

O-An Zendo Ethics Statement

O-An Zendo Sangha members and Teachers Ethics Policy

Ethics Policy for Lay Sangha Members:

As students of the Buddha-dharma we aspire to right conduct in every aspect of our lives. In this aspiration, we encourage and support our sangha's efforts in observing the Ten Grave Precepts/Clear Mind Precepts. We affirm these precepts as guides for our thoughts, words and deeds. This Ethics Statement establishes a clear and specific set of minimum expectations to which we intend to be accountable – now and in the future. Publicly specifying these expectations will sharpen our awareness of ethical issues, develop trust among sangha members and provide a safe context within which Zen practice can take place. We are committed to serve, protect and transmit the Buddha-dharma.

All lay practitioners and Zen students must feel safe and secure in their place of practice. They must expect respectful and appropriate instruction. They must be free of harassment, discrimination and disrespect in any form, and we expect sangha members to report actual or perceived misconduct. Every aspect of a practitioner's wellbeing is important, and we encourage responsible behavior both inside and outside the zendo. We encourage compassion, mutual support, confidentiality and wisdom in abstaining from unwanted influence in personal matters. Injurious conduct that is intentional, repeated or protracted, deceitful or exploitive of another's trust is especially discouraged.

To be specific, we expect O-An sangha members to observe the following:

1. To serve the health and wellbeing of the sangha as integral to personal practice.
2. To recognize the sangha as the authority in its own governance.
3. To treat all sangha members, members of other sanghas, all teachers of O-An and other sanghas with honesty and respect.
4. To respect confidentiality when requested, except as required by law or other sangha policies.
5. To practice openness and inclusivity in our relationships with sangha members. Although personal affinities occur, there is no place for destructive favoritism, discouragement or discrimination of any kind.
6. To refrain from sexual interaction with sangha members. If both individuals desire to enter an intimate relationship, it should be conducted off the O-An premises. Any intimate relationship between members must not be based on power imbalances, and so must never develop between a teacher and a student. (See below for further details). Moreover, we reaffirm our commitment to observing the Precepts, and encourage members to refrain from any form of unwholesome conduct. Any illegal, sexual or other forms of abusive conduct, reported to a teacher, the Board of Directors, or suspected by a teacher, must, by law, be reported. Members who are not "mandated reporters" are encouraged to contact protective services directly, when necessary.
7. To offer support, whether financial or voluntary work (considered Dana) which is vital to the functioning of the zendo and its mission, must be freely offered, never coerced.
8. To practice careful stewardship of the zendo's resources, avoiding any form of misappropriation of sangha funds or properties.
9. To be accountable to these guidelines and to protect those whose who bring offensive behavior to the attention of teachers, the Board of Directors and/or appropriate authorities.

Ethics Policy for Teachers and Those Lay/Priest Ordained at O-An Zendo:

As students of the Buddha-dharma and teachers serving the O-An sangha, we aspire to right conduct in every aspect of our lives. This aspiration commits us to observing The Ten Grave Precepts/Pure Mind Precepts as guides and standards for our thoughts, words and deeds. This Ethics Statement establishes clear and specific minimum expectations to which we shall be accountable -- now and in the future. Publicly specifying these guidelines will sharpen our awareness of ethical issues, establish trust in the O-An sangha, and protect and transmit the Buddha-dharma.

We recognize that our practice is founded on trust: trust placed in each of us by our respective teachers to faithfully transmit the Dharma, and the trust placed in each of us by our students – to provide them with respectful, appropriate instruction. Observation of The Precepts and a commitment to living a life of moral integrity is essential to our calling to transmit the Buddha's teaching.

We understand that in our capacity as Zen teachers, we may fail our students in various ways and in differing degrees. The failures that most deserve our attention are those that are severe, those that cause unnecessary suffering and/or are demonstrably harmful to our students, to their practice and/or their wellbeing, either to one individual or to a group. We commit ourselves to refrain from such injurious conduct, especially from any that is intentional, repeated or protracted, deceitful or exploitive of a student's trust.

To be specific, we commit ourselves:

1. To use our power and authority as teachers, lay ordainees, and/or priests to serve the needs and aspirations of the sangha.
2. To recognize the sangha as the highest authority in its own governance and to exercise discretion in leadership so that we do not unduly influence decisions – provided they are, to our best understanding, in accord with the Buddha-dharma.
3. To treat all sangha members, members of other sanghas, O-An teachers and other Zen teachers with honesty and respect.
4. To maintain confidentiality when requested from sangha members and students. Zen teachers and priests do not have the right of secrecy as in the Catholic confessional; they are required by law to be "mandated reporters" of unlawful or dangerous conduct.
5. To practice openness and inclusivity in our relationships with sangha members. Although personal affinities occur, there is no place for destructive favoritism, discouragement or discrimination of any kind.
6. To refrain from romantic or sexual interaction with sangha members or another O-An teacher. If a mutually agreed-upon commitment to an intimate relationship occurs:
 - a. the formal student-teacher relationship should be dissolved and a period of at least 6 months should elapse from the time of dissolution to renewal of a relationship.
 - b. the teacher should step down from any teaching role in the sangha for a period of 6 months.
 - c. at the end of the 6 month hiatus the teacher can resume his/her role in the sangha but can not ever be the Guiding teacher or Preceptor to the former student with whom they had an intimate relationship – even if that relationship is later dissolved.
 - d. the teacher, if having entered into an adulterous, coercive or otherwise harmful intimate relationship, will be denied the opportunity to teach at O-An Zendo, and strongly advised to disrobe, if ordained.
7. To refrain from conferring teaching authority and especially Dharma Transmission to our lovers, spouses, siblings, children, employers or known benefactors, nor to offer such authorization as a way to attract, retain or induce the cooperation of students.
8. To accept economic support (Dana) from individual sangha members only when freely given.
9. To join with sangha in careful stewardship of its resources, avoiding misappropriation of sangha funds or properties.
10. To avoid the problems inherent in conflicts of interest or other dual relationships:
 - a. O-An Zendo teachers who work professionally as psychotherapists will let at least 1 year pass before offering private instruction to a former therapy client or engaging in therapy with anyone he or she has been teaching in the zendo.
 - b. Other conflicts of interest may involve the use of Dana. Negotiations for services

performed by a teacher must be transparent and, if not trivial, subject to open bidding.
This does not apply to service provided as a donation or donation-in-kind.

We trust that our Dharma brothers and sisters, and all sangha members we serve, will hold us accountable to these guidelines, free of fear of retaliation, discrimination or resentment.

An expanded Ethics Statement is available upon request from the O-An Board of Directors.