

NATIONAL GUARD



MEMORIAL MUSEUM

WASHINGTON, DC

INSTITUTIONAL CODE OF ETHICS

The National Guard Memorial Museum (NGMM) follows the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) Formal Code of Ethics.

In addition to adherence to AAM guidance, the National Guard Memorial Museum adds its own, specific code of ethics. This code accompanies and compliments the AAM Code but in no way supersedes it.

This Code of Ethics explicitly and universally applies to all members of the Governing Authority, the staff, and volunteers.

As applied to the Museum and non-profit organization, this Institutional Code of Ethics puts forth the specific responsibilities expected to uphold the public trust. These responsibilities not only apply to individual conduct but also to the Board of Directors, staff, and all associated members.

1. Preface: Along with the Library and Archives, the National Guard Memorial Museum (NGMM) is the cornerstone of the National Guard Educational Foundation (NGEF.) Stated clearly in its mission statement, the NGMM is dedicated to educating the public on the unique and noble history of the National Guard of the United States. As the first and only Museum to be so entrusted, the NGMM Board, Staff, and associated volunteers, docents, and interns take their responsibilities seriously. While adhering to the general Codes of Ethics promulgated by such standard setting associations as the AAM, NGMM recognizes the need to establish its own clearly defined goals, aims, and methods.
2. General Responsibility Awareness: The responsibilities of the NGMM are rooted in an understanding of its dedication to the public trust and loyalty to the stated mission. The mission to educate the general public on the history of the National Guard of the United States is a comprehensive task. The National Guard began its existence in 1636, before

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the original 13 colonies were formed. The National Guard has been a part of every major military action taken by the United States since the nation's inception. The National Guard continues its ever-expanding mission in present day and beyond. Therefore, the NGMM is responsible for all aspects of disseminating the information of an almost 400-year-old institution. For clarity, this code of ethics covers several main topics without becoming overly specific. Those topics are: Museum Governance, Staff (including volunteers and interns), Collections (including Collection Management and Collection Policy), and the process of Information Dissemination.

3. **Museum Governance:** This Code of Ethics explicitly and universally applies to all members of the Governing Authority, the staff, and volunteers.

The Board of Directors, NGEF: The NGMM has a Board of Directors (the "Board") separate and apart from its parent organization, The National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS.) The Chairperson of the Board of NGAUS serves automatically as the Chairperson of the NGEF Board. The President of NGAUS is automatically the President of NGEF and serves on both boards in a non-voting, advisory only capacity.

Nature: By virtue of representing the history of the National Guard, the NGEF Board is a highly diverse and loosely consolidated board. There is relatively little contact between the day-to-day operations of the Board and the Museum. Interest is high and enthusiastic but one must remember this is a Foundation Board, not a board solely responsible for the Museum.

Authority: The Board acts as the final authority and legal actor for the Museum and is ultimately responsible for adhering to standardized rules of conduct and ethics. The Board is the final authority for financial decisions based upon the recommendation of the staff, the NGAUS Finance Committee, and appropriate advisors.

Disclosure: The Board has open and readily available access to all core documents and records held by the Staff on behalf of the Museum. The Board understands that it is

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their duty to keep classified discussions private and that, based on good reason, public records may be treated as such.

Personal Collections: The Board should not collect during their tenure any material that could be deemed in fact or appearance, a conflict with the interests of the Museum and its acquisition programs. Such a conflict arises if any authentic material relating to one or more of the collecting areas is a type and quality that would make it a potential interest to the Museum.

Conflict of Interest: The dedicated and passionate Board of Directors has a vested interest in managing the Museum in a strong and well-planned manner. There must be an understanding that the avoidance of conflicts of interest are a significant part of accepting the role of Member of the Board. While Board members may have experience in the arena of Museum science, an advisory and directive capacity must not appear to conflict with ethical behavior. Information gleaned during Board meetings must not be used for personal advantage or gain or in any way detrimental to the Museum and its mission. No personal use of the Museum or its collection is appropriate outside of the ordinary use available to members of the general public. A Museum as small as the NGMM can safely insist that members of the Board act with common sense and refrain from acting in any way that even appears in conflict with the goals of the Museum.

Those who govern the NGMM must use caution when creating their own personal collections so as not to compete with the Museum's interests. Board Members must contact the Museum staff for advice if there with any questions.

Staff (full-time, part-time, interns, volunteers): The general and specific intent of the preceding "Conflict of Interest" discussion applies directly to the Staff, interns, and volunteers of NGMM. This Code of Ethics explicitly and universally applies to all members of the Governing Authority, the staff, and volunteers.

- a. **Gifts:** This document in no way intends to insult the professionalism of the staff – while gifts are rare, if a gift is worth more than \$50, do not accept it.

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- b. Outside Activities: Staff privacy is paramount and highly respected, but outside activities must not conflict with salaried duties as outlined in the formal “Job Description.”
- c. Museum Property, Tangible and Intangible: Use caution when handling artifacts and under no circumstances may they be used to violate the public trust or for personal gain. Intangible property – such as social media, the Internet, and the Website -- represent the NGMM directly and must be used solely for professional, non-personal, reasons.
- d. Field Trips and other Enrichment: Maintain professional demeanor as it reflects on the NGMM at all times. Because the mission of the NGMM is to tell the history of the National Guard of the United States, be aware that staff behavior not only reflects on NGMM but also may reflect on the image of National Guard as a whole.
- e. Conflicts of Interest: Those who work for or volunteer in the NGMM must use caution when creating their own personal collections so as not to compete with the Museum’s interests.

4. Collections:

Ethical Management of artifacts and outreach are the priority of both NGEF and the NGMM. This Code of Ethics explicitly and universally applies to all members of the Governing Authority, the staff, and volunteers.

All staff members are expected to be familiar with the Code of Ethics adopted by AAM and the American Association for State and Local History (“AASLH”). NGEF is a member of both organizations and their codes are easily accessible by website. (www.aam-us.org, <http://about.aaslh.org/home/> respectively.)

One may refer directly to the Collections Management Policy and the Collection Plan for guidance. As a military Museum, deference to the requirements of the AAM Code of Ethics and the Registrar Manual (MMRM 5) must control the use of Nazi memorabilia, human remains, and Native American artifacts.

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In particular, the NGMM owes an ethical duty to the artifacts in its collection regarding ownership, use, and management. In general, the National Standards & Best Practices, 2008, covers requirements and is a suitable reference. However, military Museums present unique issues. (ref. Best Practices, p.30.)

Ownership: Many artifacts which come to the military Museums today (ours included), hold great sentimental value for the donors. It is incumbent, therefore, on the staff to ensure that the appropriate research and provenance of each artifact is thoroughly performed. Legal authorization must be assured for any transfer of title. Also, the staff must ensure that the donors clearly understand the finality of the transfer of ownership. Appropriate Certificates of gift must be accomplished. Receipt of the object should be relayed to the donor and a complete record with photographs) should be annotated in Past Perfect. The timeline for accomplishing these tasks is “as soon as possible” not to exceed two weeks. Assurance of accomplishment must fall to the two members of the staff to police each other.

Use and Management: The general guidance remains the same as above for ownership. Military Museums must ensure that the donors, staff, volunteers, and Governing Authority use and manage artifacts in an appropriate manner consistent with the original use of the artifact. The staff must use common sense with some artifacts unique to military Museums which may present unique dangers –weapons have sharp edges, ballistic capabilities, and potential for personal harm. Bring any questions about the practicality or safe nature of an artifact to the attention of the staff immediately.

Deaccession proceeds: Collections items to be deaccessioned WILL NOT be sold until all other options have been exhausted. As stated in the Collections Management Policy: “If items are to be sold, the proceeds will then be directed into the museum exhibit fund to care for and maintain the museum collection.”

5. Dissemination of Information (Public Duty):

The NGMM is aware of its mission and its public duty to maintain the collection and exhibit the artifacts truthfully and respectfully to the general public. The audience tends to be professional adults given the local community in which the Museum resides.

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Appropriate decorum around sensitive artifacts as well as more traditional displays must be maintained at all times.

The NGMM houses a contemplative Wall of the Fallen, dedicated to the National Guardsmen lost during the Global War on Terror. Almost 800 names are currently represented by nameplate and photograph. The location of the Wall is within the 9/11 Era Gallery and particular care is taken to provide the visiting public with an opportunity to mourn, contemplate, and generally relax and heal. It is incumbent on the NGMM to maintain the area according to this code of ethics and within good taste.

6. Availability of Code of Ethics:

A transparent Code of Ethics is embedded within the concept of ethical behavior and the mission of the NGMM. The Code of Ethics is located on the shared drive of the common network controlled by NGAUS and NGEF. Easy and ready access is available to all staff of both organizations. The Board may obtain access whenever they log into the local Wi-Fi network. The Code of Ethics is currently available to the general public and on the website.

This Code of Ethics explicitly and universally applies to all members of the Governing Authority, the staff, and volunteers.¹

Approval Board of Directors August 2, 2017

¹ General guidance in writing this Code of Ethics was taken from AAM's Code of Ethics (<http://aam-us.org/resources/ethics-standards-and-best-practices/code-of-ethics>) and The Boston Museum of Science (<https://www.mos.org/ethics>).