



**Aging Services  
of Minnesota**

LEADING CHANGE ■ CHANGING LIVES



*Earn consumers' trust through your  
commitment to a code of ethical conduct that  
emphasizes integrity, quality and community*



## Your Dedication to the Aging Services of Minnesota Code of Ethics

The Aging Services of Minnesota Housing-with-Services Code of Ethics seal signals to consumers that you subscribe to a clear set of standards that are the hallmark of quality providers in Minnesota. When you adopt the Code of Ethics, you pledge to act with integrity and make a commitment to fairness and honesty in your relationship with the people you serve. You promise to provide innovative and supportive services in a well-maintained setting that reflects the values of your community. You document the value of a well-trained, competent staff. You also recognize that the work involved in adopting the Code of Ethics is not a “one shot deal,” but rather a continuing promise to live by the Code of Ethics.

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## What is a Code of Ethics?

- ▼ Ethics can be defined as “the rules or standards governing the conduct of the members of a profession.”
- ▼ The oldest and best known code of ethics is probably the physician’s Hippocratic Oath, but groups as diverse as the American Folklore Society, the Institute of Real Estate Management, The American Marketing Association, social workers, journalists, foresters, jewelers and educators have adopted written codes of ethics.

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## Why have a Code of Ethics?

- ▼ A code of ethics can address a number of purposes for a professional group. For providers of older adult services, this code of ethics can:
  - Tell our customers what we consider to be acceptable behavior for those providing services to older adults.
  - Help prospective customers identify those providers for whom ethical behavior is intrinsic to the way they provide services.
  - Provide those working in older adult services with a framework for appropriate professional behavior to which their customers and their peers can hold them accountable.
  - Promote high standards of practices and provide a benchmark providers can use to evaluate their own services.
  - A code of ethics is important for growing and maturing professions and industries that are facing complex issues and that rely on the integrity of those who are part of the group to maintain the public trust.
- ▼ For more information about codes of ethics, there are many helpful web sites and resources, including <http://www.ethicsweb.ca/resources/>.

## Your Toolkit

Included in this packet is a **workbook** meant to be used with your board members/owner(s), staff, volunteers and others as you explore your commitment to ethical business practices.

A **resolution** must be passed by your board/owner(s), signed by the chair or designated person, and returned to Aging Services of Minnesota indicating that you are committing to the Code of Ethics. A sample resolution is included.

An **order form** has been included so that you may order a frame for your Code of Ethics certificate and purchase additional materials.

Because it is important to use the **Code of Ethics seal** in your advertising, brochures and on your business stationery, Aging Services of Minnesota will provide the Code of Ethics seal in various printable formats for your use. Please note that use of the seal is for members during their initial two-year adoption period and subsequent two-year adoption terms only.

In order to help you announce your commitment to the Aging Services of Minnesota Code of Ethics, we have supplied a template for a **news release**. Please feel free to customize it according to your needs.

Aging Services of Minnesota staff is here to help you. If you have any questions about the Code of Ethics or promoting your organization as a Code of Ethics participant, please call us at 651.645.4545, or toll-free 800.462.5368.

### How was this Code of Ethics Developed

- ▼ In May 2001, a group of about 15 providers spent two days working with a skilled facilitator to produce a first draft of the Code of Ethics.
- ▼ Drafts of the Code of Ethics have been reviewed and discussed by various committees of the Minnesota Health & Housing Alliance (now Aging Services of Minnesota) and with members at several district meetings.
- ▼ Fall 2001 – Minnesota Health & Housing Alliance hired a consultant to conduct interviews with key stakeholders to get feedback on the Code. These stakeholders were:

- Minnesota State Senators Linda Berglin and Sheila Kiscaden
- Minnesota State Representative Fran Bradley
- Dr. Rosalie Kane, University of Minnesota
- Commissioner Kit Hadley, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency
- Michele Kimball, State Director, AARP
- LaRhae Knatterud, Aging Initiatives, Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Kathy Kelso, Advocacy Center for Long-Term Care
- Tom Melchoir, Larson Allen Weishair & Co
- Deb Peterson, Minnesota Attorney General's Office
- Linda Sutherland, Facility and Provider Compliance Division, Minnesota Department of Health
- Sharon Zoesch, Ombudsman for Older Adults
- Jim Varpness, Executive Director, Board on Aging
- Bonnie Clark, Senior Housing Inc.
- Iris Freeman, Director of Public Policy, Alzheimer's Association, Minnesota-Dakotas Chapter

- ▼ In January 2002, MHHA's consultant conducted three consumer focus groups in West St. Paul and in Elk River. There were two focus groups with a total of 26 seniors and another group of six adult children each with a parent in an assisted living residence. These three focus groups were asked for feedback on the Code.
- ▼ Finally, the MHHA Board of Directors approved the Code of Ethics at its January 2002 meeting. In its first year, 206 members have now adopted the Code and its adoption is a core requirements in Aging Services of Minnesota's Confident Choices for Senior Living Program.



## What Does It Mean To Adopt Aging Services of Minnesota's Code of Ethics?

Many providers of older adult services have developed their own mission and values statements. This Code of Ethics is designed to complement an organization's mission and values statement. **It is important for this sector and providers to work together to inform our customers that there are standards of conduct that are consistent among all quality older adult services providers throughout the state of Minnesota.** We hope that as a result of ongoing consumer education efforts, our customers will begin to expect that quality providers of older adult services will have adopted the Code of Ethics. By adopting this Code of Ethics, your organization is joining with other organizations to state clearly the standards of conduct that are shared by quality providers in Minnesota.

### Living the Code of Ethics

Aging Services of Minnesota sees the Code of Ethics as a dynamic tool that will help staff, volunteers, board members or owners, customers and others think about and discuss how they conduct their business and provide services to older adults. To that end, Aging Services of Minnesota has designed an interactive workbook that can be used with staff and other groups to help them think about their own beliefs and values, how those personal beliefs relate to the Code of Ethics, and how each organization may find different ways to demonstrate its commitment to various parts of the Code.

For example, the workbook asks participants to think about the concept of integrity and what "acting with integrity" means to them in their day-to-day personal and professional life. The workbook asks participants to think about a person they know who acts with integrity and what behaviors reflect this integrity. Next, participants are asked through the following two questions how the ethic "We pledge integrity and commit to fairness, honesty and confidentiality" is carried out in their organization.

- 1) **What examples can your organization demonstrate showing its integrity and commitment to fairness, honesty and confidentiality?**
- 2) **How does your organization demonstrate this ethic to its consumers and the public?**

Although there are many ways an organization might choose to address each particular ethic, the workbook does provide some examples for discussion purposes. The workbook goes on to provide a discussion vehicle for each specific ethic. We hope this workbook will be useful for discussion, orientation and training of staff, volunteers and others involved with the organization.

### An Ongoing Process

When your organization adopts the Code of Ethics we hope that you will establish a process to regularly examine how you are addressing each ethic in the Code. Because this will be an on-going process of self-examination, Aging Services of Minnesota will ask organizations to adopt the Code every two years. When you review your commitment to the Code of Ethics every two years, you are renewing your promise to act with integrity, fairness and honesty, provide innovative and supportive services by well-trained and competent staff in a well-maintained setting. Aging Services of Minnesota looks forward to working with you to make this Code of Ethics and ethical behavior an integral part of older adult services in Minnesota.



## Sample Board of Directors Resolution to Adopt Aging Services of Minnesota's Code of Ethics

Whereas, the (name of organization) Board of Directors is committed to providing quality services to the citizens of (name of community or region);

Whereas, quality care for the people we serve is based on certain ethical standards and beliefs;

Whereas, our relationship with the people we serve and those who support them must be one of mutual trust and respect, and ethically informed actions are a cornerstone in establishing trust and respect;

Whereas our relationship with employees and volunteers is strengthened by mutual understanding and commitment to shared ethical standards and beliefs;

Whereas, we believe that if all people employed by or volunteering for (name of organization) understand these shared ethics and use them to guide decision-making and activities of care, the resulting services we provide will be sensitive, caring and of high quality;

Whereas, as a member of Aging Services of Minnesota, we have a compact with our peer provider community to strive always to offer quality, ethically informed services;

Therefore, we, the Board of (Directors) (Trustees)/Owner(s) of (name of organization) do hereby adopt the Aging Services of Minnesota's Code of Ethics (list all buildings to which this applies) and direct our employees and volunteers to adhere to the Code in all that they do as a member of this organization.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of the Board/Owner

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
CEO/Manager



# Aging Services of Minnesota

## CODE OF ETHICS

(Name of Provider)

**PREAMBLE:** This Code of Ethics guides our decisions and leads us to create a culture of mutual respect, understanding and trust with the people we serve and those who support them.

### We pledge integrity and commit to...

- fairness, honesty, and confidentiality.
- open communication and encouragement of self-expression in order to continually improve our services.
- nurture choice through disclosure of vital information to enable the people we serve to make informed decisions about the level of care – and corresponding level of risk – they desire.

### We promote the highest quality services and environments and commit to...

- develop a well-trained, competent staff and prudently manage our resources to provide quality services and environments to comply with applicable laws and regulations.
- provide innovative and supportive services in a well-maintained setting that reflects the values of our community.
- help the people we serve to obtain services to maximize their desired level of independence, autonomy and dignity. We will identify internal as well as community resources to assist them with life's transitions.

### We foster community and commit to...

- acknowledge and respect each person we serve as a reflection of his or her own culture, life experiences, habits and decisions.
- partner with the people we serve and those who support them – their family and community, and members of our organization.
- demonstrate good citizenship and create opportunities for mutually beneficial activities with the greater community.

This certifies Aging Services of Minnesota has on file a resolution of the Board of Directors/Owner(s) of (name of organization), which adopted and agreed that their organization and staff will adhere to the Aging Services of Minnesota Code of Ethics.

Wayne Olson, Board Chair

Gayle M. Kvenvold, President/CEO



Effective for two years  
from date of adoption



Make the most of your adoption of the Aging Services of Minnesota Code of Ethics.

By demonstrating your commitment to the Code of Ethics, you have become part of an elite group of organizations serving older adults. The next step is to tell your story to the public, through the news media. Here is a template for a news release to get you started, however you will want to customize it by adding information about your services and facility.

### News Release

(Name of Organization) has reinforced its commitment to open communication, fairness, confidentiality and a high standard of service by adopting the Code of Ethics of Aging Services of Minnesota.

Aging Services of Minnesota is a statewide member organization of providers dedicated to promoting excellence and innovation in older adult services. The Code of Ethics was developed by consumers and providers to focus on ethical issues in older adult services. Its goal is to help establish and maintain trust in the relationship between these providers and consumers.

(Name of Organization)'s management, board of directors/owner(s) and staff participated in completing their resolution to adopt the Code of Ethics, which involved a self-examination of (Name of Organization's) ethical standards and commitment to the standards of conduct shared by quality providers in Minnesota.

Visitors to (Name of Organization) will see the Aging Services of Minnesota Code of Ethics plaque proudly posted at our entrance.

“By earning the Code of Ethics seal, (Name of Organization) has shown that we strive for the standards of quality, open communication and respect that residents and their families expect. We have pledged to provide innovative and supportive housing in a well-maintained setting that reflects the values of our community and with a well-trained staff,” according to (Organization spokesperson).

Choosing the right services and provider can be a daunting challenge, however, looking for providers that display the Aging Services of Minnesota Code of Ethics seal can help refine the search, according to Aging Services of Minnesota.

In addition to the Code of Ethics program, the association offers consumer information on a range of older adult services in Minnesota online at <http://www.agingservicesmn.org>, click on Consumers. There you'll find tips on planning for your needs and information about the many types of services available to older Minnesotans.

#### ***For renewing members***

(Name of Organization) first adopted the Code of Ethics on \_\_\_\_\_ and has renewed this commitment every two years since that date.

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## Resources

A **PowerPoint presentation** is available on the Aging Services of Minnesota's Web site for you to use to help explain the Code of Ethics and why it was developed. Go to [www.agingervicesmn.org](http://www.agingervicesmn.org), click on About Us, then Quality Initiatives.

To obtain a copy of the **Code of Ethics seal** for use in your advertising brochures, Web site and/or business stationery, contact Jenny Mims, [jmims@agingervicesmn.org](mailto:jmims@agingervicesmn.org) for further information.

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**Code of Ethics materials are available  
from the Aging Services of Minnesota Web site at no charge.  
Go to [www.agingervicesmn.org](http://www.agingervicesmn.org), log in and click on About Us, then  
Quality Initiatives; look in the sidebar for a packet of  
information to download and print.**

Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fax this form to 651.645.0002 or call Alecia Crumpler at 651.645.4545 or 800.462.5368.

**For additional information on Aging Services of Minnesota, please visit our web site at [www.agingervicesmn.org](http://www.agingervicesmn.org).**