

Background on OSBELTCA's Core Values...

Even though we frequently talk about mission and vision first, the basic underlying foundation for both is our core values. Core values are the principles and standards at the very center of our character, and from which we will not budge or stray.

Core values are extremely stable and change only very slowly over long periods of time. Core values form the basis for our beliefs about life, ourselves and those around us, and the human potential of ourselves and others. Values and beliefs form our attitudes and guide our behavior. The behaviors we engage in are what people around us see, along with our skills and actions. Our outer or public shell of behaviors and skills can change rapidly and dramatically through our lives, influenced by our environment and guided by our more stable core values and beliefs.

Core values are much more than “minimum standards.” They remind us what it takes to get our mission done. They inspire us to do our very best at all times. They are our common bond...the glue that unifies this Board and ties us to Boards of the past and the future. The common ground. A Board of 15 could easily become splintered without some “common” ground...

The three core values OSBELTCA has selected are:

- Integrity
- Service
- Professionalism

What do these WORDS mean and are they really the things we (members of this Board, individually, and this Board as an entity, collectively) value?

Let's start with, “What IS “integrity?”

Integrity is a character trait. It is the willingness to do what is right even when no one is looking. It is the “moral compass”—the inner voice; the voice of self-control; the basis for the trust imperative in this profession as well as many others.

- Integrity is the ability to hold together and properly regulate all of the elements of a personality. A person of integrity, for example, is capable of acting on conviction. A person of integrity can control impulses and appetites.
- But integrity also covers *several other moral traits* indispensable to public service.
 - *Courage*. A person of integrity possesses moral courage and does what is right even if the personal cost is high.
 - *Honesty*. Honesty is the hallmark of the long term care professional because in long term care, our word must be our bond. We don't pencil-whip reports, we don't cover up

violations, we don't falsify documents, and we don't write misleading incident reports. *The bottom line is we don't lie, and we can't justify any deviation.*

- *Responsibility.* No person of integrity is irresponsible; a person of true integrity acknowledges his or her duties and acts accordingly.

- *Accountability.* No person of integrity tries to shift the blame to others or take credit for the work of others; "the buck stops here" says it best.

- *Justice.* A person of integrity practices justice. Those who do similar things must get similar rewards or similar punishments. As it relates to responsibility and accountability, a third word, *culpability*, comes up and relates.

- *Openness.* Professionals of integrity encourage a free flow of information within the organization. They seek feedback from all directions to ensure they are fulfilling key responsibilities, and they are never afraid to allow anyone at any time to examine how they do business.

- *Self-respect.* To have integrity also is to respect oneself as a professional and a human being. A person of integrity does not behave in ways that would bring discredit upon him or any organization to which he belongs.

- *Humility.* A person of integrity grasps and is sobered by the awesome task of defending the laws which we have all sworn to uphold.

For many of us, we could STOP right there because if you don't have Integrity, first, the ideas of "service" and "professionalism" won't stand a chance of being realized. And when you do have it, the others will be automatic. Another way to think of integrity is as the whole person concept...much as you might think of the integrity of a building. When there's something missing in a person's character, like what might be lacking in a building whose integrity you're discussing, that's an integrity issue you're talking about. Too many people confuse integrity with honesty and they are not synonymous. Likewise, responsibility and accountability are not synonymous and both contribute to this concept of integrity. We frequently say, and agree, that administrators are responsible for everything that goes on in their facility... that does not always mean they can or should be held culpable for those things. We strive to understand this.

Trust... It is earned, not given. While we always strive to do the right thing, we are all human. We will not always measure up to that standard. Trust does not develop from always doing the right thing. Rather, it comes from accepting responsibility when we do the wrong thing.

Moving on...

Service.

Service tells us that professional duties take precedence over personal desires. At the very least it includes the following behaviors:

- **Rule following.** To serve is to do one's duty, and our duties are most commonly expressed through rules. While it may be the case that professionals are expected to exercise judgment in the performance of their duties, good professionals understand that rules have a reason for being, and the default position must be to follow those rules unless there is a very clear reason for refusing to do so.
- **Respect for others.** Service tells us also that a good leader places others ahead of his/her personal comfort. We must *always* act in the certain knowledge that all persons possess fundamental worth as human beings.
- **Discipline and self-control.** Professionals cannot indulge themselves in self-pity, discouragement, anger, frustration, or defeatism. They have a fundamental moral obligation to the persons they lead to strike a tone of confidence and forward-looking optimism. All great leaders are optimists. To inspire necessarily requires a positive outlook. More specifically, they are expected to exercise control in the following areas:

- *Anger.* Professionals—at all echelons—are expected to refrain from displays of anger that would bring discredit upon themselves and/or their organization.

- *Appetites.* Those who allow their appetites to drive them to make sexual overtures to subordinates are unfit for this profession. Likewise, the excessive consumption of alcohol casts doubt on an individual's fitness, and when such persons are found to be drunk and disorderly, all doubts are removed.

- *Religious toleration.* All professionals must remember that religious choice is a matter of individual conscience. Professionals must not take it upon themselves to change or coercively influence the religious views of subordinates.

- **Faith in the system.** To lose faith in the system is to adopt the view that you know better than those above you what should or should not be done. In other words, to lose faith in the system is to place self before service. Leaders can be very influential in this regard: if a leader resists the temptation to doubt 'the system', then subordinates might follow suit.

Further discussion about "service"? Leadership IS a service. Service comes with sacrifice. No sacrifice, no service, no leader.

Continuing...

Professionalism.

Professionalism is the culmination of competence, knowledge, resourcefulness, quality, attitude, and cooperation related to how we provide our professional services. Perhaps the most “elusive” of the three core values we’ve selected, while it is something WE value, we also need to recognize that where professionalism is concerned, it MAY be more “visionary” for our licensees who have not yet fully grasped that this IS a profession as too many owners AND administrators still think of what they do as a “job” instead of a profession. So, with that in mind, we need to understand that we value professionalism in multiple ways – in what we expect of our licensees, certainly, but also in how we interact with the world in which we operate, from our students/licensure candidates and licensees all the way up to other agencies as well as our interaction with government officials such as legislators.

We exercise high levels of professionalism in our work and we reward merit. We use the most appropriate skills and competencies, continually seeking opportunities to improve through innovative approaches. We work collaboratively towards our common goals regardless of individual roles or functions and apply the same ethos with our partners. We share our knowledge of best practices with colleagues at all levels to enhance the quality of our services.

- We take pride in our work and aspire to be the best we can be.
- We continuously learn and improve our performance.
- We share information and knowledge with our co-workers and partners for the corporate benefit.
- We work effectively in teams, value our colleagues’ ideas and cooperate with, encourage and support them.
- We adhere to the highest standards of our professions and adopt best practices.
- We embrace new ideas and explore innovative ways of working.
- We communicate openly and transparently and use appropriate channels.
- We welcome, coach and mentor newcomers and give them an effective induction.
- We relate to people in a professional, empathetic and egalitarian manner.
- We recognize and celebrate achievements.

Professionalism directs us to develop a sustained passion for the continuous improvement and innovation that will help propel the field into a long-range, upward spiral of accomplishment and performance. We must focus on providing services and generating products (training, CE, licensees...) that fully respond to customer wants and anticipate customer needs, and we must do so within the boundaries established by the statutes and rules which define the profession. We must demand professionalism also from those we license. Those we license ARE among our products as well as among those we serve once licensed. We walk a “thin” line...do we serve the public through providing and sanctioning professional administrators or do we serve administrators by helping them to be more professional? Or both? Where does one stop and the other begins...? They are, in fact, very much connected.

WHY THESE CORE VALUES? AND ULTIMATELY, DO WE HAVE THEM RIGHT?

Primarily, it tells us the “price of admission” to be a part of this Board, either as a Board member or a staff member. We must all display the characteristics of “integrity” as we forge ahead with our “service” and continue to try to improve the “profession” we serve and define.

Second, these core values point to what we think is UNIVERSAL and UNCHANGING in the field of long term care. These values are merely road signs inviting us to consider key features of the requirements for service with this Board (and indeed, in this field) but we recognize they cannot be all-inclusive (though integrity alone casts a pretty broad net). By examining these core values, we discover the importance of a host of other professional requirements and attributes. The important thing is that we HAVE selected some clear road signs and by doing so have made it our obligation to understand the ethical demands these road signs dictate for all of us, collectively and individually.

Third, it gives us a very real sense of where we are in terms of the current ethical climate within the Board and staff. Establishing core values is a wake-up call IF we’re heading in a wrong direction, ethically, or an affirmation if we’re not.

The fourth reason for these core values...just as they serve to help us evaluate our climate today, they also serve as beacons in the future to give direction BACK to the path of professional conduct and transform any climate of ethical corrosion into a climate of ethical commitment.