



## Code of Ethics for AHAF – Revised 2021

### AHAF Code of Ethics

**Preamble:** The American Handwriting Analysis Foundation is an educational, scientific and professional organization whose members work in a variety of settings and serve in multiple capacities, throughout the many areas of handwriting analysis. Our members strive, through our professional relationships with other members and clients to empower people to understand themselves better and accomplish their goals, in personal and professional settings. We also help people to understand others in ways that are helpful to both.

This Code establishes the broad ethical behaviors of and asserts the ethical practice of the profession of a handwriting analyst who is certified by the American Handwriting Analysis Foundation. This Code also establishes an enforceable set of directives that not only serve as a guide and resource for the handwriting analyst but also serve as an expected code of behavior for those certified by AHAF and for those aspiring to be certified.

AHAF Certified handwriting analysts are required to adhere to all of the directives in the Code of Ethics. AHAF may sanction members, certified and non-certified under this code if the provisions of the Code are found to have been violated.

#### Directives:

- 1) AHAF members will strive to do no harm. They will not intentionally provide information that they know will cause harm or that they can reasonably expect will cause harm to another's person or reputation unless there is a compelling safety reason to do so, or unless compelled by a court order.
- 2) AHAF members will respect the privacy of the writer and shall share information about a writer only to sources who have a legitimate reason to obtain the information. Personal identifying information will be removed prior to sharing samples, even in the learning context, whenever possible. Handwriting samples that have been published or released by the writer to the public domain, such as the writing of historical figures and celebrities, are exempt from this provision. With regard to third party analysis, members will only reveal the results of handwriting analysis to the person who requested the information, unless other permissions are obtained or all identifying information is removed.
- 3) AHAF members will protect the welfare of research participants by obtaining their informed voluntary informed consent to use their handwriting samples. Handwriting researchers will take

reasonable precautions to protect the identity of the writer and prevent negative psychological or physical effects from the study.

- 4) In results/reports, AHAF members will protect the privacy of the writer by using secure or encrypted means to share their results/reports if personal identifying information is included in the report.
- 5) Recognizing the potential harm of informal uses of social media, AHAF members will not use social media sources (tweets, blogs, etc.) to provide confidential information regarding the writer of the handwriting without the voluntary and informed consent of the writer.
- 6) AHAF members shall perform and interpret only those professional handwriting analysis services for which they are qualified by education and certification. They should not provide medical, psychological diagnoses or legal advice unless qualified to do so.
- 7) AHAF members shall consult with other AHAF certified handwriting analysts and/or members of the AHAF board when unsure about conclusions from writing samples or professional practice responsibilities.
- 8) AHAF members who use handwriting analysis for measuring personal characteristics, development, career orientation, goal attainment or other forms of advice shall emphasize the importance of basing decisions on multiple sources of information rather than just handwriting analysis alone. This important disclaimer should be given both verbally and in writing as appropriate on reports. Handwriting analysts must strive to communicate with decision makers such as employers that handwriting analysis is only a lens through which to view people and should not be solely relied upon for critical personnel decisions.
- 9) AHAF members shall accurately represent their current qualifications and credentials in handwriting analysis. Handwriting analysts should never operate outside of or above their level of expertise (e.g., doing signature authentication or questioned document examination when not qualified).
- 10) AHAF members will properly secure any files they have with identifying information so that they cannot be inappropriately accessed by others.
- 11) AHAF members will make reasonable efforts to inform clients and former clients if a request for their information is received or there is an inadvertent release or breach of their confidential information.
- 12) AHAF members will not provide a reference for an applicant for certification or certification renewal if they have a reasonable belief that the requestor is not qualified, is not able to provide competent professional services, or presents a risk of harm to others. If an AHAF member is concerned about the competence of another member, they are encouraged to go to the AHAF Ethics Chairperson with their concerns.

- 13) AHAF members shall not engage in any form of harassment toward clients or colleagues. This includes verbal, nonverbal or physical actions that are known to be unwelcome or would be perceived to be unwelcome by a reasonable person. AHAF members shall not disparage other members. AHAF members are encouraged to pose their public and private disagreements with other analysts in respectful ways.
- 14) AHAF members shall adhere to the laws and legal standards in their locality and make reasonable efforts to stay current with such laws.
- 15) AHAF members shall seek professional assistance or decline requests for services if their mental or physical condition interferes with the provision of handwriting analysis services in a competent or timely manner.
- 16) AHAF members shall not discriminate in their services toward any individual or group based on gender, ethnicity, race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion or any other legally prohibited basis.
- 17) AHAF members who make statements, public or private, will do so in a manner which shall state that their opinions represent their own personal views and not the organization (AHAF) unless officially authorized to do so.

\*\*\*This list is not all inclusive and there may be matters that come up that do not fit neatly into one of the areas of this code. All AHAF members are encouraged to aware that ethics consultations are available and free to members. AHAF members should be mindful of their comporment and responsibilities at all times and when in doubt, seek consultation.