



**BLUE STAR MOTHERS OF AMERICA, INC.**

**CODE OF CONDUCT**

**Effective AUGUST 2024**

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## ARTICLE I. ORGANIZATION AND MEMBER RIGHTS

**Section 1.** The Corporation itself has rights. These rights are exercised by the decision of a majority of its members. Some of the fundamental rights of the Corporation are:

- a. To carry out its purposes and to exercise any of the rights or authority granted it by law;
- b. To change its purposes, if permitted by law and its Charter;
- c. To merge with another organization or to disband;
- d. To establish procedures governing the admission of members, and to grant or refuse membership according to the law and the Corporation's Governing Documents;
- e. To establish and to amend, through changes in its Governing Documents, the rights, privileges, and obligations of its members either by extension or by limitation;
- f. To delegate authority, to the extent permitted by law and the Governing Documents, to officers, boards, committees, and non-compensated employees;
- g. To elect its officers and appoint committee members in accordance with the Governing Documents;
- h. To terminate the membership of a Member or Associate, in accordance with Article II and Article III of the Corporation's Bylaws and with the procedures outlined in Article XII (Disciplinary Procedure) of the Code of Conduct; and
- i. To hold property and to defend or enter into litigation in its own name.

This list is not inclusive of all rights belonging to the Corporation

**Section 2.** In addition to the rights a member has as a person, there are also associational rights, property rights, and parliamentary rights, all of which are protected by law. A member's associational rights stem from membership in the Corporation. For example, a member has the right to fair and equitable treatment from the other members of the Corporation.

**Section 3.** The rights of membership may vary depending upon whether the person is a member, an associate, or some other type of member, for example, honorary.

**Section 4.** A member also has the following fundamental rights under common parliamentary law, subject only to any specific limitations contained in the Corporation's Governing Documents:

- a. To be sent notices as commonly distributed to the general membership
- b. To attend meetings;
- c. To present motions;
- d. To speak on debatable questions;
- e. To vote;
- f. To nominate;
- g. To be a candidate for office;
- h. To inspect official records of the Corporation;
- i. To ensure the enforcement of the rules of the Corporation and of parliamentary law;
- j. To resign from an office or from the Corporation itself;
- k. To be afforded all rights outlined in Article XII (Disciplinary Procedure) of the Code of Conduct;
- l. To receive and have the right to inspect a current copy of the Corporation's Governing Documents and minutes of the Corporation; and
- m. To exercise any other rights or privileges given to the members by law and/or the Corporation's Governing Documents.

**Section 5.** A member should exhaust the means provided for enforcing such rights under the Governing Documents and the rules of parliamentary procedures before pursuing further action.

## **ARTICLE II. RIGHTS OF MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 1.** The dues amount is set forth annually at the preceding National Convention and is payable by August 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Section 2.** Corporation pins are available to Members, Dads and Associates. The appropriate pin may be purchased through the Chapter Financial Secretary or through the national online store directly.

**Section 3.** All members shall renew their membership dues by August 31<sup>st</sup> each year. For members joining between June 1<sup>st</sup> and August 31<sup>st</sup>, the membership dues will be effective through the following August.

**Section 4.** Membership cards will be issued by the Chapter Membership Chair, if requested, to new and renewing members in good standing and upon payment of dues.

**Section 5.** Members with 25 years of continuous service will receive special recognition.

**Section 6.** An honorary membership may be conferred upon submission of a letter of recommendation to the NEB. An honorary membership is conferred to an individual who does not meet Corporation's eligibility requirements, but who has proven through deeds and actions to have an outstanding and continued commitment to the United States Armed Forces, its Veterans, and their families. Honorary members do not have voting rights or eligibility to be an elected or appointed officer.

**Section 7.** Lifetime membership shall be awarded to the outgoing National President (NP) upon completion of her term of office and approval of the NEB.

### **ARTICLE III. APPLICATION PROCESS FOR MEMBERSHIP AND RENEWALS**

There are four options for processing membership applications and renewals at the Department and Chapter level.

**Section 1.** Individuals should use the online link and membership information to join or renew ([bluestarmothers.org](http://bluestarmothers.org)).

**Section 2.** The individual may join/renew with the assistance of the Chapter membership chair or other qualified Chapter member. The Chapter Financial Secretary (CFS) will accept the funds and the chapter will prepare and transmit a dues report, by uploading and attaching the complete and legible application to either the Department or National. This report must be submitted within 30 days of the individual joining. Renewals, transfers (with a completed application) and Associate (must have an application) documents must be marked accordingly.

**Section 3.** An individual may mail a completed and legible application and check to the National Finance Secretary (NFS); refer to the address listed on the application.

**Section 4.** Individuals may join/renew using the approved BSMA app on a smart phone or electronic device.

## **ARTICLE IV. TRANSFERRING TO ANOTHER CHAPTER**

**Section 1.** If the transfer is to a chapter that is not part of a department, then the transferring member shall complete a transfer application and submit it to the Chapter Membership Chair of the chapter from which she wishes to transfer. The Chapter Membership Chair will then verify that the applicant has paid her membership dues or has attached a check to the copy of the transfer and forward it to the chapter to which the applicant is transferring. The Chapter Membership Chair will then submit a copy of the transfer application to the N1VP for follow-up.

Occasionally, a situation may arise where it's best for the transferring member to go directly through the N1VP instead of going through their current chapter.

**Section 2.** If the transfer is to a chapter that is part of a department, then the Chapter Membership Chair shall submit the above-described paperwork to the Department Financial Secretary (DFS) overseeing the Chapter to which the applicant wishes to transfer. The DFS shall then send the information to the chapter to which the applicant is transferring.

Occasionally, a situation may arise where it's best for the transferring member to go directly through the N1VP instead of going through their current chapter.

## **ARTICLE V. CHARTERING A CHAPTER**

**Section 1.** A group wishing to create a chapter may obtain a charter application from the N4VP. The charter application requires original signatures of at least six different persons eligible to be members, five of who will serve as officers. The new chapter must hold an organizational meeting where the members will sign the charter application, establish a meeting place, day and time and elect officers. This permits members to be able to arrange their calendars in advance to allow for participation.

If the newly forming chapter is in a state with a department, the Department President (DP) shall serve as a liaison between the members of the newly forming chapter and the N4VP. The newly forming chapter shall work closely with and through the DP.

The N4VP shall forward the approved charter to the DP to present to the new chapter at the next chapter meeting. If she is unable to attend, she may designate another Department officer to attend, who will swear in members, present the charter and install the chapter officers.

If the new chapter is not a part of a department, then the newly elected CP will receive the approved charter for presentation to the chapter at the next meeting. If a member of the National Executive Board (NEB) or a Past National President (PNP) cannot attend the meeting, new members may be sworn in, and officers installed, by phone or virtual platform.

**Section 2.** Chapters must fill out a chapter dues roster form upon formation and thereafter continue to keep the database updated.

## **ARTICLE VI. CHARTERING A DEPARTMENT**

**Section 1.** If at least three chartered chapters within one state wish to form a Department, a meeting should be called to discuss the possibility with a representative present from each of the chapters. The meeting should be centrally located in the state and provide adequate time for the chapters to discuss forming a Department.

**Section 2.** A group wishing to charter a department must obtain a Department Charter Application from the N4VP. The Department Charter Application requires the original signatures of the Presidents from all chartered chapters at the meeting.

Once the Department Charter application has been completed, the group must hold an organizational meeting. At this meeting, the members of the chartering chapters shall elect officers; and the department shall establish periodic meetings and tentative Convention dates between September 1<sup>st</sup> and November 30<sup>th</sup>. The name shall be the “Department of (Name of State)”.

**Section 3.** The newly elected DP will be informed when the charter has been approved. If a member of the NEB or a PNP cannot attend the meeting, new officers may be sworn in and installed by phone or virtual platform.

Once a department is formed, any existing chapters within the state will have the option to join but will not be required to join the newly organized department. All new chapters will fall under the newly chartered department.

After the organizational meeting, the department must register with the appropriate state authorities; follow the legal procedures for obtaining an Employer Identification Number (EIN) and file the necessary paperwork with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), as described by the Corporation's legal counsel; obtain a checking account, the signatories of which must be the DFS, Department Treasurer (DT) and the Department 1VP (D1VP); rent a department Post Office Box; and order the Department President's Pin (if available) through the NFS.

## **ARTICLE VII. MEETINGS**

Meetings should be conducted in person, within a group setting; however, when a meeting must be held through teleconference, chat room or social platforms, the meeting must follow the same rules as face-to-face meetings and must be inclusive of all members with the exception that all elections must be held in person. Departments, Chapters and Auxiliaries are encouraged to conduct in-person meetings; however, when not possible, a combination of in person and virtual meetings can be held to encourage the participation of all members.

If a Department, Chapter or Auxiliary cannot hold an in-person meeting for elections, a member of the NEB shall facilitate the elections portion of the online meeting to ensure election confidentiality.

**Section 1.** The gavel is a symbol of authority and should be used to bring the meeting to order and to adjourn the meeting.

**Section 2.** The suggested Agenda for a meeting may include the following:

- a. Calling Meeting to Order;
- b. Prayer/Moment of silence/Devotion
- c. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag;
- d. Blue Star Mothers Preamble;
- e. Roll Call of Officers;
- f. Reading and Approval of Minutes;
- g. Introduction of Guests;
- h. Officer and Committee Reports, including Compliance items;
- i. Recognition of new Members;
- j. Correspondence to be read to the members
- k. Acceptance of Financial Reports, to be set aside for review;
- l. Presentation and approval of expenses and bills, if not budgeted;
- m. Unfinished Business;
- n. New Business (Election is the first order of New Business);
- o. Announcements;

- p. Remarks;
- q. Prayer/Moment of silence/Devotion; and
- r. Adjournment.

## **ARTICLE VIII. EMBLEMS**

**Section 1.** The official pin of the Corporation shall be a five-pointed blue star in the center of a white circle bound in red with the words “Blue Star Mother”.

**Section 2.** The official flag shall be a white flag with the official logo on a blue star under the words “Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.”. These flags are available through the national online store.

**Section 3.** The official service banner shall be a white rectangle bordered in red with a blue star in the middle for each qualifying child as authorized by the Department of Defense (DOD).

**Section 4.** The official flower shall be the blue painted daisy.

## **ARTICLE IX. OFFICIAL UNIFORM**

**Section 1.** The uniform for members for Conventions (unless otherwise specified, for example, patriotic casual), formal events, memorials, and presentation is:

- a. White blouse, navy blue skirt, or dress pants;
- b. Shoes, navy or black;
- c. The American Flag and Corporation pin should be placed in order over your heart; Current and past NP/DP/CPs can wear their highest-level office pins under the Corporate pin; Auxiliary guard pins may be attached to the Corporation pin; Name badge/pin may be worn on the right chest; Up to six additional Blue Star and military service affiliated pins may be displayed, with or without a ribbon, mounted below the Corporate pin.
- d. Minimal jewelry; no scarves;
- e. White gloves (when participating in formal ceremonies only); and
- f. If the member is a Gold Star Mother, she may choose to wear all white or follow the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. guidelines.

**Section 2.** For the events described in the above Section 1, the following is optional:

- a. Navy blue jacket;
- b. Garrison hat with patch (may be embroidered royal blue) with Chapter name, number, state), or with the highest office served within the Corporation and years of service in that office. No pins or other decorations may be attached to the hat. The proper placement of the hat is two fingers above the eyebrows; and
- c. Navy blue cape (DP/CP only).

**Section 3.** Members also have the option of wearing a white nurse dress uniform to the events listed in Section 1.

**Section 4.** National Elected Officers and PNPs shall wear the following uniform to the events listed in Section 1:

- a. White blouse, white or blue skirt, or dress pants; white jacket, white suit, or white dress. A navy-blue jacket may be worn when attending any Gold Star Mother events to distinguish the officers from the Gold Star Mothers;
- b. White shoes when wearing all white, navy, or black with navy skirt or pants;
- c. The American Flag and Corporation pin should be placed in order over your heart; Current and past NP/DP/CPs can wear their highest-level office pins under the Corporate pin; Auxiliary guard pins may be attached to the Corporation pin; Name badge/pin may be worn on the right chest; Up to six additional Blue Star and military service affiliated pins may be displayed, with or without a ribbon mounted below the Corporate pin.
- d. Minimal jewelry; no scarves;
- e. White gloves (when participating in formal ceremonies only);
- f. If the member is a Gold Star Mother, she may choose to wear all white or follow the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. guidelines.
- g. White cape (optional).

**Section 5.** The informal uniform for all members and officers for fundraising, rallies, parades, etc., is Blue Star mother and/or patriotic apparel and the Corporation's Pin (optional).

## **ARTICLE X. BLUE TO GOLD PROGRAM**

A Department of Defense official banner may be presented to the spouse and parents of a Fallen military member who was on active duty. All banner presentations must be approved by the N3VP, which is accomplished by completing a Gold Star banner presentation request. Refer to the Blue to Gold guidelines posted on the BSMA website for complete instructions.

## **ARTICLE XI. CORPORATE LOGO**

**Section 1.** It is the responsibility of the NEB to ensure that the logo is being used in a manner that safeguards the integrity of the Corporation.

**Section 2.** The following is the procedure to request use of the Corporation's logo:

- a. The Department President, Chapter President, or Auxiliary President should submit, in writing, a request to the NP specifying in detail how the logo will be used, what it will be used for and if this is an on-going Department, Chapter, or Auxiliary project (example: Fundraising items, banner, sign, rally, etc.);
- b. Permission must be received from the NP before the logo is placed on any article unless described in Article XI, Section 2(d);
- c. In fundraising, if any item is sold that has the logo on it, a financial report with 25% of the net profit must be forwarded to the NFS to be placed in the General Fund;
- d. Use of the logo on the following items does not need the NEB's approval:
  - I. Department, Chapter, or Auxiliary forms;
  - II. Letterhead, notices, brochures, note cards, donation receipts and promotional items not for sale, such as tablecloths/runners;
  - III. Certificates of Appreciation;
  - IV. Business cards; and
  - V. Blue to Gold Memorial Books.

- VI. Official Convention Logo – If the NP designates a convention logo, that logo can be used by the Departments, Chapters, or Auxiliaries for fundraising purposes for attending that Convention without paying the 25% surcharge for logo use.

Departments and Chapters shall be encouraged to use the logo on merchandise that can be sold to raise funds for their respective delegates to attend the Convention.

**Section 3.** If items with the logo are sold directly through the online store of the Corporation to Departments, Chapters, or individuals, these items will not be altered. However, items that do not contain the logo that are sold to Departments, Chapters, or Auxiliaries to be used for fundraising projects may be altered and any profit kept by the Chapter or Department.

## **ARTICLE XII. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

### **Section 1.** Member/Associate Behavior Code

The purpose of the Member/Associate Behavior Code is to ensure that the Corporation carries out its mission productively in an atmosphere of democracy and cooperation. Our interaction with our members, our associates, the public and those we serve through our mission must be respectful, honorable, safe and secure, as well as enjoyable. This code is intended to define generally accepted behavior as further described.

The Corporation is a non-partisan, non-political, non-sectarian organization. We do not support any political candidate, nor do we endorse any religious organization. The military represents all aspects of America as does our organization.

1. The Member/Associate Behavior Code shall apply to all Members/Associates and all terms and conditions of the Disciplinary Procedures in this Article shall apply to Members/Associates alike.
2. Responsibility. Each NP, DP, CP, or AP together with their Executive Boards, shall ensure that the procedure set forth in this policy is followed by the membership in a consistent manner. Compliance with this policy is the responsibility of all Members/Associates.

3. General Member/Associate Behavior. Members/Associates should treat each other in the spirit of our Corporation's core values and history. Members/Associates shall treat one another, public officials, our military, and those in our neighboring communities with courtesy and goodwill at all times. This includes communications by telephone, email, virtual platforms, meetings, activities, and events.

Hard work through volunteer hours, one's title at any level of the Corporation, educational background or skill level does not give a Member/Associate the right to mistreat or cause petty grievances toward others.

- a) All contributions of time and talent shall be encouraged. Highly active members shall not criticize or denigrate the contributions of less active members.
- b) Abusive behavior from profane or threatening language to physical violence in any dealings with our volunteers or those we serve, as well as those who support us, is prohibited.
- c) Harassment or discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, religion, political affiliation, physical disability or for any other reason will not be tolerated.
- d) Personal disputes have no place at National, Department, Chapter, Auxiliary meetings or at any Corporation event. Disputes between members during any activities or events will not be resolved through argument but shall be referred to the NEB, DEB or CEB for resolution.
- e) Members/Associates shall not personally accept tips, gratuities, or monetary rewards from the public or to grant favor. Any funds received as such will be the property of the National, Department, Chapter, or Auxiliary organization, where applicable.
- f) Announcements, discussions or remarks regarding politics, political parties, or persons holding a particular public office will not be part of discussions that may be overheard by the public who supports the Corporation, or those we serve, or the membership at any Corporation activities, meetings, events, etc., disparaging any political party or person holding public office at any level of government. We are a non-partisan Corporation.

g) Members/Associates who hold public office at city, county, state or national levels will not use the Corporation in any way to further any of their political activities or agendas, which include running for a public office.

4. Corporation's Business Mission, and Lines of Authority

- a. In every organization, operations must have a chain of command. National, Department, Chapter, and Auxiliary activities shall have a person assigned for oversight. A member or officer can be elected or appointed to serve as an oversight of an officially recognized National, Department, Chapter, or Auxiliary area of responsibility. While all Members/Associates are encouraged to suggest projects, events and activities, their volunteer efforts shall be coordinated by the assigned or elected individual.
- b. All chapters are also assigned to a Chapter Mentor that is available to all Members/Associates to assist with questions. Members/Associates are also able to contact a member of the NEB, DEB or CEB.
- c. Members/Associates are prohibited from making false claims, false representations, or allegations aimed at individuals regarding any aspects of the Corporation through any means. All Members/Associates are to avoid words or deeds that are arrogant, insensitive, belittling, cruel, or disrespectful. They should set an example of good conduct for others to follow. This includes, but is not limited to, the utilization of any type of distributed hard copy or electronic copy material, public service announcements, or publicly broadcasted means of communication, including television, radio, email, internet blogs or social media.
- d. Members/Associates shall not represent themselves as the authorized agent of the Corporation, with the exception of the President. The President, at her level of oversight, is the Corporation's authorized agent that may enter into legal contracts of any kind with an outside entity. The President may assign this duty to an Executive Board Member, preferably a Vice President, as recorded in the minutes of a NEB, DEB or CEB meeting, should she be unavailable to sign a contract.
- e. The NP or DP will not, by herself, be involved in chapter disciplinary issues, except to provide minimum advice, when solicited, to chapter leadership – she must remain neutral and cannot take “sides” on such matters.

All conflicts/grievances that are received by the NP or DP will be discussed by the NEB or DEB and referred to the appropriate committee for investigation and action.

5. Treatment of Blue Star Mothers of America Inc., Property

- a. Members/Associates are the trustees of the Corporation's property. It must be treated with reasonable care.
- b. Members serving through an elected or appointed position at all levels of the Corporation are required to transition all property, financial files, minutes, and records, entrusted to them for their term to their successor within 10 days upon retirement from office. If items are not returned, legal action may be taken and the costs will be assessed to the member.
- c. An inventory list shall be used to account for property at all levels and is signed by the retiring member fiduciary and their successor fiduciary upon transfer of property.
- d. All Corporation property is under the managing control of the respective NEB, DEB or CEB. All property is to be used only for its intended purpose. No one individual may dictate how it is to be used. This also applies to members who have invested time or money toward the procurement, replacement, restoration or operation of any equipment or property. The contribution of time, money or services conveys ownership to the Corporation and not to the contributor.
- e. Theft of the Corporation's property in the member's possession requires the filing of a police report.
- f. Members/Associates who lose replaceable Corporation property are responsible for the cost of the replacement.

6. Disciplinary Action. Members/Associates who violate the Behavior Code will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in Section 2, Member/Associate Discipline, in this policy. An Executive Board may immediately suspend members for cause pending further review and disciplinary action as described in Section 2.

Any department or chapter suspending a Member/Associate must notify the individual within 48 hours. The NP or DP must also be informed within 48 hours; she will notify the N1VP.

## **Section 2: Member/Associate Discipline.**

1. Purpose. To establish a clear, uniform, impartial and equitable policy on handling alleged or suspected violations of the Behavior Code, Governing Documents, operating rules, procedures and all other policies that govern how the management, administration, operations, and mission of the Corporation will be handled.

Members/Associates are encouraged to talk to each other to resolve their problems. Although we seek to provide a place in which all Members/Associates feel that they are an important part of Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc., and where all Members/Associates feel fairly treated, there may be times when individuals have issues which can best be resolved through a formal procedure for resolution.

All issues are to be resolved in accordance with the procedures provided later in this Section.

### 2. Member/Associate Discipline Steps.

After the official report is received, and further examination and investigation is made (if necessary), the respective NEB or DEB will determine if disciplinary action is warranted. The NP or DP will inform the individual in writing of the NEB or DEB's decision within 48 hours. Written notifications will be either through the USPS and/or email.

**Disciplinary Action Procedure.** Corrective action is progressive, and the following is the order in which steps for individuals will normally occur. It should be recognized that one or more of these steps could be omitted according to the circumstances of each individual case.

- 1) Informal Discussion. Every attempt will be made involving informal discussion before proceeding to stronger disciplinary action. A record of the discussion will be written and maintained.
- 2) Written Warning. This action involves a discussion with the President regarding the rule, Behavior Code, Governing Documents, policies, or procedures with emphasis on correcting the behavior. During the discussion, the length of time allowing the individual to correct an action or improve on behavior shall be specified. The individual should be certain that she understands the reason(s) the warning for correcting an action or improving behavior have been issued and the terms for avoidance of further action.

This warning shall be presented in writing within 48 hours of the decision and the individual will be asked to sign and date the document, as indication that she has seen and understands the document. The document shall be signed and dated by the President. If the Member/Associate refuses to sign the document, the President shall insert "Individual refused to sign." The President will sign and date the document. The DEB or CEB must notify the NP of this action within 48 hours since the individual is no longer in good standing. The NP will notify the N1VP. As long as no other disciplinary action has taken place, the written warning will expire at the end of six months.

- 3) Disciplinary Probation. If both informal discussion and a written warning fail to correct the problem(s) or resolve the dispute, the Member/Associate will be placed on probation. Probation is the testing or trial period of an individual who has violated or has caused offense. Probation allows the individual to participate under supervision and only under conditional circumstances.

The onset, duration and conditions of the probationary period shall be set by the respective NEB, DEB or CEB and the President based on the particular offending circumstances. It may occur after one or more informal discussions or written warnings or simultaneously without warning. The DEB or CEB must notify the individual and the NP of this action, within 48 hours since the individual is no longer in good standing. The NP will notify the N1VP.

- 4) Discretionary Suspension. For the welfare and good of the Corporation and of the Member/Associate, suspension may be required. Suspension includes the suspension of membership privileges, excluding the Member/Associate from use of Corporation property, meetings, activities, events, etc. A suspension allows the opportunity to review the circumstances and hold discussions with all parties involved before further action is taken. Depending on the results of the review process, all or part of the suspension may be revoked. The DEB or CEB must notify the individual and the NP of this action, within 48 hours since the individual is no longer in good standing. The NP will notify the N1VP.

- 5) Automatic Suspension-Under the Influence. The President shall suspend the operating and volunteering privileges of any Member/Associate of the Corporation, who is under the influence of alcohol or any other substance such that the individual's safety and those of others, as well as their generally accepted behavior cannot be assured and until such time that the President is assured that the member will safely behave appropriately in participation of such activities.

The DEB or CEB must notify the individual and the NP of this action, within 48 hours since the individual is no longer in good standing. The NP will notify the N1VP.

- 6) Automatic Suspension-Assault or Intentional Property Damage. The President shall suspend the operating and volunteering privileges of any Member/Associate who commits bodily injury or assault on any person or causes willful damage or destruction of Corporation property. The DEB or CEB must notify the individual and the NP of this action, within 48 hours since the individual is no longer in good standing. The NP will notify the N1VP.

- 7) Automatic Suspension-Failure to Return Corporation Physical Property. Any Member/Associate who has been contacted through the Corporation's official means of communication, more than once after the timeframe for return of property is exceeded, shall be immediately suspended. The DEB or CEB must notify the individual and the NP of this action, within 48 hours since the individual is no longer in good standing. The NP will notify the N1VP.

- 8) Automatic Termination of Membership. Failure to return the Corporation's critical files, records to include financial records essential to perpetuating National, Department or Chapter operations. Only the NEB has the authority to terminate a membership. The individual must be notified within 48 hours of the decision.

- 9) Automatic Termination of Membership for Members/Associates Insubordination. Intentional refusal to acknowledge and comply with official communication from the NEB, intentional refusal to comply with a direct order, or written policies and Governing Documents; abusive behavior from profane or threatening language to physical violence toward a member in the presence of other members.

Only the NEB has the authority to terminate a membership. The individual must be notified within 48 hours of the decision.

- 10) Termination of Membership. Member/Associate membership may be terminated through final actions of the NEB after a full investigation has taken place. The individual must be notified within 48 hours of the decision.

### 3. Conflict Resolution Procedures.

Conflict resolution refers to the process used to mediate a dispute between two, or more, individuals in the organization. In some organizations, conflict can be inevitable, and good conflict management tools are essential. Conflict resolution can be defined as the informal or formal process that two or more parties use to find a peaceful solution to their dispute.

The NP or DP shall refer all interpersonal conflicts to the established Conflict Resolution Committee who, individually, must sign a Confidentiality Agreement which will be filed with the NRS or DRS.

The Conflict Resolution Chair will:

- a. Receive requests for conflict intervention from the NP or DP.
- b. Upon receipt of the request, convene with the Committee and develop a list of interview questions to be utilized. At that time, if a committee member has a conflict of interest, it should be stated, and a new committee member will be assigned in their place for this investigation.
- c. Schedule individual meetings with all parties involved, using an electronic platform (such as Zoom or Google Meet). A minimum of two members of the Committee will participate in every meeting. The meetings will be recorded. If an individual refuses to participate, it will be so noted in the formal report.
- d. Upon completing the investigation, determine the next steps to address the underlying issue and resolve the conflict.
- e. If the conflict is not resolved, advise the NP or DP who will discuss the issue with the NEB or DEB.

f. Prepare a monthly report for the NP or DP, outlining conflict resolution meetings held with individuals and all actions taken, no later than one week prior to the next scheduled NEB or DEB meeting.

#### 4. Grievance Procedures

A grievance is a complaint by a Member/Associate concerning any matter related to the Member's/Associate's participation within the Corporation. Verbal warnings will not be resolved using this grievance procedure.

Any formal written grievance must be initiated within 90 days of the alleged violation.

All grievances must be in writing. Using the form provided by the Corporation on the website, the individual must state clearly and concisely all the known facts related to the grievance, including "who, what, where, when and the why." The individual must clearly explain why the Member/Associate disagrees with the act or omission that forms the basis for the grievance.

The individual must cite the specific BSMA Governing Document(s) violated to include Article, Section, etc.; describe the action or conduct that constituted the violation, including only the facts related to this grievance. Any signed and dated witness statements, as necessary, must be attached.

The individual must sign and date the grievance and forward to the NP or DP.

All allegations will be received by the NP or DP who will send within 10 days an acknowledgement of receipt to the member(s) who submitted the allegation(s).

If any of the necessary information is missing, the grievance will be returned to the Member/Associate.

The NP or DP will present the allegations to the NEB/DEB. Should the NEB/DEB determine further investigations are warranted, the NP/DP will forward, via email, all documents and information to the Grievance Chair.

The assigned Chair will acknowledge receipt by return email, with all Committee Members copied on this email. The Chair and Committee Members shall review the allegation(s).

The National or Department Grievance Committee (NGC/DGC) is composed of a minimum of three members in good standing, as appointed by the current NP or DP. If needed, the NP or DP may appoint an ad hoc committee or committees to handle additional grievances as they arise. The NP or DP will designate the Committee Chair. The Chair will request that one of the other members act as the recordkeeper for the Committee. All members of this Committee must sign a Confidentiality Agreement which will be filed with the NRS or DRS.

Once a properly completed grievance is received, the NGC or DGC will:

1. Meet to discuss the grievance utilizing a virtual meeting platform. If this is not possible, then via a telephone conversation.
2. At that time, if a committee member has a conflict of interest, it should be stated, and a new committee member will be assigned in their place for this investigation.
3. Develop a list of interview questions to be utilized.
4. Schedule individual meetings with all parties involved, using an electronic platform (such as Zoom or Google Meet). A minimum of two members of the Committee will participate in every meeting. The meetings will be recorded. If an individual refuses to participate, it will be so noted in the formal report.
5. Determine if there is a need to interview others not named who may have key information pertaining to the situation and schedule those interviews.
6. A minimum of 2 NGC or DGC Members must be present for the entirety of all meetings.

7. After a thorough investigation, the NGC or DGC will compile a written report stating only the facts (no recommendations) and will provide this information to the NP or DP. The NP or DP will then submit this to their respective Board in executive session.

All investigations should be completed in 90 days or less; however, certain circumstances may require additional time (during holidays or when interested parties are not immediately available for meetings).

#### 5. Authority.

The NEB has the authority to terminate the membership of a Member/Associate of the Corporation, if the Member/Associate is involved in activity through their actions, speech, affiliation, or social media and website postings deemed harmful to the Corporation.

A Department or Chapter officer or chair who has oversight of an activity has the authority to immediately dismiss a Member/Associate, from that activity, if the actions and/or behaviors of the Member/Associate casts an unfavorable light on the Corporation, involving verbal or physical abuse; unlawful or illegal actions; willful disregard of the purpose of the established meetings, activity, event, program or assignment; or, willful disregard of our Behavior Code, Governing Documents, operating rules, procedures, and all other policies.

If a Member/Associate is removed from an activity, the designated authority with oversight of the event will inform the DP/CP as soon as the activity is over. A report will be prepared describing the behavior or actions that led to the removal of the Member/Associate for the respective President as soon as possible.

Executive Boards will be the first line of authority to discuss further discipline decisions regarding a Member's/Associate's removal from a meeting, event or activity within their respective Departments and Chapters. The final decision on any action to be taken resulting from a substantiated violation of the Behavior Code, Governing Documents, operating rules, procedures, and all other policies of the Corporation rests with the Executive Boards and the decision administered by the President at their respective levels.

The President will inform the member in writing of the board's decision within 48 hours. If it is a written warning or suspension, the NEB/DEB must be informed within 48 hours. The NP will notify the N1VP.

Suspension decisions made by the CEB may be appealed to the DEB or NEB through their respective chain of command. Department decisions made may be appealed to the NEB. Decisions made by Chapters without Departments may be appealed to the NEB.

All decisions made by the NEB are final.

A member retains the right to request mediation, at the member's expense.

#### 6. Documentation.

Corporate official disciplinary communication shall be sent via email with read receipt, as well as using certified and regular USPS.

NPs, DPs and CPs are required to maintain hard copy, physical files of all disciplinary actions, with the exception of verbal warnings. These files must be provided to the successor President and referred to when making new disciplinary decisions to ensure that all Members/Associates are treated in a consistent, fair and equitable manner.

### **ARTICLE XIII. GENERAL FUNDRAISING**

**Section 1.** Departments and Chapters may conduct public fundraisers to add to the general treasury for projects, administration, etc. Certain procedures should be followed:

- a. Be mindful that other chapters within the area may also be raising funds for the same reason. Many problems can be avoided by simply contacting other chapters in the area before the event. Otherwise, stay within the local area as defined in the Chapter Charter and state (exception: coordinated events such as County/State Fair, music festival, car show, parade, rally, VA facilities and military base events, etc.)
- b. Display a sign with Chapter information and the purpose for which the funds will be used. Donations received for a specific purpose are restricted to be used SOLELY for that purpose and nothing else. It is prudent to state that the donations shall be used to promote the mission and purpose of the National, Department, Chapter, or Auxiliary, which include, but are not limited to, assisting the troops, the wounded, the families of the fallen, veterans and military/veteran families.
- c. Have a copy of all tax and other paperwork available to prove that the Department, Chapter or Auxiliary is part of a tax-exempt, non-profit corporation, including appropriate state documentation, if required.

- d. Have written information regarding the Corporation and the Department, Chapter or Auxiliary available. Items can include recent projects, a book of thank you notes from troops and veterans, a poster board of pictures, etc.
- e. If planning a raffle or other game of chance, comply with local/state officials for rules and regulations regarding the conduct of such an activity.
- f. Keep detailed records of inventory and financial transactions.
- g. Publicize the event through community paper, local TV, signs, social media, etc.
- h. Provide a special basket or box for cards and items to be sent to our military.
- i. Be familiar with the National, Department, Chapter or Auxiliary responsibility as an IRC 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, in the event a donor, or potential donor, asks for financial statements. Failure to provide the requested financial statements jeopardizes the entire Corporation. Refusal to follow the IRS guidelines could be grounds for the revocation of the Charter.

#### **ARTICLE XIV. VETERANS AFFAIRS VOLUNTARY SERVICES (VAVS)**

**Section 1.** The Department of Veterans Affairs oversees the VAVS Program. Veterans' hospitals are funded through the Congressional Budget and have limited resources for extras such as televisions, bedside phones, comfort items, etc. Various veterans' organizations have joined together to volunteer their time and resources to assure that those who served America receive the benefits and care they so richly earned. The Corporation is proud to support VAVS goals through being a Representative or Deputy to the VA Hospital Advisory Committee.

**Section 2.** All VAVS activities go through the National VAVS Representative.

She will appoint Representatives and Deputies per facility. Representatives and Deputies work with volunteers; to organize special events (such as picnics, Bingo, ceremonies, etc.); and to recruit volunteers, and work with Chapters to organize parties for patients or take donated items to the facility.

**Section 3.** Chapters and Departments should keep records of all volunteer hours and the value of donated items such as clothes, coupon books, etc.

**Section 4.** The duties of the Representative are as follows: to attend quarterly committee meetings with voting rights; to assist in completion of Annual Joint Review; to report back to the department or chapter; to be knowledgeable of VA policies, requirements, and guidelines; to assist and train member volunteers; to organize special events (such as picnics, Bingo, ceremonies, etc.); and to recruit volunteers.

**Section 5.** The duties of the Deputy are as follows: to assist the Representative and, in the absence of the Representative, perform her duties.

**Section 6.** Representatives who fail to communicate and report to the VAVS National Representative on a monthly basis shall be removed from the position if failure to communicate continues for a three-month period of time. A letter will be written by the National VAVS Representative to the hospital or clinic the non-compliant Representative was assigned to, notifying them that the Representative had been removed from office.

## **ARTICLE XV. WHISTLE BLOWER POLICY**

If any Member/Associate reasonably believes that some policy, practice, or activity of BSMA is in violation of law, a written complaint may be filed by that Member/Associate with the NP or another member of the NEB. It is the intent of BSMA to adhere to all laws and regulations that apply to the Corporation, and the underlying purpose of this Policy is to support the Corporation's goal of legal compliance. The support of all members is necessary to achieving compliance with various laws and regulations. The identity of a whistleblower is considered confidential and is protected from disclosure.

A Member/Associate is protected from retaliation only if the member brings the alleged unlawful activity, policy, or practice to the attention of the NEB and provides the NEB with a reasonable opportunity to investigate and correct the alleged unlawful activity. The protection described below is only available to members that comply with this requirement.

BSMA will not retaliate against any Member/Associate who, in good faith, has made a protest or raised a complaint against some practice of BSMA or of another individual or entity with whom BSMA had a business relationship, on the basis of a reasonable belief that the practice is in violation of law or a clear mandate of public policy.

BSMA will not retaliate against a Member/Associate who discloses or threatens to disclose to the NEB, DEB or CEB, or a public body any activity, policy, or practice of BSMA that the member reasonably believes is in violation of a law, or a rule, or regulation mandated pursuant to law or is in violation of a clear mandate.

## **ARTICLE XVI. AMENDMENTS**

**Section 1.** This Code of Conduct may be amended every three years at the National Convention by a two-thirds vote of the eligible voting Delegates present and voting.

An emergency proposal may be submitted in a non-Governing Document proposal year, in the event current governing documents would be in conflict with a change in local, state, or federal laws.

**Section 2.** Any proposed amendments and resolutions shall be circulated to all Members at least 30 days prior to Convention, so that the membership will have the opportunity to review all proposed amendments and make recommendations to their respective Convention delegates.

**Section 3.** Any Department, Chapter and/or Member submitting proposed amendments and/or resolutions must include an explanation for the proposed change or be present at Convention or have a representative at Convention to speak to the proposal.

**Section 4.** Amendments passed by the Convention body shall be reviewed by the NEB and the Corporation's legal counsel for conformity and compliance with the Corporation's Charter and Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), as amended.

**Section 5.** Amendments to the Governing Documents shall take effect at the close of the National Convention at which they are adopted. With a two-thirds vote of the Convention body, a specific amendment may take effect immediately.