



## Ethics Committee Patient Submission Form

The American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) Ethics Committee reviews potential ethical misconduct that may affect the integrity of our profession. The Ethics Committee reviews challenges pertaining to AAO members and the AAO Code of Ethics.

### Part I. General Information

#### 1. Submit a Challenge

To submit a challenge to the AAO Ethics Committee, please complete this form and attach pertinent material that you want the Ethics Committee to review. A “challenge” is the word we use to describe your complaint or concern. The Ethics Committee will not review your challenge if this form is incomplete. If your challenge is about ophthalmic care provided to you, we may need to review your medical record. Please complete and return a record release form with your submission, [as found here](#).

#### 2. Rules of the AAO Code of Ethics

The Ethics Committee reviews challenges relating to specific Rules of the Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics can be found at this link: <https://www.aao.org/ethics-detail/code-of-ethics>. Only the Rules of the Code of Ethics are enforceable; the Principles of the Code of Ethics are not enforceable.

#### Note:

- a. The Ethics Committee only reviews challenges about *ophthalmologists* who are Academy members. You can find out if the ophthalmologist you are challenging is an AAO member [here](#) or go to [www.aao.org](http://www.aao.org) and use the “Find an Ophthalmologist” search function. The Ethics Committee does not review complaints about facilities, non-AAO members, or medical practice staff members.
- b. Financial issues are NOT in the purview of the Ethics Committee and the Ethics Committee WILL NOT assist in reimbursement, resolution of billing, or fee disputes. However, if you are concerned that the ophthalmic services provided to you were misrepresented, please complete, and submit this form.
- c. Patients without a specific complaint related to the Code of Ethics and who are unhappy with their outcome should address their concerns first with their ophthalmologist. If you are unsuccessful in resolving the issue, consider proceeding with a complaint to the appropriate state medical board. Contact information for many state medical boards can be found on the Federation of State Medical Boards website (<http://www.fsmb.org/policy/contacts>).

3. **Confidentiality**

The process by which the Ethics Committee reviews all challenges is designed to ensure fundamental fairness, objectivity, and confidentiality to all parties before a final decision is reached. While our investigative process is confidential, the challenged ophthalmologist will be informed of the challenge and will be told the specifics of the complaint as well as the name of the person bringing the challenge. Please do not discuss or make public the fact that your challenge has been filed or is ongoing.

4. **Investigative Timeline**

The initial review process typically occurs within 30 days. The timeline for investigating and rendering a decision on a challenge varies from several weeks to over a year depending on multiple factors, including timeliness of responses to correspondence, general cooperation, and complexity of the issue in the challenge. Prior to the completion of the review process, no information will be provided to the submitter.

5. **Investigative Limitations**

As a membership organization, the AAO cannot revoke or restrict an ophthalmologist's license to practice medicine. We cannot and will not attempt to obtain a monetary award for you or require that an ophthalmologist do something that you request. We also do not have powers of investigation that governmental bodies and others possess thus some challenges cannot be adequately resolved by the Ethics Committee.

**Part II. Your Contact Information**

Provide your name and contact information, including your telephone number, street address, and email address:

**Part III. Information about the Challenge**

1. Please provide the name and contact information of the Academy member you are challenging:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What are the dates involved with the issue or Academy member you are challenging?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Have you talked with an attorney, a state medical board or other group at any time regarding your complaint of this Academy member? Yes / No If yes, please send us all official communication from any of those individuals or groups.

If you have talked with an attorney, please consult him or her before sending any material to the Ethics Committee. If you have consulted any other entities, please send us all official communication with those entities related to your complaint.

NOTE: The Ethics Committee has the right, in its sole discretion, to reject or delay an investigation of your challenge until legal or other formal reviews of your challenge are complete. If the Ethics Committee determines that you knowingly provided inaccurate information about legal or other formal reviews of your challenge, your submission to the AAO Ethics Committee will be immediately dismissed.

#### **Part IV. Narrative of Specific Concerns**

The Ethics Committee requires that you provide a detailed description of your challenge in a narrative format. In your narrative, identify the specific Rules of the Code of Ethics that you believe have been violated. The narrative should accompany your submission form. The Ethics Committee will not accept hand-written narratives.

#### **Part V. Sign and Date the Submission Form**

By signing and submitting this form, you agree that:

1. You understand and respect the AAO Ethics Committee's investigative process and its limitations.
2. Your name and all the information you provide to the Ethics Committee about your challenge will be made available to the challenged Academy member.
3. Depending upon the severity of the situation, it may be necessary for you to attend a non-legal, administrative hearing to resolve this challenge. These hearings are rare, but if one is needed, we will make every effort to minimize your time and expense.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Submitter signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Check this box if you agree to communicate with the Ethics Committee by email. Because not all email is secure, please do not send any confidential or private health information about you or anyone else in an email message.

The Ethics Committee email address is: [ethics@aao.org](mailto:ethics@aao.org). The street address for sending submission forms and supporting materials is:

The Ethics Committee  
American Academy of Ophthalmology  
655 Beach Street  
P.O. Box 7424  
San Francisco, CA 94120-7424