

Investigative Reporters & Editors

Code of Conduct / IRE Principles

Effective September 27, 2026

Purpose & Scope

Investigative Reporters & Editors (IRE) is committed to providing a professional, welcoming and respectful environment where journalists and others can learn, collaborate and engage in meaningful discussion. IRE values integrity, accountability, diversity, inclusion, professionalism and respect. We believe journalism is strengthened through open dialogue, rigorous debate and a free exchange of ideas.

This code addresses conduct, not viewpoints. People may express opinions, perspectives and disagreements – even strongly or critically. However, participation in IRE activities requires that discussions occur without harassment, discrimination, intimidation, threats or other behavior (including the points listed below under “Standards of Conduct”) that prevents others from participating.

This code applies to all participants in IRE activities, including:

- Members
- Non-member attendees and guests
- Speakers, panelists and trainers
- Exhibitors and sponsors
- Volunteers
- Contractors and vendors
- Board of Directors
- Committee and task force members
- Staff

It applies to all activities sponsored or conducted by IRE, including but not limited to conferences, training programs, chapter events, meetings, webinars, online communities, Slack spaces, social media, listservs, networking events and other official IRE activities, including related communications and gatherings. By participating in IRE activities or holding membership, individuals agree to follow this code.

This Code of Conduct is intended as a supplement to, and not as a substitution for, the policies and legal requirements applicable to IRE staff and board members, which remain fully in force.

Standards of Conduct

IRE expects participants to:

- Treat others with professionalism, dignity and respect.
- Engage in disagreement without personal attacks.
- Respect personal boundaries and privacy. (Documenting suspected violations is permitted and is addressed more fully below.)
- Follow reasonable directions from IRE staff, event organizers, volunteers and venue personnel.
- Help maintain an environment where everyone can participate fully. (Participants are not required to intervene personally during alleged violations of this code.)

- Exercise professional judgment and avoid conduct that materially disrupts an IRE activity or compromises participant safety.

Conduct that may violate this code includes, but is not limited to:

- **Harassment, discrimination or intimidation.** Conduct that demeans, humiliates, threatens, excludes or targets an individual or group based on a protected characteristic, or creates a hostile, intimidating or offensive environment.
- **Threats, stalking or unwanted physical contact.** Threatening or intimidating another person; repeatedly following, monitoring or contacting someone in a way that causes reasonable fear or distress; or engaging in physical contact without consent.
- **Sexual harassment or unwelcome sexual conduct.** Unwelcome sexual advances, requests, comments, jokes, images, gestures or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment or affects participation or employment.
- **Personal attacks or abusive behavior directed at another participant.** Insulting, degrading, humiliating, threatening or otherwise abusive conduct directed at an individual.
- **Slurs or discriminatory language.** Derogatory or offensive language targeting an individual or group based on race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or other protected characteristics.
- **Recording, photographing, livestreaming individuals and/or posting of such content on social media where/when there is a reasonable expectation of privacy or after they have asked you not to do so.** Nothing in this code can be used to stop someone who believes it is being violated from documenting the offending behavior or suspected violation.
- **Repeated unwanted communication after someone has asked that it stop.** Continuing to contact someone after or surrounding an event through email, messages, calls, social media or other means after they have clearly asked that the communication stop.
- **Retaliation.** Adverse action, threats, intimidation or other unfavorable treatment against someone for making a complaint, providing information, serving as a witness or participating in a Code of Conduct investigation.
- **Distribution of illegal substances during IRE activities.** Selling or distributing illegal drugs or other prohibited controlled substances.
- **Conduct that substantially disrupts an IRE activity or prevents safe participation.** Behavior that materially interferes with an IRE activity or prevents or significantly limits others from participating safely.
- **Knowingly filing a false Code of Conduct complaint.** Making allegations the person knows are untrue or knowingly providing false or misleading information during a Code of Conduct process. A good-faith complaint that is not substantiated is not a violation.

Reporting Concerns

Anyone who experiences, witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may violate this code is encouraged to report it promptly and in good faith. Reports may be made by an affected person, witness or other individual with relevant information. A person does not need to confront the individual involved before making a report. IRE will address activities it observes or learns of that may violate this code, even if no formal complaint is made.

During in-person events

Anyone facing an immediate threat should contact emergency services or venue security. IRE will also provide clear reporting options, including:

- A dedicated secure online complaint form.
- Identifiable IRE staff, board members and event organizers.

At any time (including virtual events or digital platforms)

Complaints may be submitted through the same online form above at any time. Complaints involving:

- The executive director should be emailed to the board president.
- The board president should be emailed to the executive director.
- Both the executive director and board president should be submitted to the board vice president.

The same principle applies to appeals. If the person designated to receive an appeal is the subject of the complaint, the appeal will be directed to the next appropriate officer.

Filing deadline

Complaints should be submitted as soon as reasonably possible and, barring extreme circumstances, no later than 90 calendar days after the alleged conduct occurred. IRE may review complaints submitted after that timeframe when warranted by the seriousness of the allegations, newly discovered information, a continuing pattern of conduct or other cause.

Confidentiality and Anonymous Reports

IRE understands that reporting concerns can be difficult and will make reasonable efforts to protect the privacy of everyone involved. Information will be shared only with individuals whom IRE determines should review it to help investigate and address a complaint.

IRE cannot guarantee complete confidentiality because a fair review may require sharing information with the person whose conduct is being reviewed, as well as with witnesses or others who can provide relevant information. IRE prohibits retaliation against anyone who raises a concern in good faith or participates in a review.

Anonymous reports are accepted and will be reviewed to the extent possible. However, anonymity may limit IRE's ability to gather information, determine what occurred and take appropriate action.

Criteria for Requesting Anonymity

To be considered for anonymity, complainants must:

- **State Anonymity Request:** Clearly indicate their desire for anonymity and the reasons behind it.
- **Explain Concerns:** Briefly outline any safety or confidentiality issues that warrant anonymity.
- **Acknowledge Limitations:** Understand anonymity may hinder the ability to investigate the matter, depending on the completeness and scope of the information submitted by an anonymous complainant.

Review Process and Decision-Making Authority

IRE will review concerns thoroughly, impartially and as promptly as reasonably possible.

Initial determination

Upon receiving a complaint, IRE will:

- Endeavor to confirm receipt of the complaint within five business days.
- Determine whether the conduct reported falls within the scope of this code.
- Identify whether immediate steps are needed to protect participants, preserve relevant information or maintain a safe environment.

The executive director will oversee the review process unless a conflict of interest such as one arising from a personal, family or business connection with the complainant, witness or accused requires another individual to take responsibility.

Review

The process may include but is not limited to:

- Speaking with the complainant.
- Providing the accused an opportunity to respond.
- Interviewing witnesses.
- Reviewing relevant documents, communications, photographs, videos or other information.
- Consulting outside advisors when appropriate.

The scope of the review will depend on the seriousness and complexity of the alleged conduct complained of. IRE will strive to complete reviews within 30 calendar days. If additional time is needed, IRE will provide periodic updates to the complainant and accused, if and as appropriate.

A complainant may withdraw a complaint at any time. However, IRE may continue to review a withdrawn complaint if warranted to protect participants or preserve the integrity of IRE activities.

Findings and Decisions

IRE will determine next steps based on its review of the incident and the complaint. IRE will consider the seriousness of the conduct, any prior complaints or concerns, cooperation during the process and corrective measures by the accused when determining an appropriate course of action.

For routine matters — meaning lower-level conduct concerns that do not involve threats, harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, violence, or other serious or potentially unlawful behavior — the executive director may make the final determination and implement appropriate responses, including:

- Education or coaching.
- Verbal or written warning.
- Removal from a future session or activity.
- Removal from an event without refund.

For matters in which serious wrongdoing is alleged and is borne out by an investigation, the executive director will provide a recommendation to the Executive Committee, which is made up of the Board of

Directors' president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and at-large director. The following actions require review and approval by a majority of committee members present after any recusals:

- Suspension or revocation of membership.
- Removal from volunteer, elected or appointed leadership positions.
- Long-term restrictions on participation in IRE activities.
- Termination of a contractual relationship with a vendor or consultant.

In reviewing such matters, the committee will consider the available information, findings from the review and the recommended response. Individuals with conflicts of interest because of a personal, business, or family connection to the complainant or the person alleged to have violated the code must recuse themselves from reviewing or deciding matters.

IRE will notify appropriate law enforcement authorities if it has a reasonable concern that illegal or dangerous activities have occurred or are likely to occur.

Outcome notification

The executive director, or the individual overseeing the investigation under this code, will notify the complainant and the accused in writing of the outcome, whether or not a violation is substantiated, not substantiated or could not be determined, and whether corrective or disciplinary action was recommended.

To protect privacy and maintain confidentiality, IRE may limit the information shared with either party. Written notice will ordinarily be provided within 10 business days after the determination and will include information about the right to appeal, the deadline for doing so and where the appeal must be submitted.

Immediate Actions During Events

Because concerns may arise quickly during conferences and other activities and require immediate attention, IRE representatives may take steps necessary to protect participants, maintain order or allow activities to continue safely. These steps may include:

- Directing participants to separate.
- Changing event arrangements.
- Removing an individual from the event.

These actions are temporary and do not necessarily represent a final finding that a violation occurred.

Appeals

A complainant or the accused may appeal a determination within 14 calendar days of receiving notice of the decision. An appeal must be submitted in writing to the executive director. If the appeal involves the executive director, it must be submitted to the board president. If the appeal involves both the executive director and board president, it must be submitted to the board vice president.

The appeal must explain its basis and identify at least one of the following:

- Significant procedural error in the review and determination.
- New information not reasonably available during the review.
- An action substantially disproportionate to the violation.

An appeal will not automatically trigger a second investigation simply because someone disagrees with the outcome. Appeals will first be reviewed by the Executive Committee, with a determination made by a majority of committee members present after any recusals. A person has a right to a further appeal made to the full Board of Directors, with a final decision made by a majority of its members present after any recusals.

Appeals will be reviewed within 30 days of receipt. If additional time is required, the parties will be notified. Individuals with conflicts of interest may not participate in appeal decisions.

Outcome notification

The individual responsible for overseeing an appeal will notify the complainant and the accused in writing of the appeal decision within 10 business days after it is made. The notice will state the date of the decision, the outcome of the appeal and any modification to the original determination or corrective action. To protect privacy and maintain confidentiality, IRE may limit the information shared with either party. The notification should also state any decision of the full Board of Directors, if applicable, is final.

Administration and Review

The executive director is responsible for maintaining confidential records related to Code of Conduct reports, investigations, determinations, actions and appeals. These records will be retained permanently in a secure location, with access limited to individuals who have a legitimate need to know in order to carry out their responsibilities under this code.

The executive director will also provide the board with information regarding complaints in executive session at the board's first meeting following completion of a review. This report should be a summary of the complaint and any resulting action, while also protecting participant privacy.

IRE will publish an annual summary of Code of Conduct matters and outcomes online without identifying individuals. IRE's Governance Committee will review this code annually and update it based on best practices, organizational experience and member feedback.

This version was crafted in August 2026 and recommended 4-0 (motion by Chair Josh Hinkle; second by Emma Carew Grovum) by show of hands by IRE's Code of Conduct Task Force for adoption, reviewed by legal counsel and recommended 7-1 (motion by Chair Kate Howard; second by Hinkle) by show of hands by the organization's Governance Committee for adoption. IRE's Board of Directors approved the recommendation and action item by voice vote 13-0 (motion by President Hinkle; second by Vice President Cindy Galli) at its in-person meeting on September 27, 2026, at which point the revised policy went into effect.