



Frequently Asked Questions: Certified Illinois Assessing Officer Code Ethics & Professional Conduct

The Illinois Property Assessment Institute (the “IPAI”) established this FAQ to answer frequent questions concerning the Certified Illinois Assessing Officer Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (the “Code of Conduct”). The Code of Conduct establishes minimal ethical and professional standards by which we as Certified Illinois Assessing Officer designees and candidates (“CIAOs”) shall conduct ourselves. Additional questions not covered in this document may be addressed to the IPAI office.

Q: Are CIAOs required to take an ethics course?

A: If you obtained a CIAO prior to January 1, 2018, you are encouraged but not required to take “Exploring Assessment Ethics.”

Individuals who obtained their CIAO after January 1, 2018, as well as current CIAO Candidates are required to take and successfully complete “Ethics for New Assessment Professionals” as part of the process to obtain a CIAO.

Any CIAO wishing to obtain an advanced designation (CIAO-Intermediate or CIAO-Master) are required to have taken and successfully completed either “Exploring Assessment Ethics” or “Ethics for New Assessment Professionals”.

Q: Why did the IPAI create and implement a Code of Conduct?

A: The IPAI established the Code of Conduct to inspire and guide the ethical conduct of all current and aspiring assessment professionals. The Code of Conduct is an essential tool used to communicate and promote the highest standards of ethics, education, and professional excellence for the ultimate benefit of all stakeholders. The IPAI recognizes the importance of codifying and making known to the profession, and the general public, the ethical principles that guide the work of assessment professionals.¹

Additionally, a code of conduct or code of ethics are commonplace and required in most all credential-granting organizations including Certified Financial Planners, Appraisal Institute, The American College of Financial Services, International Association of Assessing Officers, and more.

¹ Certified Illinois Assessing Officer Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, Illinois Property Assessment Institute, adopted November 18, 2019, and revised May 12, 2025, Preamble.



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Q: Who appoints the Ethics Committee?

A: Members of the Ethics Committee are appointed annually by the IPAI Board of Directors Chairperson. It has three to five regular members and alternate members who can serve in case of a conflict of interest of a regular member.²

Q: Who serves on the Ethics Committee?

A: The names of committee members are posted on the IPAI website.

Q: Who is the CIAO Ethics Officer?

A: The IPAI Executive Director serves as the CIAO Ethics Officer. In that role, the Ethics Officer accepts complaints through the official reporting form on the IPAI website and facilitates the work of the Ethics Committee. They do not have a vote in Ethics Committee decisions.

Q: Who created the Code of Conduct?

A: The original Code of Conduct was written by a task force appointed by the IPAI Board of Directors and led by former Lee County CCAO Wendy Ryerson. The Code of Conduct was approved by the Board of Directors in 2019 and went into effect on January 1, 2020. Revisions to the original document are handled by the Ethics Committee with assistance from IPAI staff and legal counsel. All revisions are approved by the Board of Directors.

Q: Am I required to take an ethics course to be placed on the ballot, participate in a caucus or be appointed or contracted to an assessment position?

A: No.

Q: Can someone file an anonymous Code of Conduct complaint?

A: No. The IPAI will not accept anonymous complaints.³

² Id., Section 4.1.

³ Id., Section 4.3.



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Q: When I was young, wild, and free, I got a speeding ticket for going 92 mph. Am I now at risk of losing my CIAO?

A: First, the violation of the Code of Conduct must have occurred within the last four years⁴ to be acted on. Second, the violation must be relevant to the Code of Conduct.⁵ You may have made a bad decision and received a ticket and hefty fine, but it is likely not a relevant violation of the Code of Conduct.

Q: Is the Code of Conduct complicated and hard to follow?

A: No. It is straightforward. If you are acting in good faith, doing your best to serve the public good, and striving to maintain professional standards, you are likely in compliance.

Q: I know of a CIAO who is doing something I think is illegal. Should I report them to you?

A: If you think someone is doing something illegal, the first thing you should do is contact the police, sheriff, or state's attorney. Then file a Code of Conduct complaint.

Q: How does the IPAI ensure that Code of Conduct complaints are handled fairly and not influenced by personal or political motivations?

A: The Code of Conduct establishes a strong framework for ensuring complaints are mapped to a relevant cause of action⁵ and details clear procedures⁶ for determining if a violation has occurred. The Code of Conduct has a high bar for relevant evidence to ensure the Ethics Committee receives the best information possible for its deliberations.

Q: A CIAO designee/candidate posted something on social media that I found rude and offensive. Will you sanction that person?

A: While some public comments and social media posts may be in poor taste or outright offensive, for a CIAO to be sanctioned, the violation must be relevant to the Code of Conduct.

⁴ Id., Section 4.3.

⁵ Id., Section 4.2.

⁶ Id., Section 4.4.



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Q: I disagree with the value assigned to mine or someone else's property and I feel I am being treated unfairly by a CIAO. Should I file a complaint?

A: There is a process in Illinois for disputes concerning property valuation disagreements. It typically begins with filing a complaint with a county board of review⁷. If unresolved, an appeal can be filed with the Property Tax Appeal Board⁸. The last venue for valuation disagreements is the courts. The Code of Conduct is not an outlet for valuation disputes as Code of Conduct complaints must correspond with one of the "Relevant Causes of Action" as detailed in Section 4.2.

Q: If I file a complaint, what kind of supporting documentation does the Ethics Committee want to substantiate my complaint?

A: Here are a few examples of documentation demonstrating relevant causes of action⁹:

- Court documents that detail a conviction of a CIAO or civil action that was found in favor of the plaintiff.
- News articles or stories from a regional/local newspaper, regional/local radio station, or regional/local television station of record that detail a relevant violation of the Code of Conduct. Posts or articles from blogs, political websites, social media posts, and the like will not be considered.
- A copy of an official notice or a letter from an organization documenting a license, certification, designation, or membership of a CIAO has been revoked or suspended.
- Documentation showing termination, removal from office/employment, or resignation.
- Approved minutes of a public body documenting relevant violations of the Code of Conduct.

Q: What is the general timeline for determining the outcome on a complaint?

A: Generally, the Ethics Committee issues a decision within 120 days of the initial complaint. Depending on the nature of the complaint and review process, a decision could take more than 120 days. A written copy of the decision is sent to the Complainant and Respondent (if applicable)¹⁰ once a decision has been made.

⁷ Establishment of county boards of review. 35 ILCS 200/5-5. 35 ILCS 200/6-5.

⁸ Establishment of the Property Tax Appeal Board. 35 ILCS 200/7-5.

⁹ Id., Section 4.2.

¹⁰ Id., Section 4.4.