



National Science Foundation Office of Polar Programs

OPP-POL_6000.01
Polar Code of Conduct

Effective Date: July 2018
Review Date: July 2023

Introduction

Since its establishment in 1950, the National Science Foundation (NSF) has supported research in the Arctic to better understand the region and its interactions with the rest of the planet. The 1984 Arctic Research and Policy Act designated NSF as the lead federal agency for the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) and initiated an emphasis on research in the Arctic that was furthered by the 2013 National Strategy for the Arctic Region. Fieldwork in the Arctic frequently takes place in towns and villages, in other nations, and in collaboration with other U.S. federal agencies and organizations. It is inherently risky, and it receives considerable attention from the media.

Without interruption since 1956, American scientists have been studying the Antarctic and its interactions with the rest of the planet. The United States Antarctic Program (USAP) carries forward the nation's goals of supporting the Antarctic Treaty, fostering cooperative research with other nations, and protecting the Antarctic environment. By Presidential Memorandum 6646 in 1982, NSF was affirmed as the single-point manager for funding and managing U.S. activities in Antarctica. The USAP has been highly visible and is growing ever more so, often with activities and events making the domestic U.S. and global news cycle on a regular basis.

The preeminence of NSF's Polar Programs is predicated on the dedication and hard work of researchers, support personnel, and other program participants. A high standard of professionalism from all personnel is of the utmost importance.

Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to restate important principles and expectations for professional conduct and acceptable behavior by all personnel. While non-exhaustive, this Code is a shared statement of commitment to uphold the ethical, professional, and legal standards required to fulfill these principles and objectives.

Code of Conduct

The National Science Foundation seeks to ensure that the following objectives and guiding principles are complied with and promoted by all personnel:

- The foremost objective of your presence in Antarctica and/or the Arctic is to contribute to accomplishing the mission of the U.S. Government while fully adhering to all applicable international and national legal and policy requirements, including those of the Antarctic Treaty System and the Arctic's state, local, and tribal governments.

- All personnel will treat others with dignity and respect, will exercise the highest level of professional and ethical behavior, and will work cooperatively to resolve differences.
- It is everyone's responsibility to provide a safe workplace and to protect the polar environment.

Scope

This Code applies to all persons working at or visiting a USAP or an NSF-managed Arctic station, field camp, other facility, ship, or aircraft, and this includes researchers, students, contractors, official visitors, federal civilian and military personnel, and others. Further, persons who are financially supported by NSF, through grant, contract, or otherwise, are also expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct while deployed to other field locations in the Arctic and Antarctic. Finally, the Code equally applies to all conduct occurring in foreign countries and logistics gateway cities (e.g., Punta Arenas, Chile; Christchurch, New Zealand; and Kangerlussuaq, Greenland), as personnel travel to and from their polar deployments.

This Code sets minimum expectations for personal and professional behavior. More stringent requirements imposed by third parties (e.g., employing organizations, vessel or station management) remain fully in effect.

While not exhaustive, the following acts are examples of conduct that violate the fundamental principles and objectives of this Code:

- Physical or verbal abuse of any person, including, but not limited to, harassment, stalking, bullying, or hazing of any kind, whether the behavior is carried out verbally, physically, electronically, or in written form.
- Conduct that is offensive, indecent, obscene, or disorderly.
- Possession, use, sale, manufacture, transfer, trafficking in, or being under the influence of illegal drugs, including marijuana, and abuse of legal drugs.
- Violation of applicable policies, including, but not limited to, the NSF Safety and Occupational Health Policy; the USAP Alcohol Policy, and the USAP Lodging Policy.
- Violation of the USAP Information Technology Enterprise Rules of Behavior.
- Violation of the Principles for the Conduct of Research in the Arctic.
- Solicitation of gifts. In general, Federal ethics laws prohibit the solicitation of gifts (for example, any gratuity, favor, food, or entertainment). See e.g. 5 C.F.R. 2635.202(c)(2). Personnel may not solicit gifts.
- Endorsements, expressed or implied, of products, services, or enterprises. Such endorsements are prohibited. See e.g. 5 C.F.R. § 2635.702. USAP and/or NSF facilities, property, logos, or insignias may not be used for endorsement purposes.

Violations of this Code of Conduct may be shared with current and future USAP or Arctic program support contractors, federal agency partners, or grantee institutions. Further, violations of this Code of Conduct may result in adverse consequences to the individual, including, but not limited to, removal from a USAP or Arctic station, field camp, other facility, ship, or aircraft; termination of employment (by the employer); or other administrative, civil, or criminal enforcement actions, as appropriate.

Policy Review

This policy is valid until rescinded. It will be reviewed at an interval of not more than 5 years.