

## **Professional Standards Advisory PS-2 (May 2004; Revised August 2007)**

### **OVERSTATING CHARGES, FEES AND/OR COMPENSATION**

*All PRSA members pledge adherence to the Society's Member Code of Ethics. As issues arise relating to the practice of public relations, the Board of Ethics and Professional Standards (BEPS) is charged with providing guidance on such issues within the framework of the Code provisions. The PRSA Board of Directors then announces these guidelines through this series of professional standards advisories. The PRSA Member Code of Ethics may be found online at [www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org).*

**ISSUE:** Overstating charges and/or compensation, financial or otherwise, for actual work performed by a public relations professional.

**BACKGROUND:** At a time when questionable business practices are being routinely revealed, honesty, fairness and ethical dealings are mandates for public relations professionals and the companies they represent. The practice of claiming compensation or credit for work that was never performed is unethical and weakens the public's trust in the public relations profession and individual practitioners. Additionally, such practices may be in violation of contractual obligations and may be even found to be illegal. This Professional Standards Advisory lists a wide range of improper practices under the PRSA Code of Ethics.

**RELEVANT SECTIONS OF THE PRSA CODE:** At least one Code provision and two professional values relate to these improper practices.

#### **Code Provisions**

**Enhancing the Profession.** Public relations professionals work constantly to strengthen the public's trust in the profession. We have an ethical obligation to refrain from business conduct that is in opposition to this code and denigrates the public's trust in the profession.

#### **Professional Values**

**Honesty.** We adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of those we represent and in communicating with the public.

**Fairness.** We deal fairly with clients, employers, competitors, peers, vendors, the media and the general public.

#### **EXAMPLES OF IMPROPER PRACTICES**

- Knowingly or intentionally presenting for reimbursement any false or fraudulent claim, or cost report, for furnishing services or items
- Knowingly presenting for payment any claim or cost report for unnecessary services
- Knowingly submitting false information for the purpose of obtaining greater compensation than that to which the practitioner is entitled
- Knowingly submitting false information for the purpose of obtaining authorization to furnish services or advice
- Submitting duplicate claims for services, supplies, or equipment, for which the consultant has already received or claimed reimbursement
- Submitting a claim for services, supplies, or equipment which were not rendered to a client
- Submitting a claim for services, supplies, or equipment which includes cost or charges not related to the services supplies, or equipment provided
- Submitting a claim or referring a client to another provider by referral for services, supplies, or equipment which are not documented in a proper manner, or are of little or no value or benefit to the client, or are below accepted standards or unneeded by the client
- Submitting for payment claims which misrepresent the description of services, supplies, or equipment provided, the dates of provision or the identities of the recipients
- Submitting claim for reimbursement for a service, charge, or item at a fee or charge that is higher than the provider's usual or customary charges, unless specifically pre-authorized by the client
- Submitting a claim for reimbursement for a service or item which was provided without the consent of the recipient or client

**RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE:** PRSA members pledge to adhere to a rigid code of conduct and the highest standards of professional integrity and responsibility. Members and the companies that they represent, including public relations agencies and independent public relations consultants, must bill clients only for services they perform and for expenses they incur on behalf of clients.