



Member and Leader Code of Conduct Process

Background

The Member and Leader Code of Conduct describes our expectations of ourselves, articulates our ideals, and defines the behaviors expected in our organization (see Appendix I to read the Code in full).

The purpose of this Code is to instill confidence in how we carry out SIA's business and to help individuals become better Sorooptimists. We do this by establishing an organization-wide understanding of appropriate behavior. Embracing this Member and Leader Code of Conduct will also assist us in making wise decisions, particularly when faced with difficult situations in which we may be asked to compromise our integrity or our values. The process outlined below is meant to be a tool to help support leaders in navigating difficult situations appropriately.

The Member and Leader Code of Conduct applies to all SIA Members, even if they do not sign the Code. All members are bound and held accountable to the Code and its accompanying processes. The process for the Code of Conduct is outlined below to ensure due process, fairness, and integrity for all individuals involved while upholding confidentiality and accountability.

The consequences for violating the Code of Conduct are designed to be progressive, aiming first to educate and correct behavior, and then escalate to more serious actions if violations persist or are severe. The goal is to maintain a safe, respectful, and ethical community within SIA.

Generally, conflicts/grievances and disputes fall into the following categories:

- Personality Conflicts/Inappropriate Behavior,
- Governance-related Grievances, and
- Severe Violations

and should be managed as follows according to the appropriate category.

Personality Conflicts and Inappropriate Behavior (e.g., compromising/misusing member data, or personal expression regarding sensitive topics such as religion, politics, and race when representing SIA in any capacity):

These may be situations involving misunderstanding or lack of awareness, first violations of the Code, or interpersonal conflicts (e.g., compromising/misusing member data, or personal expression regarding sensitive topics such as religion, politics, and race when representing SIA in any capacity).

Level One: Personality Conflicts or Inappropriate Behavior

What should be done? Members and leaders are encouraged to first address personality conflicts directly with one another to foster awareness and improve their ability to work together effectively. They are encouraged to find a mutually agreeable solution for all parties. In instances when a member or leader feels uncomfortable or ill-equipped to address a conflict directly, they should seek guidance/coaching from leadership per the chart below before discussing the matter with the other party. At this juncture, leadership may provide coaching to facilitate a conversation between the parties or decide to facilitate a discussion.

Tips for a Successful Facilitated Conversation by Leadership:

- If applicable, verbal or written reminder of Code expectations or procedures.
- Referral to training or coaching on appropriate conduct or process to reduce risk.
- Document the conversation in preparation for the unfortunate event of future recurrence.

Level Two: Repeated Personality Conflicts or Inappropriate Behavior

What should leadership do if personality conflicts or inappropriate behavior persist?

- Provide a written warning outlining the nature of the violation; reference the initial conversation.
- Set clear expectations for behavior improvement and share timelines.
- Require participation in specific training or education if available to reduce risk.

Level Three: Persistent Personality Conflicts or Inappropriate Behavior

If personality conflicts and/or inappropriate behavior persist, complete the Code of Conduct Review Committee (CCRC) submission form to trigger a review of the situation. The CCRC will investigate the

situation and determine whether to dismiss the complaint, seek informal resolution, implement a formal course of action, or escalate to the Board of Directors.

Escalation to SIA Board of Directors is required for serious misconduct, repeated violations, or risks to SIA’s reputation or safety. The SIA Board of Directors will review any serious complaints and render a final decision.

Consequences from the CCRC or Board of Directors review at this level may comprise of suspension from leadership roles, committee participation, or membership and member privileges (including attending meetings or events) for a defined period based on the severity of the infraction (e.g., 3–6 months or permanently).

Clubs and regions that determine it is appropriate to remove a member from a leadership role or membership and have the authority to do so within their governing documents should still complete a CCRC submission form so that SIAHQ can be kept abreast of the situation and can serve as a consultant for the club or region.

The duration of the suspension and conditions will be communicated in writing with notification to relevant clubs or regions of this decision within 30 days of submission of the complaint. This timeline will be expedited for more serious violations.

Enforcement actions will be carried out by SIAHQ and local leadership as appropriate. There will be zero tolerance for retaliation—retaliation will result in immediate revocation of membership.

How can members appeal the decision? Members will receive notice of their appeal rights. Appeals must be submitted in writing via email to code@soroptimist.org within 14 days. Appeals will be reviewed by an independent appeals panel distinct from previous bodies which will issue a final and binding decision.

Require Support in Addressing a Personality Conflict?	
Here’s How to Seek Counsel	
Conflict Between	Seek Counsel From
Club Members	Club President <i>If the conflict is with the Club President, seek counsel from your Region Governor.</i>
Club Leaders	Club President <i>If the conflict is with the Club President, seek counsel from the Region Governor, who will alert and engage SIA’s Executive Director/CEO.</i>
Region Leaders	Region Governor

<i>If the conflict is with the Region Governor, seek counsel from SIA’s Executive Director/CEO, who will alert and engage officers from SIA’s Board of Directors.</i>	
SIA’s Board of Directors	SIA’s President
<i>If the conflict is with the SIA President, seek counsel from another SIA Officer, e.g., SIA’s President-Elect or SIA’s Secretary-Treasurer.</i>	

Governance-Related Grievances (e.g., situations involving misunderstanding of governing documents, misinterpretation of the governing documents, or lack of awareness of operating procedures):

Level One: Mild Governance-Related Grievances

What should be done? Members and leaders with governance grievances are encouraged to first confer with their governing documents to confirm a breach has occurred. If it is unclear or if there are different interpretations of the governing documents, engage the club or region Parliamentarian for clarity. Club and region Parliamentarians are welcome to consult with SIAHQ if they require additional support, which may result in referral to an external Parliamentarian. If the Parliamentarian cannot provide a clear direction, this indicates that the governing documents need to be strengthened. Confer with the club or region operating policies for making changes to governing documents. Bylaw changes need to be voted on by club, region, and/or federation members. Operating procedures can be managed at the club, region, or federation board level generally.

Tips for a Successfully Addressing Governance Grievances:

- If a misunderstanding has occurred, document the correct interpretation of the governing documents and provide coaching and training to leaders to enhance clarity.
- If there is a gap in the governing documents and there is indication that they need to be strengthened, the club/region should pursue the documented process for any edits or modifications to be approved.
- If a member is violating the governing documents, leadership should have a facilitated conversation with the member with an explanation of what occurred, what it violated, and documentation of that conversation should be undertaken.

Level Two: Repeated Governance-Related Grievances

What should leadership do if a member consistently violates or operates outside of governing documents?

- Provide a written warning outlining the nature of the violation; reference the initial conversation.
- Set clear expectations for behavior improvement and share timelines.
- Require participation in specific training or education if available to reduce risk.

Level Three: Persistent Governance-Related Grievances

If Governance-Related Grievances are persistent, complete the Code of Conduct Review Committee (CCRC) submission form to trigger a review of the situation. The CCRC will investigate the situation and determine whether to dismiss the complaint, seek informal resolution, implement a formal course of action, or escalate to the Board of Directors.

Escalation to SIA Board of Directors is required for serious misconduct, repeated violations, or risks to SIA's reputation or safety. The SIA Board of Directors will review any serious complaints and render a final decision.

Consequences from the CCRC or Board of Directors review at this level may comprise of suspension from leadership roles, committee participation, or membership and member privileges (including attending meetings or events) for a defined period based on the severity of the infraction (e.g., 3–6 months or permanently).

Clubs and regions that determine it is appropriate to remove a member from a leadership role or membership and have the authority to do so within their governing documents should still complete a CCRC submission form so that SIAHQ can be kept abreast of the situation and can serve as a consultant for the club or region.

The duration of the suspension and conditions will be communicated in writing with notification to relevant clubs or regions of this decision within 30 days of submission of the complaint. This timeline will be expedited for more serious violations.

Enforcement actions will be carried out by SIAHQ and local leadership as appropriate. There will be zero tolerance for retaliation—retaliation will result in immediate revocation of membership.

How can members appeal the decision? Members will receive notice of their appeal rights. Appeals must be submitted in writing via email to code@soroptimist.org within 14 days. Appeals will be reviewed by an independent appeals panel distinct from previous bodies which will issue a final and binding decision.

Governance-Related Grievances	
Here's Who to Work with to Seek Resolution	
Grievance Within	Seek Resolution with
Club	<p>Club President</p> <p><i>If the Club President is violating or operating against the club's governing documents, seek counsel from your Region Governor. If your club has a Parliamentarian, engage and involve them.</i></p>
Region	<p>Region Governor</p> <p><i>If the Region Governor is violating or operating against the region's governing documents, seek counsel from SIA's Executive Director/CEO, who may assign it to her designate. If your region has a Parliamentarian, engage and involve them.</i></p>
SIA Board of Directors	<p>SIA's President</p> <p><i>If SIA's President is violating or operating against SIA's governing documents, seek counsel from another SIA Officer, e.g., SIA's President-Elect or SIA's Secretary-Treasurer.</i></p>

Severe Violations. Criminal behavior (e.g. physical abuse, harassment, embezzlement, misappropriation of funds, etc.) with significant liability and/or reputational risk:

What should be done? Leadership or the aggrieved member should complete the Code of Conduct Review Committee (CCRC) submission form to trigger a review of the situation. The CCRC will investigate the situation and determine whether to dismiss the complaint, seek informal resolution, implement a formal course of action, or escalate to the Board of Directors, which will be done immediately in the case of allegations of serious misconduct or criminal behavior as law enforcement may need to be notified.

Clubs and regions that determine it is appropriate to remove a member from a leadership role or membership and have the authority to do so within their governing documents should still complete a CCRC submission form so that SIAHQ can be kept abreast of the situation and can serve as a consultant for the club or region.

Escalation to SIA Board of Directors is required for serious misconduct, repeated violations, or risks to SIA's reputation or safety. The SIA Board of Directors will review and investigate any serious complaints and render a final decision.

If the CCRC or Board of Directors review and investigation reveals that the claims of serious inappropriate behavior are legitimate, consequences from the CCRC or Board of Directors review at this level may comprise of termination of membership and its privileges, and access to all SIA activities and benefits.

This will be communicated in writing with notification to relevant clubs or regions of this decision within 30 days of submission of the complaint. This timeline will be expedited for more serious violations.

Enforcement actions will be carried out by SIAHQ and local leadership as appropriate. There will be zero tolerance for retaliation—retaliation will result in immediate revocation of membership.

How can members appeal the decision? Members will receive notice of their appeal rights. Appeals must be submitted in writing via email to code@soroptimist.org within 14 days. Appeals will be reviewed by an independent appeals panel distinct from previous bodies which will issue a final and binding decision.

Additional Governance Procedures

Members of the Code of Conduct Review Committee or Appeals Review Panel are bound to additional standards in the course of their volunteer commitments, and members of the CCRC or ARP who are found to be in violation of the standards of confidentiality, anti-bias, procedures of SIA, or serious violations of the Member and Leader Code of Conduct will be removed from their position immediately and may face further investigation. The goal is to ensure that volunteer leadership responsible for governance processes related to the Code reflect SIA's core values and uphold our organization's standards of confidentiality and anti-bias.

What should be done:

- Leadership or the aggrieved member should complete the Code of Conduct Review Committee submission form to trigger a review.

- The SIA Board of Directors will review and investigate any complaints submitted regarding members of the CCRC or ARP and render a final decision.

Consequences from the Board of Directors review at this level may comprise of removal from all leadership positions, including elected or appointed offices, permanently, with notification to relevant clubs or regions of this decision.

Written notification of decisions will be issued within 30 days with an expedited timeline for serious allegations. Enforcement actions will be carried out by SIAHQ and local leadership as appropriate. There will be zero tolerance for retaliation—retaliation will result in immediate revocation of membership.

How can members appeal the decision? Appeals must be submitted in writing via email to code@soroptimist.org within 14 days. Appeals of this nature will be reviewed by the President of SIA, who will render a final and binding decision.