

NOVA SCOTIA DIETETIC ASSOCIATION

CODE OF ETHICS FOR

PROFESSIONAL DIETITIANS

Index

Preamble

Glossary

Dietitians' Values Defined

Role and Responsibility Statements

- 1.0 Dietitian as a Direct Care Provider
- 2.0 Dietitian as a Health Care Professional
- 3.0 Dietitian as an Employee
- 4.0 Dietitian as a Teacher
- 5.0 Dietitian as a Member of the Health Care Team
- 6.0 Dietitian as a Researcher
- 7.0 Dietitian as a Business Person

Preamble

The Nova Scotia Dietetic Association supports and promotes the highest standards of professional practice. The Professional Dietitian accepts the obligation to protect clients, the public, and the profession by upholding this Code of Ethics.

This Code of Ethics for Professional Dietitians is a statement of the ethical commitments of dietitians to those they serve. It has been developed by dietitians for dietitians. It outlines the numerous roles played by dietitians and the ethical standards by which dietitians are to conduct their practice. It gives guidance for decision making, serves as a means of self-evaluation, and provides a basis for feedback and peer review. This code outlines what Professional Dietitians must know about their ethical responsibilities, informs other health care professionals and the public about the ethical commitments of dietitians and fulfills the responsibilities of a self-regulating profession.

Glossary

“Client” means an individual, family and/or substitute decision-maker, group, agency, employer, employee, organization or community who is a potential or actual recipient of the dietitian’s expertise. The client is unique and diverse in needs, culture, motivations, resources, religion and perception of wellness, If there is a conflict between responsibility to a client or an employer, the dietitian’s responsibility is to the client.

“Professional Dietitian/Dietitian” means every person licensed pursuant to the Professional Dietitians Act R.S. c361,s.1 (amended 1990, c.43) who may use the designation “Dietitian” or “Dietician”, “Dietitian-Nutritionist”, “Nutritionist”, “Professional Dietitian”, “Professional Dietitian Nutritionist”, “Professional Nutritionist”, “Dietetiste”, “Dietetiste-Nutritionniste”, “Dietetiste Professionnelle”, “Dieteticienne”, “Nutritionniste” or the initials “P.Dt.” or “Dt.P.”. This also includes those persons registered as temporary members under the Act. The term “Dietitian” has been used throughout this document.

“Standards of Practice” means Professional Standards for Dietitians in Canada, Copyright Dietitians of Canada 1997, revised 2000.

Dietitians’ Values Defined

Ethical Conduct

Dietitians establish and maintain a unique relationship with each client that is based on an ethical covenant. The word “covenant” means that dietitians have moral obligations in return for the trust given them by society.

Client Centred Provision of Care

Dietitians value the ability to provide client centered care that allows them to honour the individual needs, values and dignity of the client.

Confidentiality and Transparency

Dietitians safeguard information learned in the context of a professional relationship and ensure it is shared outside the health care team only with the person's informed consent, or as may be legally required, or where the failure to disclose would cause significant harm.

Collaboration

Dietitians work cooperatively and collaboratively as part of a professional team and in the best interests of the client.

Choice

Dietitians respect the client's right to informed consent and voluntary choice in treatment decisions.

Professional Conduct

Dietitians ensure high quality provision of care through self-evaluation of personal competence. They are accountable for their practice, and act according to the ethical values and standards of the profession.

Accountability to the Profession

Dietitians participate in professional activities to advance the development of new knowledge, to mentor, support and advocate for students and colleagues, and to assist in the improvement and regulation of the profession.

Role and Responsibility Statements

1.0 Dietitian as a Direct Care Provider

- 1.1 Dietitians shall place the individual client's best interests as their primary professional obligation.
- 1.2 Dietitians shall obtain consent for any service, and shall:
 - 1.2.1 Provide the client with a complete and objective explanation of the nature and scope of the issues, which in the dietitian's opinion, emerge from all the facts that have been brought to his or her attention;
 - 1.2.2 Inform the client of the scope of the recommended services, and of any reasonable alternative services;
 - 1.2.3 Provide accurate information about the expected benefits and the risks of the recommended services and of the alternatives.
- 1.3 The dietitian should take all reasonable steps to ensure that consent is not given under conditions of coercion or undue pressure.
- 1.4 When a person lacks the decisional capacity, dietitians must obtain consent for nutritional care from a substitute decision maker, subject to the laws in their jurisdiction.
- 1.5 Dietitians should endeavour to ensure that the substitute decision maker honours the individual's previously expressed wishes concerning treatment or, when these are unknown, acts in the individual's best interests.
- 1.6 Dietitians must remain sensitive to their position of relative power in professional relationships with individuals. They must not take physical, emotional or financial advantage of those individuals entrusted to their care. Dietitians must avoid all forms of abuse.
- 1.7 The dietitian must respect the right of individuals to refuse treatment or withdraw consent for care at any time, or to request a second opinion. The dietitian should be sensitive to nonverbal indications of a desire to discontinue and seek confirmation from the individual or substitute decision maker.
- 1.8 When discussing treatment options the dietitian should interpret controversial information without personal bias, recognizing that legitimate differences of professional opinion exist.

- 1.9 The dietitian should take all reasonable steps to ensure that the individual understands the information provided, and that the individual's questions have been answered. This is especially important when ethno-cultural or literacy issues apply.
- 1.10 The dietitian shall inform the individual of all fees for service and available methods of payment prior to providing the service.
- 1.11 Where a client's interests so require, the dietitian shall consult a colleague, a member of another professional association, or any other qualified person, or shall refer the client to one of those persons.
- 1.12 The dietitian provides professional services in response to the needs of the client regardless of ancestry, nationality, ethnic background, religion, age, gender, social and marital status, sexual orientation, political beliefs or physical or mental disability.
- 1.13 The dietitian shall respect and protect the individual's right to physical modesty and psychological privacy.
- 1.14 The dietitian should continue to provide services until they are no longer needed; the patient requests discontinuation; another qualified dietitian has assumed responsibility for the patient; or the patient has been given adequate notice.
- 1.15 Dietitians who are on strike must take appropriate steps to protect the safety of clients once the union has approved the provision of an essential service.
- 1.16 The dietitian shall respect the confidentiality of information obtained in the practice of her or his profession.
- 1.17 The dietitian may divulge confidential information only when the individual consents to disclosure, when disclosure is required or permitted by law, or when disclosure is necessary to protect an incompetent client from harm. The extent of the disclosure should be limited in order to provide as much protection as possible to the individual's privacy.
- 1.18 The dietitian shall respect the client's right to consult her or his nutrition record and to obtain a copy thereof.

2.0 The Dietitian as a Health Care Professional

- 2.1 The dietitian practices dietetics based on scientific principles and current information in the field of dietetics.

- 2.2 The dietitian assumes responsibility and accountability for personal competence in practice. She or he has an obligation to acquire new skills and knowledge in the areas of practice on a continuing basis to ensure safe, competent and ethical dietetic practice.
- 2.3 The dietitian practices within her or his own level of competence. She or he seeks additional information or knowledge, or makes referrals as appropriate when the situation is beyond her or his level of competence.
- 2.4 Where the dietitian is called upon to collaborate with a colleague, she or he shall maintain her or his professional independence. If the task assigned is contrary to the standards of practice for dietetics, she or he should decline to act.
- 2.5 The dietitian shall avoid misleading statements, omissions, or false entries in any records relating to her or his practice.
- 2.6 The dietitian shall permit her or his name to be used for the purpose of verifying that dietetic services have been rendered only if she or he provided or supervised the provision of those services.
- 2.7 The dietitian shall withdraw from professional practice whenever circumstances exist that might impair her or his judgment and prevent the dietitian from practicing safely and without harm to her or his clients.
- 2.8 The dietitian accepts the obligation to protect clients, the public, and the profession by upholding this Code of Ethics and the profession's standards of practice. A dietitian shall report alleged violations of the Code of Ethics or the standards of practice to the appropriate provincial regulatory body for further investigation and resolution.
- 2.9 The dietitian upholds her or his responsibility to society by bringing forward concerns about unsafe practice or unethical conduct by other health care professionals to their appropriate regulatory body.
- 2.10 When called upon to do so, the dietitian provides objective evaluations of performance for employees and coworkers, candidates for employment, students, professional association memberships, awards or scholarships. The dietitian makes all reasonable effort to avoid bias in any kind of professional evaluation of others.
- 2.11 The dietitian assists the profession in improving its standards and values by identifying issues that are relevant to the provision of safe, effective and ethical nutritional care.

- 2.12 The dietitian shall assist in maintaining the integrity of the profession and shall refrain from any act which may impact negatively on the dignity of the profession.

3.0 The Dietitian as an Employee

- 3.1 When seeking employment the dietitian accurately represents her or his qualifications and experience.
- 3.2 The dietitian should accept only those responsibilities which she or he is competent to perform. If asked to assume responsibilities beyond her or his present level of competence, the dietitian shall be willing to obtain further training prior to assuming these responsibilities.
- 3.3 The dietitian should only enter into agreements or contracts which allow her or him to act in accordance with this Code of Ethics and the profession's standards of practice.
- 3.4 The dietitian shall give priority to the needs of the individual receiving nutritional care. The dietitian should also consider the philosophy and policies of the employer and explore solutions to meet the needs of both the clients and the employer.
- 3.5 The dietitian should encourage and collaborate with her or his employer to develop and update policies and standards in order to improve the quality of service provided.

4.0 The Dietitian as a Teacher

- 4.1 When called upon to do so, the dietitian shares her or his dietetic knowledge with colleagues and, to the best of her or his abilities, provides mentorship and guidance for the professional development of students of dietetics.
- 4.2 The dietitian shall assume overall responsibility for the professional activities of students, interns, trainees and assigns tasks appropriate to their current level of competence. She or he should ensure that the client understands the status of a student, trainee or intern.
- 4.3 The dietitian should assist in the development of those who enter the discipline of dietetics by helping them acquire a full understanding of the ethics, responsibilities and needed competencies of their chosen area(s).

5.0 The Dietitian as a Member of the Health Care Team

- 5.1 When providing services as part of a health care team, the dietitian shall show respect for its members, recognize their expertise, share information and plan collaboratively to provide quality service to the client.
- 5.2 The dietitian should ensure that her or his action plan is consistent with the overall plan of the team, or should advocate on the client's behalf.

6.0 The Dietitian as a Researcher

- 6.1 The dietitian should participate in ethical and high quality research to expand the development of dietetic knowledge and practice.
- 6.2 Dietitians who conduct or assist in the conduct of research must observe established dietetic research ethics guidelines that are consistent with the ethical conduct for research involving humans.

7.0 The Dietitian as a Business Person

- 7.1 The dietitian shall charge fair and reasonable fees, proportionate to the services rendered.
- 7.2 The dietitian shall not engage in or allow the use of, by any means whatsoever, advertising that is false, incomplete, or liable to mislead the public.
- 7.3 The dietitian should avoid real or perceived conflict of interest in which her or his professional judgment could be compromised. When circumstances make it impossible to avoid a conflict of interest, it shall be disclosed to the client.
- 7.4 The dietitian shall not sell or promote any product, or act as an agent for the sale or promotion of any product, in such a manner as to mislead or create a false impression.

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