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## Introduction to the Professional Standards Process

### FILING A REQUEST FOR ARBITRATION AS A REALTOR® MEMBER or A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC

The Kentucky REALTORS® ensures the ethical behavior of its REALTOR® members through the professional standards process. KYR handles the administrative aspects of this process for many of the local associations in our state. A request can only be processed against someone who is a member of our association and his/her membership will need to be verified. Although the staff of KYR is not at liberty to offer any advice on the merits of your complaint, there are options to consider:

**Filing a Request for Arbitration**—A request for arbitration may be filed if a contractual relationship exists between two parties and involves a specific monetary amount, which will either be awarded to one of the parties involved or split between the two parties. **Note that parties subject to arbitration must agree to be bound by the award. Also, the request must be filed within 180 days after the closing of the transaction, if any, or within one hundred eighty (180) days after the facts constituting the arbitrable matter could have been known by the complainant in the exercise of reasonable diligence, whichever is later.**

Enclosed are the necessary forms to file a request for arbitration, if you wish to take that action. The Arbitration Hearing will be held in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Please be reminded it is important to attach an explanation of the situation surrounding the request. Be as specific as possible. Provide any information that would assist the grievance committee in understanding the facts in the situation and making an informed decision.

If you have any further questions, please contact the Director of Professional Standards at 1-800-264-2185. If you have a question about Kentucky Real Estate Laws, please contact the Kentucky Real Estate Commission at (888) 373-3300 or (502) 429-7250.

Enclosures: Overview of the Professional Standards Process  
Form #A-1  
Form #A-2  
2024 Code of Ethics  
Mediation Brochure

The majority of real estate transactions close without incident, but there is a possibility that a problem or dispute can occur. If you feel you have a problem, you may want to first discuss the situation with the real estate agent or with the principal broker of the firm. When a dispute does arise, it is usually successfully resolved through normal channels of communication and negotiation. Occasionally, a dispute arises which cannot be resolved through negotiation.

Boards and Associations of REALTORS® are responsible for enforcing the **REALTOR® Code of Ethics** through the Professional Standards Process. The Kentucky REALTORS® handles the administrative aspects of the professional standards process for most of Kentucky's local boards and associations of REALTORS®.

Enclosed with this packet is a copy of the **2024 Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the National Association of REALTORS®**. The **Code of Ethics** describes the professional conduct that is expected of REALTORS®. The willingness to accept and abide by the **Code of Ethics** is what sets REALTORS® apart from other real estate practitioners.

## Overview of the Professional Standards Process

When joining a Board or Association, REALTORS® agree to abide by the **Code of Ethics** as a continuing condition of membership. It is because of the obligation to abide by the **Code of Ethics** that you can file a complaint. Before filing a complaint with a Board or Association of REALTORS®, it must be determined if the real estate agent involved is a REALTOR®. Not all real estate agents are REALTORS®. Only those who belong to a Board of REALTORS® can legally use the term REALTOR®. Therefore, it must be determined if, and to which Board of REALTORS® an agent belongs.

### **Do you have an ethics complaint or an arbitration request?**

An **Ethics Complaint** charges that a REALTOR® violated a(n) Article(s) of the **Code of Ethics**. See the enclosed copy of the **REALTOR® Code of Ethics**.

A **Request for Arbitration** may be filed if a contractual (or specific noncontractual—see Standards of Practice 17-4) relationship exists between two parties and involves a specific monetary amount. An arbitration request often involves one REALTOR® in disagreement with another REALTOR®, usually over a commission dispute. Sometimes, arbitration concerns a dispute between a member of the public and a REALTOR®.

The Association provides arbitration as a service to its members. Arbitration is not a disciplinary proceeding nor does it award damages. By becoming and remaining a member of a Board or Association of REALTORS®, each REALTOR® binds himself to arbitrate certain disputes. Not every request may be arbitrated at the Board. Conditions and limitations exist which must be considered. The Association will explain these conditions and limitations as the process continues. Disputes involving clients or customers require that they sign an agreement to arbitrate and to be bound by the arbitration. A Grievance Committee determines whether the Complainant is a client or customer (whether arbitration is mandatory or voluntary) and if the dispute can be processed by the Board.

Arbitration requests and ethics complaints must always be handled separately. If an arbitration request and an ethics complaint are filed at the same time and both are forwarded to a hearing, the arbitration hearing will be held first, followed by the ethics hearing consisting of a different hearing panel.

### **Who may file an arbitration request?**

- REALTORS® who are principal brokers;
- REALTOR® non-principals provided his or her principal broker joins in the request; *Note Arbitration in such cases shall be between the REALTOR® principals.*
- REALTOR® non-principals requesting arbitration with REALTOR® principals (or vice versa)

- who are or were affiliated with the same firm;
- Clients or customers of the REALTOR®; or
- REALTOR® principal requesting arbitration with a nonmember broker.
- All parties submitting to arbitration must agree in writing to be bound by the decision.

The Arbitration Hearing will be held in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

### **What can the Association do?**

A Board or Association of REALTORS® possesses limited authority regarding its members.

1. The Board or Association cannot try a member for the violations of the Kentucky real estate license law or any other alleged violation of the law. Its jurisdiction only covers violations of membership duties. The Kentucky Real Estate Commission solely controls the real estate agent's license to sell real estate. If you think a person has violated the law, you should contact this agency at (888) 373-3300 or (502) 429-7250.
2. For the same reason, the Board or Association cannot suspend or terminate the license of one of its members.
3. The Board or Association can administer discipline to the REALTOR®. This would happen only in the instance of an ethics violation or other breach of membership duties. The Board or Association can use one or more of the following ways to discipline a member:
  - Send a letter of warning or reprimand to the member.
  - Direct the member to attend an ethics class or other training appropriate to the violation.
  - Fine the member up to \$15,000 (this fine is not awarded to the Complainant).
  - Place the member on probation.
  - Suspend the Board membership of the member or issue a fine not to exceed \$15,000 in lieu of suspension.
  - Expel the member from Board membership.
  - Suspend/expel the individual's MLS access and use.
4. An ethics proceeding may not include money damages.
5. The Board can arbitrate certain money disputes and must in some situations. But, the member of the public must agree in writing to arbitrate the dispute and to be bound by the decision.
6. An arbitration award may not be more than the amount in dispute. Under no circumstances will the Board award 'punitive' damages.
7. The Arbitration Hearing will be held in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

### **How do you file an arbitration request?**

1. Depending on whether or not you are a REALTOR® member, complete and sign the **Request for Arbitration Form #A-1 or #A-2**. Name the REALTOR®(s) principal(s) on page one. Add the name of the firm on page one if you wish the firm to be the co-respondent.
2. Indicate the amount in dispute and who holds the disputed funds.
3. Include an explanation of the situation. State why you feel you are entitled to an award of some kind. *(Remember, this is not an ethics complaint. If you think the REALTOR®(s) violated the **Code of Ethics** you may file a separate ethics complaint.)*
4. Attach copies of any and all pertinent documents such as listing agreements, purchase and sales agreements, closing statements, etc. Also include any notarized statements from witnesses.

5. Parties must include a \$250 deposit with their arbitration request. The prevailing party in arbitration will receive their deposit back from KYR, minus a \$50 charge to offset the cost of the arbitration.
6. The complainant(s) sign the arbitration agreement. This indicates a commitment to abide by the decision of the Hearing Panel. The Arbitration Hearing will be held in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.
7. Send the entire package, keeping a copy for your own records, to the Kentucky REALTORS®, 2708 Old Rosebud Road, Suite 200, Lexington, Kentucky 40509, to the attention of the Director of Professional Standards. The Grievance Committee will then process the request. The package may also be emailed to [jjohnson@kyrealtors.com](mailto:jjohnson@kyrealtors.com)

It is not unusual for an Association to receive an ethics complaint and an arbitration request surrounding the same set of circumstances. If you think the REALTOR®(s) violated the **Code of Ethics** AND you have a monetary dispute with the same REALTOR®, you must complete both forms.

### **How does the Association process the complaint or request?**

Specially trained REALTOR® members of the Kentucky REALTORS® are appointed by the local associations to serve on the Grievance Committee, Mediation Committee, Professional Standards Hearing Panel, and the Appeal Panel.

The Grievance Committee's role in arbitration functions only to make a preliminary review. The results of this review will determine whether the matter is subject to Board arbitration. The Grievance Committee must consider the six points outlined as follows:

1. whether the complainant is authorized to invoke arbitration;
2. whether the dispute described is an arbitrable matter;
3. whether the dispute is filed in a timely manner;
4. whether the arbitration is mandatory or voluntary to the people involved;
5. whether either the amount in dispute is too small or too large, or too legally complex;
6. whether the matter is currently the subject of litigation.

Such a review could result in releasing members from their obligation to arbitrate. This would free the parties to seek other recourse in order to resolve the dispute. If the Grievance Committee forwards the complaint or request for a hearing, it is assigned to the Professional Standards Committee. A written reply is requested from the respondent and a both parties attend the hearing.

### **MEDIATION:**

Mediation is a process in which disputing parties attempt to resolve their disagreements with the help of an impartial, trained third party—the mediator. The mediator does not offer opinions, pass judgment, or render legally binding decisions. The mediator's only function is to help parties identify their differences and reach an agreement on how to resolve them. Participation in this mediation conference is mandatory for REALTOR® members of the Kentucky REALTORS®.

If the Grievance Committee has reviewed a **Request for Arbitration** and found it to be an arbitrable matter, a mediation conference will be scheduled at a time and location that is acceptable to both parties.

When the disputing parties have reached and agreed on a mutually acceptable solution, they sign a written agreement that outlines the terms of the settlement. Once the agreement is signed, parties are legally bound to abide by its terms.

If the parties cannot reach a settlement, the arbitration hearing will be scheduled for the arbitration hearing panel to determine the outcome of the dispute.

## **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The function of this committee is to hold ethics and arbitration hearings. The Respondent is requested to reply to the complaint or request. A hearing will then be scheduled, and the parties will be given minimally 21 days' notice of the hearing date, time, and place. KYR schedules the hearing at the local board office (if there is a private conference room available) or a neutral location in the city closest to the parties. These hearings provide an opportunity for the Complainant and the Respondent to explain "his or her side of the story" by presenting testimony and witnesses, if any.

Once all of the facts have been presented, a Hearing Panel, consisting of members of the Kentucky REALTORS® chosen on the basis of their experience, temperament, and objectivity, will determine whether the **Code of Ethics** has been violated, or, in the case of arbitration, how the dispute should be settled.

The Association will inform the parties about each step of this process as it occurs. The Association will also provide the parties with instructions about the hearing procedures prior to the hearing.

Form #A-1

Kentucky REALTORS®

Board or State Association

2708 Old Rosebud Road Suite 200

Lexington

Kentucky

40509

Address

City

State

Zip

Request and Agreement to Arbitrate

- (1) The undersigned, by becoming and remaining a member of the (local) Board of REALTORS® (or Participant in its MLS), has previously consented to arbitration through the Board under its rules and regulations.
(2) I am informed that each person named below is a member in good standing of the Board (or Participant in its MLS), or was a member of said Board of REALTORS® at the time the dispute arose.
(3) A dispute arising out of the real estate business as defined by Article 17 of the Code of Ethics exists between me (or my firm) and (list all persons and/or firms you wish to name as respondents to this arbitration):\*

Name, REALTOR® principal\* Address

Name, REALTOR® principal\* Address

Firm Address
(NOTE: Arbitration is generally conducted between REALTORS® [principals] or between firms comprised of REALTOR® principals. Naming a REALTOR® [principal] as respondent enables the complainant to know who will participate in the hearing from the respondent's firm; naming a firm may increase the likelihood of collecting any resulting award.)

- (4) There is due, unpaid and owing to me (or I retain) from the above-named persons the sum of \$ My claim is predicated upon the statement attached, marked Exhibit I and incorporated by reference into this application. The disputed funds are currently held by

Parties are strongly encouraged to provide any and all documents and evidence they intend to introduce during the hearing to the other party(ies) and to the association prior to the day of the hearing. Providing documents and evidence in advance can expedite the hearing process and prevent costly, unnecessary continuances.

- (5) I request and consent to arbitration through the Board in accordance with its Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual (alternatively, "in accordance with the professional standards procedures set forth in the bylaws of the Board"). I agree to abide by the arbitration award and, if I am the non-prevailing party, to, within ten (10) days following transmittal of the award, either (1) pay the award to the party(ies) named in the award or (2) deposit the funds with the Professional Standards Administrator to be held in an escrow or trust account maintained for this purpose. Failure to satisfy the award or to deposit the funds in the escrow or trust account within this time period may be considered a violation of a membership duty and may subject the member to disciplinary action at the discretion of the Board of Directors consistent with Section 53, The Award, Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual.

In the event I do not comply with the arbitration award and it is necessary for any party to this arbitration to obtain judicial confirmation and enforcement of the arbitration award against me, I agree to pay the party obtaining such confirmation the costs and reasonable attorney's fees incurred in obtaining such confirmation and enforcement.

- (6) I understand any party may request mediation of a dispute by contacting the association's Professional Standards Administrator.
(7) I enclose my check in the sum of \$ \$250.00 for the arbitration filing deposit.\*\*
(8) I understand that I may be represented by legal counsel, and that I should give written notice no less than fifteen (15) days before the hearing of the name, address, and phone number of my attorney to all parties and the Board. Failure to provide this notice may result in a continuance of the hearing, if the Hearing Panel determines that the rights of the other party(ies) require representation.

\*Complainants may name one or more REALTOR® principals or a firm comprised of REALTOR® principals as respondent(s). Or, complainants may name REALTOR® principals and firms as respondents. "REALTOR® principal" includes licensed or certified individuals who are sole proprietors, partners in a partnership, officers or majority shareholders of a corporation, or office managers (including branch office managers) acting on behalf of principals of a real estate firm.

\*\*Not to exceed \$500.

(9) Each party must provide a list of the names of witnesses he intends to call at the hearing to the Board and to all other parties not less than fifteen (15) days prior to the hearing. Each party shall arrange for his witnesses to be present at the time and place designated for the hearing.

\_\_\_\_\_.

All parties appearing at a hearing may be called as a witness without advance notice.

(10) The following REALTOR® nonprincipal (or REALTOR ASSOCIATE® nonprincipal) affiliated with my firm has a financial interest in the outcome of the proceeding and may be called as a witness, and may, at my discretion, be present throughout the hearing: \_\_\_\_\_.

(11) I declare that this application and the allegations contained herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and this request for arbitration is filed within one hundred eighty (180) days after the closing of the transaction, if any, or within one hundred eighty (180) days after the facts constituting the arbitrable matter could have been known by the complainant in the exercise of reasonable diligence, whichever is later.

Date(s) alleged dispute took place \_\_\_\_\_

(12) If either party to an arbitration request believes that the Grievance Committee has incorrectly classified the issue presented in the request (i.e., mandatory or voluntary), the party has twenty (20) days from the date of transmittal of the Grievance Committee's decision to file a written appeal of the decision. Only those materials that the Grievance Committee had at the time of its determination may be considered with the appeal by the Board of Directors.

(13) Are the circumstances giving rise to this arbitration request the subject of civil litigation? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

(14) Important note related to arbitration conducted pursuant to Standard of Practice 17-4 (1) or (2): Where arbitration is conducted between two (or more) cooperating brokers pursuant to Standard of Practice 17-4 (1) or (2), the amount in dispute and the amount of any potential resulting award is limited to the amount paid to the respondent by the listing broker, seller, or landlord and any amount credited or paid to a party to the transaction at the direction of the respondent.

(15) Address of the property in the transaction giving rise to this arbitration request:

\_\_\_\_\_

(16) The sale/lease closed on: \_\_\_\_\_

(17) Agreements to arbitrate are irrevocable except as otherwise provided under state law. The arbitration hearing will be held in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

**Complainant(s):**

Name (Type/Print)	Signature of REALTOR® Principal*	Date
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\_\_\_\_\_

Address

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Type/Print)	Signature of REALTOR® Principal*	Date
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\_\_\_\_\_

Address

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Firm\* \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

\*In cases where arbitration is requested in the name of a firm comprised of REALTORS® (principals), the request must be signed by at least one of the REALTOR® principals of the firm as a co-complainant. "REALTOR® principal" includes licensed or certified individuals who are sole proprietors, partners in a partnership, officers or majority shareholders of a corporation, or office managers (including branch office managers) acting on behalf of principals of a real estate firm.

*(Revised 11/23)*



Form #A-2

Kentucky REALTORS®

Board or State Association

2708 Old Rosebud Road Suite 200

Lexington

Kentucky

40509

Address

City

State

Zip

Request and Agreement to Arbitrate (Nonmember)

- (1) The undersigned agrees and wants to submit to arbitration before a Hearing Panel of the Kentucky Board of REALTORS® with the understanding that the arbitration will be conducted pursuant to the Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual of the Board (or, alternatively, "in accordance with the professional standards procedures set forth in the Board's bylaws"). The undersigned acknowledges having had the opportunity to review the Board's procedures or having been provided with a copy of the procedures.
(2) I am informed that each person named below is a member in good standing of the Board (or Participant in its MLS), or was a member of said Board of REALTORS® at the time the dispute arose.
(3) A dispute arising out of the real estate business as defined by Article 17 of the Code of Ethics exists between me and (list all persons and/or firms you wish to name as respondents to this arbitration. Naming a REALTOR® [principal] as respondent enables the complainant to know who will participate in the hearing from the respondent's firm; naming a firm may increase the likelihood of collecting any resulting award.):\*

Name, REALTOR® principal\* Address

Name, REALTOR® principal\* Address

Firm Address

- (4) There is due, unpaid, and owing to me (or I retain) from the above-named persons the sum of \$ My claim is predicated upon the statement attached, marked Exhibit I and incorporated by reference into this application. Parties are strongly encouraged to provide any and all documents and evidence they intend to introduce during the hearing to the other party(ies) and to the association prior to the day of the hearing. Providing documents and evidence in advance can expedite the hearing process and prevent costly, unnecessary continuances.
(5) The undersigned confirms that execution of this Agreement is wholly voluntary and, pursuant to this Agreement, agrees and promises to abide absolutely by the award of the Hearing Panel. In the event of adverse decision, I agree to, within ten (10) days following transmittal of the award, either (1) pay the award to the party(ies) named in the award or (2) deposit the funds with the Professional Standards Administrator to be held in an escrow or trust account maintained for this purpose consistent with Section 53, The Award, Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual. In the event I do not comply with the arbitration award and it is necessary for any party to this arbitration to obtain judicial confirmation and enforcement of the arbitration award against me, I agree to pay the party obtaining such confirmation the costs and reasonable attorney's fees incurred in obtaining such confirmation and enforcement.

(6) I understand any party may request mediation of a dispute by contacting the association's Professional Standards Administrator.

(7) I enclose my check in the sum of \$ 250.00 for the arbitration filing fee deposit.\*\*

(8) I understand that I may be represented by legal counsel, and that I should give written notice no less than fifteen (15) days before the hearing of the name, address, and phone number of my attorney to all parties and the Board. Failure to provide this notice may result in a continuance of the hearing, if the Hearing Panel determines that the rights of the other party(ies) require representation.

Each party must provide a list of the names of witnesses he intends to call at the hearing to the Board and to all other parties not less than fifteen (15) days prior to the hearing. Each party shall arrange for his witnesses to be present at the time and place designated for the hearing. All parties appearing at the hearing may be called as witnesses without advance notice.

(9) I declare that this application and the allegations contained herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and this request for arbitration is filed within one hundred eighty (180) days after the closing of the transaction, if any, or within one hundred eighty (180) days after the facts constituting the arbitrable matter could have been known by the complainant in the exercise of reasonable diligence, whichever is later.

Date(s) alleged dispute took place:

\*Complainants may name one or more REALTOR® principals or a firm comprised of REALTOR® principals as respondent(s). Or, complainants may name REALTOR® principals and firms as respondents. "REALTOR® principal" includes licensed or certified individuals who are sole proprietors, partners in a partnership, officers or majority shareholders of a corporation, or office managers (including branch office managers) acting on behalf of principals of a real estate firm.

\*\*Not to exceed \$500.

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(10) If either party to an arbitration request believes that the Grievance Committee has incorrectly classified the issue presented in the request (i.e., mandatory or voluntary), the party has twenty (20) days from transmittal of the Grievance Committee's decision to file a written appeal of the decision. Only those materials that the Grievance Committee had at the time of its determination may be considered with the appeal by the Board of Directors.

(11) Are the circumstances giving rise to this arbitration request the subject of civil litigation? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

(12) Important note related to arbitration conducted pursuant to Standard of Practice 17-4 (1) or (2): Where arbitration is conducted between two (or more) cooperating brokers pursuant to Standard of Practice 17-4 (1) or (2), the amount in dispute and the amount of any potential resulting award is limited to the amount paid to the respondent by the listing broker, seller, or landlord and any amount credited or paid to a party to the transaction at the direction of the respondent.

(13) Agreements to arbitrate are irrevocable except as otherwise provided under state law. The Arbitration Hearing will be held in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

**Complainant(s):**

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Name (Type/Print)

Signature of complainant

Date

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Address

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Telephone

Email

---

Name (Type/Print)

Signature of complainant

Date

---

Address

---

Telephone

Email

## Process Overview

### Pre-mediation Preparation

- Ten days prior to session, parties receive a letter explaining the mediation process and logistical issues.
- Parties agree to mediate.
- Mediator is selected/appointed by random rotation, mutual request, or objection to a proposed mediator.
- Arrangements are made via letter or telephone.
  - Pre-mediation concerns are addressed.
  - Date and time typically scheduled at the convenience of the parties after a request for arbitration or mediation is received or following the grievance committee's determination of arbitrability.
- Witnesses and/or attorneys may attend, but this is not necessary because the process is non adversarial; there are no "findings of facts."
- Information is exchanged.
  - Parties need not prepare exhibits or extensive documentation. If a document will clarify an issue it may be used, but parties are reminded that mediation is not a fact-finding conference.

## Mediation Conference

### 1. Mediator's opening statement/questions

Explain process and rules/goals, including the mediator's and parties' roles, voluntariness, neutrality, and confidentiality.

### 2. Parties' initial statements/questions

- Understanding perspectives
- Venting

### 3. Identification of issues

### 4. Create agenda

### 5. Cross-talk

Parties respond to each other and explain/explore information, needs, ideas and feelings.

### 6. Caucus (private meeting)

Mediator may meet privately with the parties to clarify needs and explore options for resolution and proposals.

### 7. Building an agreement

With the mediator's assistance, parties explore and refine workable solutions.

### 8. Conclusion

Agreement is reached/signed before leaving mediation or all agree that no further progress can be made, in which case parties are free to pursue arbitration.

# Code of Ethics

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

# Mediation

The Winning Solution  
for Brokers

collaborative  
resolution  
process  
decisions  
brokers  
mediation  
voluntary  
non-adversarial  
agreement  
control  
ethics  
confidential  
neutral  
quick  
conference

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Item 166-291P  
(01/17)



NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION of  
REALTORS®



NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION of  
REALTORS®

Even REALTORS® who are committed to high standards of conduct occasionally have honest business disputes with other professionals, clients, or customers. There is an ongoing need for efficient and economical mechanisms to resolve such disputes. Arbitration is valuable, but mediation is simpler and easier.

## What is Mediation?

“The act or process of mediating; intervention between conflicting parties to promote reconciliation, settlement, or compromise.”

–Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary

- Arbitration and mediation are valuable in resolving business disputes.
- Both mediation and arbitration are private and neutral/with expertise.

### But . . .

- Mediation is an attractive alternative to arbitration.

## Why Use Mediation?

Mediation	Arbitration
Low or no cost	Moderate cost
Quick	More time consuming
Win/win outcome	Win/lose outcome
Collaborative	Adversarial
Maximum range of solutions	Result limited to monetary award
Improves relationships	May damage relationships
Parties control outcome	Arbitrators control outcome

## Key Features

### Voluntary\*/Private Process

- Parties decide to enter the mediation process.
- Parties can leave the mediation process at any time.
- Parties have complete control over the outcome.

### Neutral/Impartial Mediator

- Understands issues quickly because typically, the facilitator is familiar with real estate practices and customs.
- Mediates only matters in which he/she remains neutral and impartial.
- Discloses conflicts of interest (parties may agree to continue following disclosure or terminate session).
- Facilitates and assists with negotiations – controls the process, not the substance.
- Honors the concepts of self-determination, respect, and civility.
- Enhances the parties’ abilities to understand their own and each other’s needs.
- Helps parties understand the alternatives to settling.
- Should possess these qualities, according to William Simkin in *Settling Disputes*:
  - wisdom of Solomon
  - the hide of a rhinoceros
  - the patience of Job
  - abilities of a half-back
  - wit of the Irish

\*Voluntary unless mandated by the association

## Confidential Process

- Mediation is a confidential settlement process.
- Neither the mediator nor the parties disclose the communications or conduct of the mediation, unless all parties agree (with limited exceptions, such as risk of harm).
- Ethical violations discovered as a result of participation in the mediation are not reported.
- Settlements discussed in mediation are not admissible in arbitration.
- Generally a mediator is not a witness in arbitration or court.
- Information gathered and exchanged may be used in arbitration only to the extent that it was obtained independently from the mediation process.

## Why Mediation Works

- Most disputes are successfully resolved
- High speed
- Low or no cost
- Flexible
- Maintains/improves relationships
- Improves poor communication/clarifies misunderstandings because parties come together and talk
- Discovers/addresses the true interests of parties
- Moves beyond different views of law/fact
- Allows creative solutions beyond win/lose
- Mediated resolution is just as binding and enforceable as an arbitration award

## When It Will Not Work

- When a precedent is necessary
- When there is no relationship and it is cheaper to contest the claim
- When vindication/punishment remains the main objective
- When the “jackpot syndrome” is involved (maximize/minimize recovery)

“Mediation is user friendly. It takes a potential conflict, turns it around and saves relationships.” –Larry Apple

“Mediation is the ONLY win/win solution in dispute resolution.” –Mike Wasmann

“Mediation lets participants accept responsibility for the outcome of their disputes, as opposed to relinquishing that authority to a third party.” –C. Hilea Walker

“Mediation is the best alternative because you have more control over the results, a better chance to communicate your story, and it strengthens REALTOR® relationships through mutual gain and satisfaction.” –Patrick Reilly

Mediation can save time and money and can be quicker, easier, and more amicable for resolving business disputes than arbitration.

# CODE OF ETHICS AND STANDARDS OF PRACTICE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

Effective January 1, 2024



Where the word REALTORS® is used in this Code and Preamble, it shall be deemed to include REALTOR ASSOCIATE®s.

While the Code of Ethics establishes obligations that may be higher than those mandated by law, in any instance where the Code of Ethics and the law conflict, the obligations of the law must take precedence.

## Preamble

Under all is the land. Upon its wise utilization and widely allocated ownership depend the survival and growth of free institutions and of our civilization. REALTORS® should recognize that the interests of the nation and its citizens require the highest and best use of the land and the widest distribution of land ownership. They require the creation of adequate housing, the building of functioning cities, the development of productive industries and farms, and the preservation of a healthful environment.

Such interests impose obligations beyond those of ordinary commerce. They impose grave social responsibility and a patriotic duty to which REALTORS® should dedicate themselves, and for which they should be diligent in preparing themselves. REALTORS®, therefore, are zealous to maintain and improve the standards of their calling and share with their fellow REALTORS® a common responsibility for its integrity and honor.

In recognition and appreciation of their obligations to clients, customers, the public, and each other, REALTORS® continuously strive to become and remain informed on issues affecting real estate and, as knowledgeable professionals, they willingly share the fruit of their experience and study with others. They identify and take steps, through enforcement of this Code of Ethics and by assisting appropriate regulatory bodies, to eliminate practices which may damage the public or which might discredit or bring dishonor to the real estate profession. REALTORS® having direct personal knowledge of conduct that may violate the Code of Ethics involving misappropriation of client or customer funds or property, willful discrimination, or fraud resulting in substantial economic harm, bring such matters to the attention of the appropriate Board or Association of REALTORS®. (Amended 1/00)

Realizing that cooperation with other real estate professionals promotes the best interests of those who utilize their services, REALTORS® urge exclusive representation of clients; do not attempt to gain any unfair advantage over their competitors; and they refrain from making unsolicited comments about other practitioners. In instances where their opinion is sought, or where REALTORS® believe that comment is necessary, their opinion is offered in an objective, professional manner, uninfluenced by any personal motivation or potential advantage or gain.

The term REALTOR® has come to connote competency, fairness, and high integrity resulting from adherence to a lofty ideal of moral conduct in business relations. No inducement of profit and no instruction from clients ever can justify departure from this ideal.

In the interpretation of this obligation, REALTORS® can take no safer guide than that which has been handed down through the centuries, embodied in the Golden Rule, "Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Accepting this standard as their own, REALTORS® pledge to observe its spirit in all of their activities whether conducted personally, through associates or others, or via technological means, and to conduct their business in accordance with the tenets set forth below. (Amended 1/07)

## Duties to Clients and Customers

### Article 1

When representing a buyer, seller, landlord, tenant, or other client as an agent, REALTORS® pledge themselves to protect and promote the interests of their client. This obligation to the client is primary, but it does not relieve REALTORS® of their obligation to treat all parties honestly. When serving a buyer, seller, landlord, tenant or other party in a non-agency capacity, REALTORS® remain obligated to treat all parties honestly. (Amended 1/01)

- **Standard of Practice 1-1**

REALTORS®, when acting as principals in a real estate transaction, remain obligated by the duties imposed by the Code of Ethics. (Amended 1/93)

- **Standard of Practice 1-2**

The duties imposed by the Code of Ethics encompass all real estate-related activities and transactions whether conducted in person, electronically, or through any other means.

The duties the Code of Ethics imposes are applicable whether REALTORS® are acting as agents or in legally recognized non-agency capacities except that any duty imposed exclusively on agents by law or regulation shall not be imposed by this Code of Ethics on REALTORS® acting in non-agency capacities.

As used in this Code of Ethics, "client" means the person(s) or entity(ies) with whom a REALTOR® or a REALTOR®'s firm has an agency or legally recognized non-agency relationship; "customer" means a party to a real estate transaction who receives information, services, or benefits but has no contractual relationship with the REALTOR® or the REALTOR®'s firm; "prospect" means a purchaser, seller, tenant, or landlord who is not subject to a representation relationship with the REALTOR® or REALTOR®'s firm; "agent" means a real estate licensee (including brokers and sales associates) acting in an agency relationship as defined by state law or regulation; and "broker" means a real estate licensee (including brokers and sales associates) acting as an agent or in a legally recognized non-agency capacity. (Adopted 1/95, Amended 1/07)

- **Standard of Practice 1-3**

REALTORS®, in attempting to secure a listing, shall not deliberately mislead the owner as to market value.

- **Standard of Practice 1-4**  
REALTORS®, when seeking to become a buyer/tenant representative, shall not mislead buyers or tenants as to savings or other benefits that might be realized through use of the REALTOR®'s services. (Amended 1/93)
- **Standard of Practice 1-5**  
REALTORS® may represent the seller/landlord and buyer/tenant in the same transaction only after full disclosure to and with informed consent of both parties. (Adopted 1/93)
- **Standard of Practice 1-6**  
REALTORS® shall submit offers and counter-offers objectively and as quickly as possible. (Adopted 1/93, Amended 1/95)
- **Standard of Practice 1-7**  
When acting as listing brokers, REALTORS® shall continue to submit to the seller/landlord all offers and counter-offers until closing or execution of a lease unless the seller/landlord has waived this obligation in writing. Upon the written request of a cooperating broker who submits an offer to the listing broker, the listing broker shall provide, as soon as practical, a written affirmation to the cooperating broker stating that the offer has been submitted to the seller/landlord, or a written notification that the seller/landlord has waived the obligation to have the offer presented. REALTORS® shall not be obligated to continue to market the property after an offer has been accepted by the seller/landlord. REALTORS® shall recommend that sellers/landlords obtain the advice of legal counsel prior to acceptance of a subsequent offer except where the acceptance is contingent on the termination of the pre-existing purchase contract or lease. (Amended 1/20)
- **Standard of Practice 1-8**  
REALTORS®, acting as agents or brokers of buyers/tenants, shall submit to buyers/tenants all offers and counter-offers until acceptance but have no obligation to continue to show properties to their clients after an offer has been accepted unless otherwise agreed in writing. Upon the written request of the listing broker who submits a counter-offer to the buyer's/tenant's broker, the buyer's/tenant's broker shall provide, as soon as practical, a written affirmation to the listing broker stating that the counter-offer has been submitted to the buyers/tenants, or a written notification that the buyers/tenants have waived the obligation to have the counter-offer presented. REALTORS®, acting as agents or brokers of buyers/tenants, shall recommend that buyers/tenants obtain the advice of legal counsel if there is a question as to whether a pre-existing contract has been terminated. (Adopted 1/93, Amended 1/22)
- **Standard of Practice 1-9**  
The obligation of REALTORS® to preserve confidential information (as defined by state law) provided by their clients in the course of any agency relationship or non-agency relationship recognized by law continues after termination of agency relationships or any non-agency relationships recognized by law. REALTORS® shall not knowingly, during or following the termination of professional relationships with their clients:
  - 1) reveal confidential information of clients; or
  - 2) use confidential information of clients to the disadvantage of clients; or
  - 3) use confidential information of clients for the REALTOR®'s advantage or the advantage of third parties unless:
    - a) clients consent after full disclosure; or
    - b) REALTORS® are required by court order; or
    - c) it is the intention of a client to commit a crime and the information is necessary to prevent the crime; or
    - d) it is necessary to defend a REALTOR® or the REALTOR®'s employees or associates against an accusation of wrongful conduct.

Information concerning latent material defects is not considered confidential information under this Code of Ethics. (Adopted 1/93, Amended 1/01)
- **Standard of Practice 1-10**  
REALTORS® shall, consistent with the terms and conditions of their real estate licensure and their property management agreement, competently manage the property of clients with due regard for the rights, safety and health of tenants and others lawfully on the premises. (Adopted 1/95, Amended 1/00)
- **Standard of Practice 1-11**  
REALTORS® who are employed to maintain or manage a client's property shall exercise due diligence and make reasonable efforts to protect it against reasonably foreseeable contingencies and losses. (Adopted 1/95)
- **Standard of Practice 1-12**  
When entering into listing contracts, REALTORS® must advise sellers/landlords of:
  - 1) the REALTOR®'s company policies regarding cooperation and the amount(s) of any compensation that will be offered to subagents, buyer/tenant agents, and/or brokers acting in legally recognized non-agency capacities;
  - 2) the fact that buyer/tenant agents or brokers, even if compensated by listing brokers, or by sellers/landlords may represent the interests of buyers/tenants; and
  - 3) any potential for listing brokers to act as disclosed dual agents, e.g., buyer/tenant agents. (Adopted 1/93, Renumbered 1/98, Amended 1/03)
- **Standard of Practice 1-13**  
When entering into buyer/tenant agreements, REALTORS® must advise potential clients of:
  - 1) the REALTOR®'s company policies regarding cooperation;
  - 2) the amount of compensation to be paid by the client;
  - 3) the potential for additional or offsetting compensation from other brokers, from the seller or landlord, or from other parties;
  - 4) any potential for the buyer/tenant representative to act as a disclosed dual agent, e.g., listing broker, subagent, landlord's agent, etc.; and
  - 5) the possibility that sellers or sellers' representatives may not treat the existence, terms, or conditions of offers as confidential unless confidentiality is required by law, regulation, or by any confidentiality agreement between the parties. (Adopted 1/93, Renumbered 1/98, Amended 1/06)
- **Standard of Practice 1-14**  
Fees for preparing appraisals or other valuations shall not be contingent upon the amount of the appraisal or valuation. (Adopted 1/02)
- **Standard of Practice 1-15**  
REALTORS®, in response to inquiries from buyers or cooperating brokers shall, with the sellers' approval, disclose the existence of offers on the property. Where disclosure is authorized, REALTORS® shall also disclose, if asked, whether offers were obtained by the listing licensee, another licensee in the listing firm, or by a cooperating broker. (Adopted 1/03, Amended 1/09)
- **Standard of Practice 1-16**  
REALTORS® shall not access or use, or permit or enable others to access or use, listed or managed property on terms or conditions other than those authorized by the owner or seller. (Adopted 1/12)

## Article 2

REALTORS® shall avoid exaggeration, misrepresentation, or concealment of pertinent facts relating to the property or the transaction. REALTORS® shall not, however, be obligated to discover latent defects in the property, to advise on matters outside the scope of their real estate license, or to disclose facts which are confidential under the scope of agency or non-agency relationships as defined by state law. (Amended 1/00)

- **Standard of Practice 2-1**  
REALTORS® shall only be obligated to discover and disclose adverse factors reasonably apparent to someone with expertise in those areas required by their real estate licensing authority. Article 2 does not impose upon the REALTOR® the obligation of expertise in other professional or technical disciplines. (Amended 1/96)
- **Standard of Practice 2-2**  
(Renumbered as Standard of Practice 1-12 1/98)
- **Standard of Practice 2-3**  
(Renumbered as Standard of Practice 1-13 1/98)
- **Standard of Practice 2-4**  
REALTORS® shall not be parties to the naming of a false consideration in any document, unless it be the naming of an obviously nominal consideration.
- **Standard of Practice 2-5**  
Factors defined as “non-material” by law or regulation or which are expressly referenced in law or regulation as not being subject to disclosure are considered not “pertinent” for purposes of Article 2. (Adopted 1/93)

## Article 3

REALTORS® shall cooperate with other brokers except when cooperation is not in the client’s best interest. The obligation to cooperate does not include the obligation to share commissions, fees, or to otherwise compensate another broker. (Amended 1/95)

- **Standard of Practice 3-1**  
REALTORS®, acting as exclusive agents or brokers of sellers/landlords, establish the terms and conditions of offers to cooperate. Unless expressly indicated in offers to cooperate, cooperating brokers may not assume that the offer of cooperation includes an offer of compensation. Terms of compensation, if any, shall be ascertained by cooperating brokers before beginning efforts to accept the offer of cooperation. (Amended 1/99)
- **Standard of Practice 3-2**  
Any change in compensation offered for cooperative services must be communicated to the other REALTOR® prior to the time that REALTOR® submits an offer to purchase/lease the property. After a REALTOR® has submitted an offer to purchase or lease property, the listing broker may not attempt to unilaterally modify the offered compensation with respect to that cooperative transaction. (Amended 1/14)
- **Standard of Practice 3-3**  
Standard of Practice 3-2 does not preclude the listing broker and cooperating broker from entering into an agreement to change cooperative compensation. (Adopted 1/94)
- **Standard of Practice 3-4**  
REALTORS®, acting as listing brokers, have an affirmative obligation to disclose the existence of dual or variable rate commission arrangements (i.e., listings where one amount of commission is payable if the listing broker’s firm is the procuring cause of sale/lease and a different amount of commission is payable if the sale/lease results through the efforts of the seller/landlord or a cooperating broker). The listing broker shall, as soon as practical, disclose the existence of such arrangements to potential cooperating brokers and shall, in response to inquiries from cooperating brokers, disclose the differential that would result in a cooperative transaction or in a sale/lease that results through the efforts of the seller/landlord. If the cooperating broker is a buyer/tenant representative, the buyer/tenant representative must disclose such information to their client before the client makes an offer to purchase or lease. (Amended 1/02)
- **Standard of Practice 3-5**  
It is the obligation of subagents to promptly disclose all pertinent facts to the principal’s agent prior to as well as after a purchase or lease agreement is executed. (Amended 1/93)

- **Standard of Practice 3-6**  
REALTORS® shall disclose the existence of accepted offers, including offers with unresolved contingencies, to any broker seeking cooperation. (Adopted 5/86, Amended 1/04)
- **Standard of Practice 3-7**  
When seeking information from another REALTOR® concerning property under a management or listing agreement, REALTORS® shall disclose their REALTOR® status and whether their interest is personal or on behalf of a client and, if on behalf of a client, their relationship with the client. (Amended 1/11)
- **Standard of Practice 3-8**  
REALTORS® shall not misrepresent the availability of access to show or inspect a listed property. (Amended 11/87)
- **Standard of Practice 3-9**  
REALTORS® shall not provide access to listed property on terms other than those established by the owner or the seller. (Adopted 1/10, Amended 1/23)
- **Standard of Practice 3-10**  
The duty to cooperate established in Article 3 relates to the obligation to share information on listed property, and to make property available to other brokers for showing to prospective purchasers/tenants when it is in the best interests of sellers/landlords. (Adopted 1/11)
- **Standard of Practice 3-11**  
REALTORS® may not refuse to cooperate on the basis of a broker’s race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. (Adopted 1/20, Amended 1/23)

## Article 4

REALTORS® shall not acquire an interest in or buy or present offers from themselves, any member of their immediate families, their firms or any member thereof, or any entities in which they have any ownership interest, any real property without making their true position known to the owner or the owner’s agent or broker. In selling property they own, or in which they have any interest, REALTORS® shall reveal their ownership or interest in writing to the purchaser or the purchaser’s representative. (Amended 1/00)

- **Standard of Practice 4-1**  
For the protection of all parties, the disclosures required by Article 4 shall be in writing and provided by REALTORS® prior to the signing of any contract. (Adopted 2/86)

## Article 5

REALTORS® shall not undertake to provide professional services concerning a property or its value where they have a present or contemplated interest unless such interest is specifically disclosed to all affected parties.

## Article 6

REALTORS® shall not accept any commission, rebate, or profit on expenditures made for their client, without the client’s knowledge and consent.

When recommending real estate products or services (e.g., homeowner’s insurance, warranty programs, mortgage financing, title insurance, etc.), REALTORS® shall disclose to the client or customer to whom the recommendation is made any financial benefits or fees, other than real estate referral fees, the REALTOR® or REALTOR®’s firm may receive as a direct result of such recommendation. (Amended 1/99)

- **Standard of Practice 6-1**  
REALTORS® shall not recommend or suggest to a client or a customer the use of services of another organization or business entity in which they have a direct interest without disclosing such interest at the time of the recommendation or suggestion. (Amended 5/88)

## Article 7

In a transaction, REALTORS® shall not accept compensation from more than one party, even if permitted by law, without disclosure

to all parties and the informed consent of the REALTOR®'s client or clients. (Amended 1/93)

## Article 8

REALTORS® shall keep in a special account in an appropriate financial institution, separated from their own funds, monies coming into their possession in trust for other persons, such as escrows, trust funds, clients' monies, and other like items.

## Article 9

REALTORS®, for the protection of all parties, shall assure whenever possible that all agreements related to real estate transactions including, but not limited to, listing and representation agreements, purchase contracts, and leases are in writing in clear and understandable language expressing the specific terms, conditions, obligations and commitments of the parties. A copy of each agreement shall be furnished to each party to such agreements upon their signing or initialing. (Amended 1/04)

### • Standard of Practice 9-1

For the protection of all parties, REALTORS® shall use reasonable care to ensure that documents pertaining to the purchase, sale, or lease of real estate are kept current through the use of written extensions or amendments. (Amended 1/93)

### • Standard of Practice 9-2

When assisting or enabling a client or customer in establishing a contractual relationship (e.g., listing and representation agreements, purchase agreements, leases, etc.) electronically, REALTORS® shall make reasonable efforts to explain the nature and disclose the specific terms of the contractual relationship being established prior to it being agreed to by a contracting party. (Adopted 1/07)

## Duties to the Public

## Article 10

REALTORS® shall not deny equal professional services to any person for reasons of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. REALTORS® shall not be parties to any plan or agreement to discriminate against a person or persons on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. (Amended 1/23)

REALTORS®, in their real estate employment practices, shall not discriminate against any person or persons on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. (Amended 1/23)

### • Standard of Practice 10-1

When involved in the sale or lease of a residence, REALTORS® shall not volunteer information regarding the racial, religious or ethnic composition of any neighborhood nor shall they engage in any activity which may result in panic selling, however, REALTORS® may provide other demographic information. (Adopted 1/94, Amended 1/06)

### • Standard of Practice 10-2

When not involved in the sale or lease of a residence, REALTORS® may provide demographic information related to a property, transaction or professional assignment to a party if such demographic information is (a) deemed by the REALTOR® to be needed to assist with or complete, in a manner consistent with Article 10, a real estate transaction or professional assignment and (b) is obtained or derived from a recognized, reliable, independent, and impartial source. The source of such information and any additions, deletions, modifications, interpretations, or other changes shall be disclosed in reasonable detail. (Adopted 1/05, Renumbered 1/06)

### • Standard of Practice 10-3

REALTORS® shall not print, display or circulate any statement or advertisement with respect to selling or renting of a property that indicates any preference, limitations or discrimination based

on race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. (Adopted 1/94, Renumbered 1/05 and 1/06, Amended 1/23)

### • Standard of Practice 10-4

As used in Article 10 "real estate employment practices" relates to employees and independent contractors providing real estate-related services and the administrative and clerical staff directly supporting those individuals. (Adopted 1/00, Renumbered 1/05 and 1/06)

### • Standard of Practice 10-5

REALTORS® must not use harassing speech, hate speech, epithets, or slurs based on race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. (Adopted and effective November 13, 2020, Amended 1/23)

## Article 11

The services which REALTORS® provide to their clients and customers shall conform to the standards of practice and competence which are reasonably expected in the specific real estate disciplines in which they engage; specifically, residential real estate brokerage, real property management, commercial and industrial real estate brokerage, land brokerage, real estate appraisal, real estate counseling, real estate syndication, real estate auction, and international real estate.

REALTORS® shall not undertake to provide specialized professional services concerning a type of property or service that is outside their field of competence unless they engage the assistance of one who is competent on such types of property or service, or unless the facts are fully disclosed to the client. Any persons engaged to provide such assistance shall be so identified to the client and their contribution to the assignment should be set forth. (Amended 1/10)

### • Standard of Practice 11-1

When REALTORS® prepare opinions of real property value or price they must:

- 1) be knowledgeable about the type of property being valued,
- 2) have access to the information and resources necessary to formulate an accurate opinion, and
- 3) be familiar with the area where the subject property is located

unless lack of any of these is disclosed to the party requesting the opinion in advance.

When an opinion of value or price is prepared other than in pursuit of a listing or to assist a potential purchaser in formulating a purchase offer, the opinion shall include the following unless the party requesting the opinion requires a specific type of report or different data set:

- 1) identification of the subject property
- 2) date prepared
- 3) defined value or price
- 4) limiting conditions, including statements of purpose(s) and intended user(s)
- 5) any present or contemplated interest, including the possibility of representing the seller/landlord or buyers/tenants
- 6) basis for the opinion, including applicable market data
- 7) if the opinion is not an appraisal, a statement to that effect
- 8) disclosure of whether and when a physical inspection of the property's exterior was conducted
- 9) disclosure of whether and when a physical inspection of the property's interior was conducted
- 10) disclosure of whether the REALTOR® has any conflicts of interest (Amended 1/14)

### • Standard of Practice 11-2

The obligations of the Code of Ethics in respect of real estate disciplines other than appraisal shall be interpreted and applied in accordance with the standards of competence and practice which



clients and the public reasonably require to protect their rights and interests considering the complexity of the transaction, the availability of expert assistance, and, where the REALTOR® is an agent or subagent, the obligations of a fiduciary. (Adopted 1/95)

• **Standard of Practice 11-3**

When REALTORS® provide consultative services to clients which involve advice or counsel for a fee (not a commission), such advice shall be rendered in an objective manner and the fee shall not be contingent on the substance of the advice or counsel given. If brokerage or transaction services are to be provided in addition to consultative services, a separate compensation may be paid with prior agreement between the client and REALTOR®. (Adopted 1/96)

• **Standard of Practice 11-4**

The competency required by Article 11 relates to services contracted for between REALTORS® and their clients or customers; the duties expressly imposed by the Code of Ethics; and the duties imposed by law or regulation. (Adopted 1/02)

## Article 12

REALTORS® shall be honest and truthful in their real estate communications and shall present a true picture in their advertising, marketing, and other representations. REALTORS® shall ensure that their status as real estate professionals is readily apparent in their advertising, marketing, and other representations, and that the recipients of all real estate communications are, or have been, notified that those communications are from a real estate professional. (Amended 1/08)

• **Standard of Practice 12-1**

REALTORS® must not represent that their brokerage services to a client or customer are free or available at no cost to their clients, unless the REALTOR® will receive no financial compensation from any source for those services. (Amended 1/22)

• **Standard of Practice 12-2**

(Deleted 1/20)

• **Standard of Practice 12-3**

The offering of premiums, prizes, merchandise discounts or other inducements to list, sell, purchase, or lease is not, in itself, unethical even if receipt of the benefit is contingent on listing, selling, purchasing, or leasing through the REALTOR® making the offer. However, REALTORS® must exercise care and candor in any such advertising or other public or private representations so that any party interested in receiving or otherwise benefiting from the REALTOR®'s offer will have clear, thorough, advance understanding of all the terms and conditions of the offer. The offering of any inducements to do business is subject to the limitations and restrictions of state law and the ethical obligations established by any applicable Standard of Practice. (Amended 1/95)

• **Standard of Practice 12-4**

REALTORS® shall not offer for sale/lease or advertise property without authority. When acting as listing brokers or as subagents, REALTORS® shall not quote a price different from that agreed upon with the seller/landlord. (Amended 1/93)

• **Standard of Practice 12-5**

REALTORS® shall not advertise nor permit any person employed by or affiliated with them to advertise real estate services or listed property in any medium (e.g., electronically, print, radio, television, etc.) without disclosing the name of that REALTOR®'s firm in a reasonable and readily apparent manner either in the advertisement or in electronic advertising via a link to a display with all required disclosures. (Adopted 11/86, Amended 1/16)

• **Standard of Practice 12-6**

REALTORS®, when advertising unlisted real property for sale/lease in which they have an ownership interest, shall disclose their status as both owners/landlords and as REALTORS® or real estate licensees. (Amended 1/93)

• **Standard of Practice 12-7**

Only REALTORS® who participated in the transaction as the listing broker or cooperating broker (selling broker) may claim to have "sold" the property. Prior to closing, a cooperating broker may post a "sold" sign only with the consent of the listing broker. (Amended 1/96)

• **Standard of Practice 12-8**

The obligation to present a true picture in representations to the public includes information presented, provided, or displayed on REALTORS®' websites. REALTORS® shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that information on their websites is current. When it becomes apparent that information on a REALTOR®'s website is no longer current or accurate, REALTORS® shall promptly take corrective action. (Adopted 1/07)

• **Standard of Practice 12-9**

REALTOR® firm websites shall disclose the firm's name and state(s) of licensure in a reasonable and readily apparent manner.

Websites of REALTORS® and non-member licensees affiliated with a REALTOR® firm shall disclose the firm's name and that REALTOR®'s or non-member licensee's state(s) of licensure in a reasonable and readily apparent manner. (Adopted 1/07)

• **Standard of Practice 12-10**

REALTORS®' obligation to present a true picture in their advertising and representations to the public includes Internet content, images, and the URLs and domain names they use, and prohibits REALTORS® from:

- 1) engaging in deceptive or unauthorized framing of real estate brokerage websites;
- 2) manipulating (e.g., presenting content developed by others) listing and other content in any way that produces a deceptive or misleading result;
- 3) deceptively using metatags, keywords or other devices/methods to direct, drive, or divert Internet traffic; or
- 4) presenting content developed by others without either attribution or without permission; or
- 5) otherwise misleading consumers, including use of misleading images. (Adopted 1/07, Amended 1/18)

• **Standard of Practice 12-11**

REALTORS® intending to share or sell consumer information gathered via the Internet shall disclose that possibility in a reasonable and readily apparent manner. (Adopted 1/07)

• **Standard of Practice 12-12**

REALTORS® shall not:

- 1) use URLs or domain names that present less than a true picture, or
- 2) register URLs or domain names which, if used, would present less than a true picture. (Adopted 1/08)

• **Standard of Practice 12-13**

The obligation to present a true picture in advertising, marketing, and representations allows REALTORS® to use and display only professional designations, certifications, and other credentials to which they are legitimately entitled. (Adopted 1/08)

## Article 13

REALTORS® shall not engage in activities that constitute the unauthorized practice of law and shall recommend that legal counsel be obtained when the interest of any party to the transaction requires it.

## Article 14

If charged with unethical practice or asked to present evidence or to cooperate in any other way, in any professional standards proceeding or investigation, REALTORS® shall place all pertinent facts before the proper tribunals of the Member Board or affiliated institute, society, or council in which membership is held and shall take no action to disrupt or obstruct such processes. (Amended 1/99)

- **Standard of Practice 14-1**

REALTORS® shall not be subject to disciplinary proceedings in more than one Board of REALTORS® or affiliated institute, society, or council in which they hold membership with respect to alleged violations of the Code of Ethics relating to the same transaction or event. (Amended 1/95)

- **Standard of Practice 14-2**

REALTORS® shall not make any unauthorized disclosure or dissemination of the allegations, findings, or decision developed in connection with an ethics hearing or appeal or in connection with an arbitration hearing or procedural review. (Amended 1/92)

- **Standard of Practice 14-3**

REALTORS® shall not obstruct the Board's investigative or professional standards proceedings by instituting or threatening to institute actions for libel, slander, or defamation against any party to a professional standards proceeding or their witnesses based on the filing of an arbitration request, an ethics complaint, or testimony given before any tribunal. (Adopted 11/87, Amended 1/99)

- **Standard of Practice 14-4**

REALTORS® shall not intentionally impede the Board's investigative or disciplinary proceedings by filing multiple ethics complaints based on the same event or transaction. (Adopted 11/88)

## Duties to REALTORS®

### Article 15

REALTORS® shall not knowingly or recklessly make false or misleading statements about other real estate professionals, their businesses, or their business practices. (Amended 1/12)

- **Standard of Practice 15-1**

REALTORS® shall not knowingly or recklessly file false or unfounded ethics complaints. (Adopted 1/00)

- **Standard of Practice 15-2**

The obligation to refrain from making false or misleading statements about other real estate professionals, their businesses, and their business practices includes the duty to not knowingly or recklessly publish, repeat, retransmit, or republish false or misleading statements made by others. This duty applies whether false or misleading statements are repeated in person, in writing, by technological means (e.g., the Internet), or by any other means. (Adopted 1/07, Amended 1/12)

- **Standard of Practice 15-3**

The obligation to refrain from making false or misleading statements about other real estate professionals, their businesses, and their business practices includes the duty to publish a clarification about or to remove statements made by others on electronic media the REALTOR® controls once the REALTOR® knows the statement is false or misleading. (Adopted 1/10, Amended 1/12)

### Article 16

REALTORS® shall not engage in any practice or take any action inconsistent with exclusive representation or exclusive brokerage relationship agreements that other REALTORS® have with clients. (Amended 1/04)

- **Standard of Practice 16-1**

Article 16 is not intended to prohibit aggressive or innovative business practices which are otherwise ethical and does not prohibit disagreements with other REALTORS® involving commission, fees, compensation or other forms of payment or expenses. (Adopted 1/93, Amended 1/95)

- **Standard of Practice 16-2**

Article 16 does not preclude REALTORS® from making general announcements to prospects describing their services and the terms of their availability even though some recipients may have

entered into agency agreements or other exclusive relationships with another REALTOR®. A general telephone canvass, general mailing or distribution addressed to all prospects in a given geographical area or in a given profession, business, club, or organization, or other classification or group is deemed "general" for purposes of this standard. (Amended 1/04)

Article 16 is intended to recognize as unethical two basic types of solicitations:

First, telephone or personal solicitations of property owners who have been identified by a real estate sign, multiple listing compilation, or other information service as having exclusively listed their property with another REALTOR® and

Second, mail or other forms of written solicitations of prospects whose properties are exclusively listed with another REALTOR® when such solicitations are not part of a general mailing but are directed specifically to property owners identified through compilations of current listings, "for sale" or "for rent" signs, or other sources of information required by Article 3 and Multiple Listing Service rules to be made available to other REALTORS® under offers of subagency or cooperation. (Amended 1/04)

- **Standard of Practice 16-3**

Article 16 does not preclude REALTORS® from contacting the client of another broker for the purpose of offering to provide, or entering into a contract to provide, a different type of real estate service unrelated to the type of service currently being provided (e.g., property management as opposed to brokerage) or from offering the same type of service for property not subject to other brokers' exclusive agreements. However, information received through a Multiple Listing Service or any other offer of cooperation may not be used to target clients of other REALTORS® to whom such offers to provide services may be made. (Amended 1/04)

- **Standard of Practice 16-4**

REALTORS® shall not solicit a listing which is currently listed exclusively with another broker. However, if the listing broker, when asked by the REALTOR®, refuses to disclose the expiration date and nature of such listing, i.e., an exclusive right to sell, an exclusive agency, open listing, or other form of contractual agreement between the listing broker and the client, the REALTOR® may contact the owner to secure such information and may discuss the terms upon which the REALTOR® might take a future listing or, alternatively, may take a listing to become effective upon expiration of any existing exclusive listing. (Amended 1/94)

- **Standard of Practice 16-5**

REALTORS® shall not solicit buyer/tenant agreements from buyers/ tenants who are subject to exclusive buyer/tenant agreements. However, if asked by a REALTOR®, the broker refuses to disclose the expiration date of the exclusive buyer/tenant agreement, the REALTOR® may contact the buyer/tenant to secure such information and may discuss the terms upon which the REALTOR® might enter into a future buyer/tenant agreement or, alternatively, may enter into a buyer/tenant agreement to become effective upon the expiration of any existing exclusive buyer/tenant agreement. (Adopted 1/94, Amended 1/98)

- **Standard of Practice 16-6**

When REALTORS® are contacted by the client of another REALTOR® regarding the creation of an exclusive relationship to provide the same type of service, and REALTORS® have not directly or indirectly initiated such discussions, they may discuss the terms upon which they might enter into a future agreement or, alternatively, may enter into an agreement which becomes effective upon expiration of any existing exclusive agreement. (Amended 1/98)

- **Standard of Practice 16-7**

The fact that a prospect has retained a REALTOR® as an exclusive representative or exclusive broker in one or more past transactions does not preclude other REALTORS® from seeking such prospect's future business. (Amended 1/04)

- **Standard of Practice 16-8**  
The fact that an exclusive agreement has been entered into with a REALTOR® shall not preclude or inhibit any other REALTOR® from entering into a similar agreement after the expiration of the prior agreement. (Amended 1/98)
- **Standard of Practice 16-9**  
REALTORS®, prior to entering into a representation agreement, have an affirmative obligation to make reasonable efforts to determine whether the prospect is subject to a current, valid exclusive agreement to provide the same type of real estate service. (Amended 1/04)
- **Standard of Practice 16-10**  
REALTORS®, acting as buyer or tenant representatives or brokers, shall disclose that relationship to the seller/landlord's representative or broker at first contact and shall provide written confirmation of that disclosure to the seller/landlord's representative or broker not later than execution of a purchase agreement or lease. (Amended 1/04)
- **Standard of Practice 16-11**  
On unlisted property, REALTORS® acting as buyer/tenant representatives or brokers shall disclose that relationship to the seller/landlord at first contact for that buyer/tenant and shall provide written confirmation of such disclosure to the seller/landlord not later than execution of any purchase or lease agreement. (Amended 1/04)  
  
REALTORS® shall make any request for anticipated compensation from the seller/landlord at first contact. (Amended 1/98)
- **Standard of Practice 16-12**  
REALTORS®, acting as representatives or brokers of sellers/landlords or as subagents of listing brokers, shall disclose that relationship to buyers/tenants as soon as practicable and shall provide written confirmation of such disclosure to buyers/tenants not later than execution of any purchase or lease agreement. (Amended 1/04)
- **Standard of Practice 16-13**  
All dealings concerning property exclusively listed, or with buyer/tenants who are subject to an exclusive agreement shall be carried on with the client's representative or broker, and not with the client, except with the consent of the client's representative or broker or except where such dealings are initiated by the client.  
  
Before providing substantive services (such as writing a purchase offer or presenting a CMA) to prospects, REALTORS® shall ask prospects whether they are a party to any exclusive representation agreement. REALTORS® shall not knowingly provide substantive services concerning a prospective transaction to prospects who are parties to exclusive representation agreements, except with the consent of the prospects' exclusive representatives or at the direction of prospects. (Adopted 1/93, Amended 1/04)
- **Standard of Practice 16-14**  
REALTORS® are free to enter into contractual relationships or to negotiate with sellers/landlords, buyers/tenants or others who are not subject to an exclusive agreement but shall not knowingly obligate them to pay more than one commission except with their informed consent. (Amended 1/98)
- **Standard of Practice 16-15**  
In cooperative transactions REALTORS® shall compensate cooperating REALTORS® (principal brokers) and shall not compensate nor offer to compensate, directly or indirectly, any of the sales licensees employed by or affiliated with other REALTORS® without the prior express knowledge and consent of the cooperating broker.
- **Standard of Practice 16-16**  
REALTORS®, acting as subagents or buyer/tenant representatives or brokers, shall not use the terms of an offer to purchase/lease to attempt to modify the listing broker's offer of compensation to subagents or buyer/tenant representatives or brokers nor make the submission of an executed offer to purchase/lease

contingent on the listing broker's agreement to modify the offer of compensation. (Amended 1/04)

- **Standard of Practice 16-17**  
REALTORS®, acting as subagents or as buyer/tenant representatives or brokers, shall not attempt to extend a listing broker's offer of cooperation and/or compensation to other brokers without the consent of the listing broker. (Amended 1/04)
- **Standard of Practice 16-18**  
REALTORS® shall not use information obtained from listing brokers through offers to cooperate made through multiple listing services or through other offers of cooperation to refer listing brokers' clients to other brokers or to create buyer/tenant relationships with listing brokers' clients, unless such use is authorized by listing brokers. (Amended 1/02)
- **Standard of Practice 16-19**  
Signs giving notice of property for sale, rent, lease, or exchange shall not be placed on property without consent of the seller/landlord. (Amended 1/93)
- **Standard of Practice 16-20**  
REALTORS®, prior to or after their relationship with their current firm is terminated, shall not induce clients of their current firm to cancel exclusive contractual agreements between the client and that firm. This does not preclude REALTORS® (principals) from establishing agreements with their associated licensees governing assignability of exclusive agreements. (Adopted 1/98, Amended 1/10)

## Article 17

In the event of contractual disputes or specific non-contractual disputes as defined in Standard of Practice 17-4 between REALTORS® (principals) associated with different firms, arising out of their relationship as REALTORS®, the REALTORS® shall mediate the dispute if the Board requires its members to mediate. If the dispute is not resolved through mediation, or if mediation is not required, REALTORS® shall submit the dispute to arbitration in accordance with the policies of the Board rather than litigate the matter.

In the event clients of REALTORS® wish to mediate or arbitrate contractual disputes arising out of real estate transactions, REALTORS® shall mediate or arbitrate those disputes in accordance with the policies of the Board, provided the clients agree to be bound by any resulting agreement or award.

The obligation to participate in mediation and arbitration contemplated by this Article includes the obligation of REALTORS® (principals) to cause their firms to mediate and arbitrate and be bound by any resulting agreement or award. (Amended 1/12)

- **Standard of Practice 17-1**  
The filing of litigation and refusal to withdraw from it by REALTORS® in an arbitrable matter constitutes a refusal to arbitrate. (Adopted 2/86)
- **Standard of Practice 17-2**  
Article 17 does not require REALTORS® to mediate in those circumstances when all parties to the dispute advise the Board in writing that they choose not to mediate through the Board's facilities. The fact that all parties decline to participate in mediation does not relieve REALTORS® of the duty to arbitrate.  
  
Article 17 does not require REALTORS® to arbitrate in those circumstances when all parties to the dispute advise the Board in writing that they choose not to arbitrate before the Board. (Amended 1/12)
- **Standard of Practice 17-3**  
REALTORS®, when acting solely as principals in a real estate transaction, are not obligated to arbitrate disputes with other REALTORS® absent a specific written agreement to the contrary. (Adopted 1/96)
- **Standard of Practice 17-4**  
Specific non-contractual disputes that are subject to arbitration pursuant to Article 17 are:

- 1) Where a listing broker has compensated a cooperating broker and another cooperating broker subsequently claims to be the procuring cause of the sale or lease. In such cases the complainant may name the first cooperating broker as respondent and arbitration may proceed without the listing broker being named as a respondent. When arbitration occurs between two (or more) cooperating brokers and where the listing broker is not a party, the amount in dispute and the amount of any potential resulting award is limited to the amount paid to the respondent by the listing broker and any amount credited or paid to a party to the transaction at the direction of the respondent. Alternatively, if the complaint is brought against the listing broker, the listing broker may name the first cooperating broker as a third-party respondent. In either instance the decision of the hearing panel as to procuring cause shall be conclusive with respect to all current or subsequent claims of the parties for compensation arising out of the underlying cooperative transaction. (Adopted 1/97, Amended 1/07)
  - 2) Where a buyer or tenant representative is compensated by the seller or landlord, and not by the listing broker, and the listing broker, as a result, reduces the commission owed by the seller or landlord and, subsequent to such actions, another cooperating broker claims to be the procuring cause of sale or lease. In such cases the complainant may name the first cooperating broker as respondent and arbitration may proceed without the listing broker being named as a respondent. When arbitration occurs between two (or more) cooperating brokers and where the listing broker is not a party, the amount in dispute and the amount of any potential resulting award is limited to the amount paid to the respondent by the seller or landlord and any amount credited or paid to a party to the transaction at the direction of the respondent. Alternatively, if the complaint is brought against the listing broker, the listing broker may name the first cooperating broker as a third-party respondent. In either instance the decision of the hearing panel as to procuring cause shall be conclusive with respect to all current or subsequent claims of the parties for compensation arising out of the underlying cooperative transaction. (Adopted 1/97, Amended 1/07)
  - 3) Where a buyer or tenant representative is compensated by the seller or landlord, and not by the listing broker, and the listing broker, as a result, reduces the commission owed by the seller or landlord and, subsequent to such actions, another cooperating broker claims to be the procuring cause of sale or lease. In such cases the complainant may name the first cooperating broker as respondent and arbitration may proceed without the listing broker being named as a respondent. When arbitration occurs between two (or more) cooperating brokers and where the listing broker is not a party, the amount in dispute and the amount of any potential resulting award is limited to the amount paid to the respondent by the seller or landlord and any amount credited or paid to a party to the transaction at the direction of the respondent. Alternatively, if the complaint is brought against the listing broker, the listing broker may name the first cooperating broker as a third-party respondent. In either instance the decision of the hearing panel as to procuring cause shall be conclusive with respect to all current or subsequent claims of the parties for compensation arising out of the underlying cooperative transaction. (Adopted 1/97)
  - 4) Where two or more listing brokers claim entitlement to compensation pursuant to open listings with a seller or landlord who agrees to participate in arbitration (or who requests arbitration) and who agrees to be bound by the decision. In cases where one of the listing brokers has been compensated by the seller or landlord, the other listing broker, as complainant, may name the first listing broker as respondent and arbitration may proceed between the brokers. (Adopted 1/97)
  - 5) Where a buyer or tenant representative is compensated by the seller or landlord, and not by the listing broker, and the listing broker, as a result, reduces the commission owed by the seller or landlord and, subsequent to such actions, claims to be the procuring cause of sale or lease. In such cases arbitration shall be between the listing broker and the buyer or tenant representative and the amount in dispute is limited to the amount of the reduction of commission to which the listing broker agreed. (Adopted 1/05)
- **Standard of Practice 17-5**  
The obligation to arbitrate established in Article 17 includes disputes between REALTORS® (principals) in different states in instances where, absent an established inter-association arbitration agreement, the REALTOR® (principal) requesting arbitration agrees to submit to the jurisdiction of, travel to, participate in, and be bound by any resulting award rendered in arbitration conducted by the respondent(s) REALTOR®'s association, in instances where the respondent(s) REALTOR®'s association determines that an arbitrable issue exists. (Adopted 1/07)

## Explanatory Notes

The reader should be aware of the following policies which have been approved by the Board of Directors of the National Association:

In filing a charge of an alleged violation of the Code of Ethics by a REALTOR®, the charge must read as an alleged violation of one or more Articles of the Code. Standards of Practice may be cited in support of the charge.

The Standards of Practice serve to clarify the ethical obligations imposed by the various Articles and supplement, and do not substitute for, the Case Interpretations in Interpretations of the Code of Ethics.

Modifications to existing Standards of Practice and additional new Standards of Practice are approved from time to time. Readers are cautioned to ensure that the most recent publications are utilized.



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