP Secretary. Responsibilities of the group include the following:

- Review leadership disclosures.
- Identify conflicts of interest from those leaders.
- Determine mitigation strategies to address those conflicts of interest.
- Consult with AACAP staff about potential organizational relationships and provide guidance, as needed.
- Review this policy and all related documents every three years and recommend updates to AACAP Council.

## Definitions

*Conflict of Interest:* A relationship, commitment, or other financial, personal, or professional interest or association that has, could have, or appears to have the potential to influence, affect, exploit, or control any of the following:

- Decisions made or activities conducted on behalf of AACAP
- The fulfillment of commitments or any other responsibilities to AACAP

*Direct Financial Relationship:* Direct financial relationships exist when **any** financial interest is provided from the external entity directly to the individual or organization. Some examples of direct financial relationships include, but are not limited to:

- Advisory Board
- Consultant
- Data and Safety Monitoring Board
- Employee
- Expert Testimony
- Grant Support
- Honorarium
- In-kind Services
- Leadership Role
- Research Support paid directly to the individual
- Royalties/Intellectual Property
- Speakers Bureau
- Stock or equity of any amount (excluding diversified mutual funds)
- Travel Support

*Eligible Company:* An eligible company in the context of ACCME (Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education) is an entity whose mission and function are (1) providing clinical services directly to patients; (2) education of healthcare professionals; (3) serving as a fiduciary to patients, the public, or population health. Eligible companies include other organizations that are not otherwise ineligible per ACCME. Examples of such organizations include, but are not limited to:

- Advocacy Organizations
- Ambulatory procedure centers
- Blood banks
- Diagnostic labs that do not sell proprietary products
- Electronic health records companies
- Government contractors or consultants
- Government or military agencies
- Group medical practices
- Health law firms
- Health profession membership organizations
- Hospitals or healthcare delivery systems
- Infusion centers
- Insurance or managed care companies
- Journals, including peer-reviewed scientific journals
- Medical accreditation agencies

- Medical certification agencies
- Nursing homes
- Pharmacies that do not manufacture proprietary compounds
- Preventive and public health services providers
- Publishing or education companies
- Rehabilitation centers
- Schools of medicine or health science universities
- Software or game developers not undergoing a governmental regulatory approval process

*Indirect Financial Relationship:* Indirect financial relationships encompass benefits that flow from external entities to the individual or organization through a third party. Some examples of indirect financial relationships include:

- Funding or support (including research or grants) paid to an institution or organization, rather than directly to the individual that may indirectly benefit the individual as an employee, administrator, or official of that entity.
- Payments directed to organizations where the individual serves in a fiduciary role

*Immediate Family Member:* Spouse or domestic partner.

*Ineligible Company:* Any commercial entity whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing health care products used by or on patients. Some examples of the types of entities considered to be ineligible by ACCME include:

- Advertising, marketing, or communication firms whose clients are ineligible companies
- Biomedical startups that have begun a governmental regulatory approval process
- Compounding pharmacies that manufacture proprietary compounds
- Device manufacturers or distributors
- Diagnostic labs that sell proprietary products
- Growers, distributors, manufacturers, or sellers of medical foods and dietary supplements
- Manufacturers of health-related wearable products
- Pharmaceutical companies or distributors
- Pharmacy benefit managers
- Reagent manufacturers or sellers

*Intellectual Property Rights:* Any right or interest in copyrights, patents, trademarks, service marks, royalties, and trade secrets, regardless of whether the right or interest has any current value or marketability.

*Mitigation of Conflicts of Interest:* The structured process of implementing specific strategies, protocols, and oversight mechanisms designed to manage or eliminate the actual or potential influence of financial or non-financial relationships on professional judgment, decision-making, or research integrity while maintaining transparency and accountability.

## **Policy on Individual Relationships with External Entities**

### **General Principles**

Individuals covered by this policy must uphold the following fundamental principles:

1. Prioritize AACAP's mission and maintain objective judgment in all AACAP-related activities by proactively identifying and addressing any actual or potential conflicts of interest. This includes maintaining current, complete, and accurate disclosure of all relationships and updating these disclosures at least annually and within 30 days when circumstances change.
2. Safeguard confidential AACAP information and materials, sharing such information only when explicitly authorized and necessary for AACAP business purposes.
3. Exercise sound ethical judgment by refraining from using AACAP position, information, or resources for personal benefit or competitive advantage.
4. Protect AACAP's reputation by ensuring all external communications and affiliations accurately represent AACAP's position. Any use of AACAP's name, brand assets, or formal representation requires prior organizational approval.
5. Foster a culture of transparency and awareness through routine monitoring and by participating openly in disclosure processes, abiding by mitigation strategies, and encouraging colleagues to do the same.

### **Description of Leadership Roles**

Leadership roles consist of those positions, either appointed or elected, in which the individuals can influence, directly or indirectly, AACAP policies, publications, and/or activities.

Leadership roles and other key positions are divided into three tiers.

#### **Tier One**

- Executive Committee (President, President-Elect, Secretary, Treasurer, and Chair of the Assembly of Regional Organizations)
- Executive Director/CEO\*
- *JAACAP* Editor-in-Chief and Editors of other peer-reviewed scholarly publications
- Program Committee chair and deputy chair
- Quality Issues Committee chairs and members
- COI Group chair

#### **Tier Two**

- Council and Assembly Executive Committee
- Committee, advisory board, resource group, and task force chairs
- WEB Editor
- Financial Planning Group members
- Associate and Deputy Editors of *JAACAP*, *JAACAP Connect Editor*, and other peer-reviewed scholarly publications
- PAC Board chairs
- COI Group members

#### **Tier Three**

- *AACAP News* editors and editorial board members
- Advisory board, resource group, and task force members
- Assembly delegates
- Committee members not included in Tier One or Two

- Editors and editorial board members of *JAACAP* and other peer-reviewed scholarly publications not included in Tiers One and Two
- Nominating Committee members
- PAC Board members

\*All other AACAP staff manage conflicts of interest through the Human Resources Department.

If a new leadership role or other key position is created that does not fall into an existing category, the AACAP President will determine the tier for that role in consultation with the COI Group.

### **Disclosure Requirements**

To identify and mitigate potential conflicts of interest, AACAP requires all individuals in leadership roles or other key positions to disclose via AACAP's Disclosure of Relationships form on an annual basis in June or when they have new relationships. In addition, potential leaders must disclose when there is a prompting event, such as consideration for appointment for a new leadership role or nomination to run in an election. When asked to disclose by AACAP, or when a leader has a new relationship, individuals have up to 30 days to complete or update the disclosure.

Chairpersons or leaders of meetings that include individuals in any of the three leadership tiers must verbally call for new disclosures at the start of all meetings. Any leader with a new disclosure will need to update their Disclosure of Relationships Form with the new relationship within 30 days.

- Leaders in Tier One are required to report all disclosures and are prohibited from direct or indirect financial or contractual relationships with ineligible companies. Other relationships may be mitigated as needed.
- Leaders in Tier Two are required to report all disclosures and are prohibited from employment by ineligible companies. Other relationships may be mitigated as needed.
- Leaders in Tier Three are required to report all disclosures. Relationships may be mitigated as needed.

### **Types of Information to Disclose**

Leaders are required to disclose the following financial relationships from the past 24 months. Examples of financial relationships with eligible and ineligible companies are provided in the Disclosure of Relationships Form and in the Definitions section above.

1. All financial relationships with ACCME-defined ineligible companies. An ineligible company is an organization whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, reselling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients, and is NOT eligible to provide CME credit. Providers of clinical services directly to patients are not considered ineligible companies.
2. All financial relationships with eligible companies.
3. All non-financial leadership roles in other medical/professional agencies, organizations, or companies or those in which you are acting in a professional capacity.
4. Financial relationships by immediate family members with ineligible or eligible companies. Immediate family members are defined as spouse or domestic partner.

### **Reviewing Disclosures and Determining Mitigation Strategies**

All current and prospective holders of AACAP Tier One, Two, or Three positions are required to complete a Disclosure of Relationships form.

AACAP's Executive Director/CEO will appoint a staff team to support the COI Group in managing the review, identification, and mitigation of member conflicts of interest.

After initial staff team review, all forms with potential conflicts for **Tier One or Two positions** will be submitted to the COI Group for further evaluation. The COI Group will determine the appropriate mitigation strategies for disclosed relationships with external entities and prepare a letter to the member outlining those strategies and asking for agreement to comply. Copies of the letter will be also sent to the Secretary and relevant unit leaders, including Cluster Facilitators and Committee/Task Force/Work Group Chair/Co-Chair/Editor.

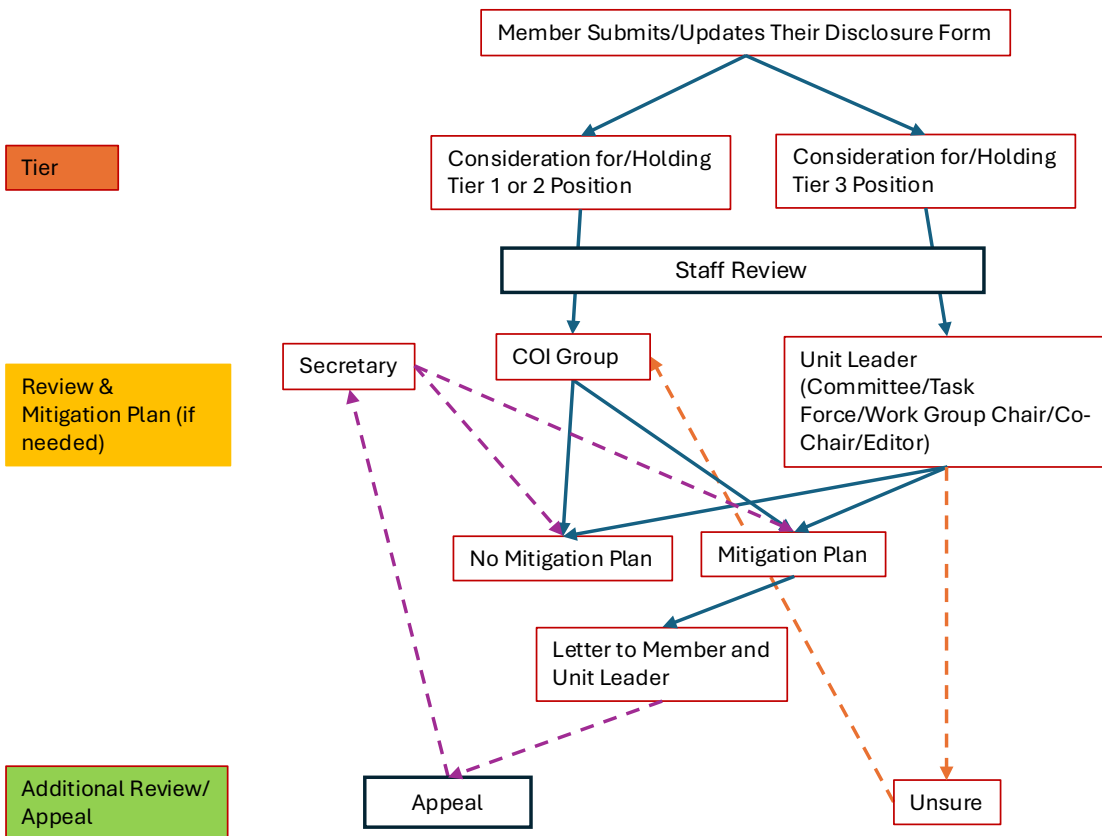
After initial staff review, all forms with potential conflicts for **Tier Three positions** will be submitted to the unit leader for further evaluation. The unit leader will determine the appropriate mitigation strategies for disclosed relationships with external entities and send a letter to the member outlining those strategies and asking for agreement to comply. Copies of the letter will be also sent to the Cluster Facilitator and Secretary. If the unit leader is unsure of the optimal mitigation strategies, they may refer the matter to the COI Group for determination.

Appeals of the decision by the COI Group or unit leader may be made to the Secretary. In the situation where the Secretary has a conflict of interest, the President may appoint an ad hoc committee, made up of three voting members of Council, to hear the appeal in their stead. The decision by the Secretary or ad hoc committee is final.

Before each meeting of these respective bodies, the people identified above who have copies of the COI letter should review them and assume responsibility for ensuring that during the meeting, applicable mitigation strategies are followed.

In its annual report to the Secretary, the COI Group will include a statement regarding the management of potential conflicts of interest and a summary of any actions taken during the year to address apparent or reported violations of this policy. Similarly, Committee annual reports will also have a question confirming that the chairs have addressed conflicts of interest and mitigation strategies.

The following flow chart, illustrates this process:



## Mitigation Strategies

Depending upon a person's role in AACAP and the nature of a person's financial and/or non-financial relationships, mitigation strategies may include but are not limited to the following:

- Disclosing these relationships when actively discussing a related topic
- Recusing from voting if the subject matter is related to disclosed relationships
- Recusing from discussions related to disclosed relationships
- Divesting from the disclosed relationship
- Being unable to serve in the applied-for, elected, or appointed leadership role

## Violations

### Reporting Procedure

Any individual who witnesses a situation where another individual does not disclose a known conflict or does not follow an agreed-upon mitigation strategy should report that individual to the chair of the COI Group. AACAP strictly prohibits any form of retaliation for reporting non-compliance with this policy.

### *Sanctions*

The COI Group will make significant efforts to educate the membership on these policies and work with specific members to understand the implications of disclosure and mitigation strategies when there are questions. Once education has taken place, if these efforts are not successful in resolving a particular conflict, an individual in violation of these policies may be subject to sanctions based on the severity and nature of their behavior. In all cases, should sanctions be issued, the COI Group will conduct a full investigation using due process and matters will remain confidential among the COI Group, Council, and related staff. Such sanctions may include but are not limited to:

- Verbal and/or written warning
- Removal from the leadership role
- Prohibition from holding future leadership roles or other key positions

AACAP reserves the right to pursue additional measures as they may deem appropriate.

Sanctions will initially be determined by the COI Group and the COI Group will recommend those sanctions to the Secretary. If the sanction is a verbal or written warning, the decision of the Secretary is final. If the sanction is removal from the leadership role or prohibition from holding future leadership roles, the Secretary will review the recommendation and investigatory details, and then if the Secretary agrees with the recommendation, the Secretary will send the recommendation to Council. Council can approve that recommendation with a two thirds vote. The decision of Council is final.

### **Other Types of Disclosure Outside of this Document**

- AACAP collects disclosure forms for other purposes, including from presenters/authors/planners of CME activities, participants in Public Health Service-Sponsored research grants, and authors and reviewers of peer-reviewed publications. These processes are governed by external agencies, including the ACCME, the US federal government, and publishing ethics bodies. Those processes are not directly linked to the policies in this document.
  - AACAP staff also complete a disclosure form as part of the annual review process with the Human Resources Department. AACAP's Executive Director/CEO oversees mitigation of all conflicts of interest for staff.
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## **Policy on Organizational Relationships with External Entities**

AACAP will develop and manage relationships with external entities in accordance with the following principles:

### **Transparency and Monitoring**

- All AACAP members, including leaders, general members, and ROCAPs, should have access to AACAP's financial reports and investment policies.
- On an annual basis, AACAP will include a report on the Transparency Portal that lists the names and total amount of direct revenue from ineligible companies.
- While AACAP's Executive Committee ultimately has overall responsibility for managing AACAP's relationship with external entities, the COI Group will work with AACAP staff to initially review any potential relationships that are not consistent with the policies noted here.

### **Managing Funds and Investments**

Funds from external entities are used to support specific advocacy, education, or research in ways that are consistent with AACAP's mission. The following section directs how those funds should be managed.

- Funding from ineligible companies is monitored by the AACAP Treasurer and direct total revenue from ineligible companies cannot exceed 10% of total revenue from operations in a given fiscal year. Funding from eligible companies is not capped.
- There are clear processes used to determine and document how funds from external entities are managed and allocated. The following are the procedures that outline the process for how funds from external entities are managed from other parts of the organization:
  - External funding for CME activities is outlined in the Operating Principles for Extramural Support of AACAP Meetings and Related Activities
  - Government grant funding and expenditures are managed by a team including an outside grants consultant and AACAP's Financial Controller. The Grants Oversight Committee also reviews federal grant activity. Federal awards are subject to annual audit by AACAP's external auditor.
  - Funds from donors, non-government grants, and/or private foundations are managed by AACAP development and accounting staff. Each endowed gift has a letter of agreement that outlines the terms and conditions of the gift.
- AACAP accepts financial contributions from ineligible companies to support AACAP's mission. Sponsoring companies may not designate specific recipients or participate in the selection process. Programs or awards will not bear the name of the ineligible company.
- AACAP accepts financial contributions from eligible companies for a variety of activities that align with AACAP's mission. Oversight rests with the Executive Director/CEO, who may consult with the COI Group when necessary.
- All contributions toward donor-restricted purposes are recorded appropriately by accounting staff. Funds that are invested in AACAP's investment portfolio share gains and losses in proportion to the total fund balance. AACAP's executive staff reviews fund balances on a quarterly basis. These invested fund balances are also outlined in AACAP's audited financial statements.

- An independent third-party advisor manages all investments based on AACAP's investment policy. The individual instruments, including individual stocks and mutual funds, are to be selected by the professional managers of the investment portfolio. According to AACAP policy, Council will receive investment reports twice per year.
- Investment in external entities as part of a diversified portfolio does not constitute a conflict of interest.

### **Continuing Medical Education**

- Sponsorship of CME activities, income from advertising, and exhibit revenue from all CME activities, should be handled in accordance with the [Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education \(ACCME\) Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited Continuing Education](#) and [AACAP's Operating Principles for Extramural Support](#).
- There should be clear separation between marketing and education activities consistent with ACCME Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited Continuing Education and AACAP's Operating Principles for Extramural Support.

### **Publications**

- *JAACAP* and other peer-reviewed scholarly publications' advertising content should be reviewed by the respective editors, in accordance with [AACAP Bylaws](#). Single-company sponsorship of *JAACAP* supplement issues is prohibited, in accordance with *JAACAP* advertising policy.
- There should be no cap or limit to funding from external entities as AACAP does not receive revenue directly from advertising in *JAACAP*. It receives royalties from the publisher.
- *AACAP News* advertising content should be reviewed by the *AACAP News* Editor, in accordance with [AACAP Bylaws](#).

### **Endorsements**

- AACAP does not endorse any ineligible companies or their products.
- AACAP may endorse an eligible company if it aligns with AACAP's mission. Council is responsible for reviewing and approving proposals for endorsements.
- AACAP may connect interested member experts with external entities seeking expert advice. In such instances, the member is not acting on behalf of AACAP when giving the expert advice. Any financial arrangements strictly remain between the external entity and the AACAP member.

This policy was approved on June 28, 2025, and will go into effect in May 2026, with a complete roll out of new technology by 2027. Any members in a current role will continue to follow the current policy dated 2023 until the end of their term for existing relationships with external entities. However, any new relationships with external entities must follow the new policy, effective May 2026.