Ethics for the Nutrition and Dietetics Profession

Jeanne Blankenship, MS, RDN
Vice President, Policy Initiatives and Advocacy

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Commission on Dietetic Registration
Professional Code of Ethics

Code of Ethics for the Nutrition and Dietetics Profession
-provides guidance for professional practice and decision-making

Primary goal -- protection of the public
-includes individuals, communities, organizations, and population groups with whom the practitioner works and interacts

Foundational Ethical Components

- Autonomy
- Non-Maleficence
- Beneficence
- Justice

Adapted from Formari A. Approaches to ethical decision-making. J Acad Nutr Diet. 2015;115(1):119-121.
Four Main Principles

Principle 1
• Competence and professional development in practice (Non-maleficence)

Principle 2
• Integrity in personal and organizational behaviors and practices (Autonomy)

Principle 3
• Professionalism (Beneficence)

Principle 4
• Social responsibility for local, regional, national, global nutrition and well-being (Justice)

Core Values

The Code of Ethics applies to nutrition and dietetics practitioners who act in a wide variety of capacities.

Assumes adherence to core values:
• Customer focus
• Integrity
• Innovation
• Social responsibility
• Diversity
Case Study: Social Media

Includes nine ethical standards, including:

- Respect the values, rights, knowledge, and skills of colleagues and other professionals.
- Demonstrate respect, constructive dialogue, civility and professionalism in all communications, including social media.
- Refrain from communicating false, fraudulent, deceptive, misleading, disparaging or unfair statements or claims.
- Refrain from verbal/physical/emotional/sexual harassment.

Principle 3: Professionalism

Ethical Leadership: What does this mean for my organization?
The Pledge of Professional Civility

- I pledge to demonstrate respect to my colleagues and all others.
- I pledge to support constructive dialogue and positive engagement.
- I pledge to discourage the public belittling of my colleagues, even when we do not agree.
- I pledge to model professional conduct in all my public communications and actions.

Case Study: Consumer Protection and Licensure
Principle 2: Integrity

Includes nine ethical standards including:

- Comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including obtaining/maintaining a state license or certification if engaged in practice governed by nutrition and dietetics statutes.
- Report inappropriate behavior or treatment of a patient/client by another nutrition and dietetics practitioner or other professionals.

Online Reporting of Success and Harm

Protecting Consumers. Improving Health.
Common Misconceptions

The Code of Ethics DOES:
- Protect the profession and the credential
- Influence public and private policy
- Improve professional practice

The Code of Ethics DOES NOT:
- Identify and reprimand all unqualified nutrition and dietetics practitioners
- Generally remove credentials from professionals

Approach to Ethical Decision Making

1. State an ethical dilemma
   - Identify components of potential ethical dilemma
   - Is it an ethical issue, or a legal matter?
   - What are the facts of the situation?
   - Who are key participants?
   - Identify your perceptions/values
   - What further information is needed?

2. Connect ethical theory to the dilemma in practice
   - Employ four key principles of ethical theory:
     - Autonomy
     - Non-Maleficence
     - Beneficence
     - Justice

3. Apply the Academy/CDR code to the issue and your ethical decision-making
   - There are four principles of the current Academy/CDR Code of Ethics:
     - Competence and professional development in practice
     - Integrity in personal and organizational behaviors and practice

4. Select the best alternative and justify your decision
   - Identify possible alternatives to resolve the dilemma, considering:
     - Cultural influences affecting your decision-making process
     - How alternative solutions track with your values and your institution's values
     - Your confidence in and ability to defend the ultimate decision
     - Whether the decision aligns with the Academy/CDR Code of Ethics and/or the SOPs/SOPPs
     - How the decision might affect others and whether they will support it
     - Make a final decision

5. Develop strategies to successfully implement the chosen decision
   - Seek additional knowledge to clarify or contextualize the situation as needed
   - Implement chosen resolution

6. Evaluate the outcomes and how to prevent a similar occurrence
   - Monitor outcomes, ensuring intended outcomes
What is the Code of Ethics

Ethics Education Resources
https://www.eatrightpro.org/practice/code-of-ethics/ethics-education-resources

Ethical Leadership: What does this mean for my organization?