

TITLE: AAP Policy on Conflict of Interest and Relationships with Industry and Other Organizations

BOARD POLICY:

Introduction

The mission of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is to attain optimal physical, mental, and social health and well being for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. To accomplish this mission, the AAP shall support the professional needs of its members. The maintenance of public trust and the AAP's integrity, ethical standards, credibility, and identify are of paramount importance in accomplishing that mission and will be protected with the utmost vigilance.

The AAP collaborates with certain organizations and monitors and complies with their industry guidelines (eg, the American Medical Association, the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education, Council of Medical Specialty Societies, and the Office of the Inspector General).

The policy outlined in this document serves as a general guide for the AAP at the national level to address conflicts of interest and relationships with industry and other organizations (eg, corporations, government agencies, and foundations hereafter referred to as "organizations") (See appendix 1 for definitions of additional verbage used herein).

The AAP recognizes that professionals—especially those involved in policy-making, research, education, standard-setting, fund-raising or advocacy—are subject to conflicts of interest (COI). Therefore, the AAP considers it unwise to embrace a general policy which would prevent participation in AAP affairs by individuals having relationships which may be perceived as COI's. The existence of an actual or current COI does not necessarily imply fault or wrong doing on the part of an individual. The AAP policy requires disclosure of financial or other relationships which may be regarded as possibly influencing actions taken or statements made under the aegis of the organization. The AAP recognizes the need to have a policy that ensures proper balance, independence, objectivity and scientific rigor in governance and in education, research, health policy and all other activities sponsored by the AAP. Careful compliance will inspire confidence, will avoid both actual bias and the appearance of bias, and will comply with legal and regulatory standards. The AAP requires that prior to participating in AAP programs, all individuals without exception, make full and effective disclosure of their relationship related in any way to healthcare or to their AAP activities, business transactions, presentations or publications. The AAP requires that all such disclosures be made and presented in a manner that will allow others to make informed decisions about the existence and/or impact of a COI. If a conflict is identified, it will be resolved according to clearly defined and promulgated procedures.

Conflict of Interest

There are potential and real conflicts of interest that may affect an individual's opinion, may appear to make that opinion self-serving, or might not allow for impartial objective determinations. These situations include but are not limited to relationships with providers of services and manufacturers of products. Any potential or real conflicts of interest in decision-making and principled interactions with industry and other organizations shall be disclosed and resolved.

Suitability of Relationship

The AAP acknowledges that opportunities and resources (including non-dues revenue) exist and the AAP will therefore seek partnerships that can serve to further its mission, provided that these relationships are in agreement with its core values. The AAP will develop relationships with organizations that, through their products, activities, and/or their philosophy, enhance the quality of life for children and their families and are aligned with the AAP's values and mission. Partnerships that provide no clear advantage to child health or medical care, or no professional or educational benefit relating to the practice of pediatrics will not be considered for AAP participation. Industry funding will not be accepted for any part of a meeting of an AAP deliberative body at which AAP business or policy development is the primary focus, including the development of practice guidelines.

Objectivity, Editorial Control, and Quality

The AAP wishes all points of view to be vigorously and actively expressed in the formulation of policies and recommendations at all levels in the organization. The policies of the AAP, the statements of its committees, sections, councils, and task forces, AAP educational programs and all other AAP communications on matters relating to the health and well-being of children as well as to the practice of pediatrics should be free from personal bias and from outside influences not related to the best interests of children and their families.

Support of AAP programs does not permit influence over content, nor does it imply AAP approval or endorsement of an organization's policies or products, whether a program is funded by a single source or multiple sources. For programs developed by an external organization for which AAP collaboration is sought, the AAP will require review of all program-related materials to ensure that quality and accuracy are in accordance with the standards of AAP materials and comply with acceptable medical practice. Distribution plans must also be reviewed by the AAP. In some cases, the AAP will allow the use of its name and logo to signify its participation in these worthwhile collaborations, subject to appropriate limitations to protect the integrity of its name and logo. The AAP name and logo must never be used as an endorsement, either actual or implied, of an organization or a commercial product or service.

Review Process

The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for the AAP's relationships with industry and other organizations, and for resolving matters where conflicts of interest are present. Programs must be approved by the Board of Directors or through the procedures adopted by the Board before outside funding can be sought or accepted.

Oversight: Board of Directors

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