

# CODE OF CONDUCT FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

The code obligations below are set out in the Human Rights Regulation 2023 and represent the minimum standards that all health care workers in the ACT must comply with. Health care workers are those not regulated by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.



ACT HEALTH SERVICES  
COMMISSIONER

ACT Human Rights Commission

## 8. Health care worker must provide safe and ethical health service

1. A health care worker must provide a health service in a safe and ethical way.
2. Without limiting subsection (1), a health care worker must—
  - (a) be competent to provide the health service; and
  - (b) have the experience, training, and qualification required to provide the health service; and
  - (c) only prescribe or recommend a treatment or appliance to a client that the health care worker believes serves the needs of the client; and
  - (d) recognise the limit of the treatment the health care worker can provide; and
  - (e) if appropriate, refer a client to another competent health service; and
  - (f) if appropriate, recommend a client seek another opinion or health service; and
  - (g) if required and practicable, assist a client to find another appropriate health service; and
  - (h) encourage a client to tell the client's treating doctor (if any) about the health services being provided by the health care worker; and
  - (i) provide a health service in a manner that is sensitive to the cultural needs of a client; and
  - (j) if the health care worker is, or should be, aware a client is taking or receiving another health service—understand the interaction between the health services and tell the client about any possible adverse interaction.

## 9. Health care worker must have client consent

Before a health care worker provides a health service to a client, the health care worker must be satisfied on reasonable grounds that the client consents to the health service.

## 10. Health care worker must not claim to cure cancer or terminal illness

1. A health care worker must not claim to be qualified, able or willing to cure cancer or another terminal illness.
2. A health care worker may claim to be able to treat or alleviate the symptoms of cancer or another terminal illness only if the claim can be substantiated

## 11. Health care worker must not misinform

1. This section applies to information a health care worker gives a person in relation to a health service.

Examples

- information given when consulting a client
- information included in an advertisement
- information given to a professional body for a health service

## 2. The health care worker must not—

- (a) give false, misleading or deceptive information about, or otherwise misrepresent, any of the following:
  - (i) a health service the health care worker provides;
  - (ii) the health care worker's competence to provide a health service;
  - (iii) the health care worker's experience, training and qualification in relation to providing a health service;
  - (iv) the health care worker's professional affiliation;
  - (v) the health care worker's ability to provide treatment; or
- (b) make a claim about the efficacy of a health service if the claim cannot be substantiated.

## 12. Health care worker must provide accurate advice

1. This section applies to advice a health care worker gives a client in relation to a health service provided to the client.
2. The health care worker must—
  - (a) allow the client to make an informed choice in relation to the health service, and other health services; and
  - (b) not attempt to dissuade the client from seeking or continuing medical treatment; and
  - (c) communicate and co-operate with colleagues, other health service providers and relevant entities in the best interests of a client
3. However, subsection (2) does not prevent a health care worker from telling a client that the health care worker believes a health service provided by the health care worker will not benefit, or continue to benefit, the client.

## 13. Health care worker must not exploit client — financial misconduct

1. A health care worker must not financially exploit a client.
2. Without limiting subsection (1), a health care worker must—
  - (a) only provide a health service to a client that is designed to maintain or improve the client's health or wellbeing; and
  - (b) not accept or offer financial inducements or gifts in relation to a client referral arrangement with another health care worker; and
  - (c) not ask a client to give, lend or bequeath money or gifts that will benefit the health care worker directly or indirectly.

## 14. Health care worker must not exploit client—sexual misconduct

1. A health care worker must not engage in behaviour of a sexual or other inappropriate close personal nature with a client.
2. A health care worker must not engage in a sexual or other close personal, physical or emotional relationship with a client.
3. A health care worker must ensure there is a reasonable period after the health care worker stops providing a health service to a client before starting a sexual or close personal relationship with the former client.

## 15. Health care worker must mitigate harm

1. If an adverse event occurs in connection with providing a health service to a client, a health care worker must take appropriate and timely measures to minimise harm to the client.
2. Without limiting subsection (1), a health care worker must, as soon as practicable after the adverse event occurs—
  - (a) tell the client about the adverse event; and
  - (b) for a serious adverse event—obtain appropriate emergency assistance; and
  - (c) take steps to reduce the risk of a similar adverse event occurring; and
  - (d) report the adverse event to any relevant authority.
3. A health care worker must ensure that appropriate first aid is available to deal with any adverse event.

## 16. Health care worker must control infection

1. A health care worker must take reasonable precautions for the control of infection in the course of providing a health service.
2. Without limiting subsection (1), a health care worker who carries out skin penetration or another invasive procedure must comply with the Public Health Act 1997, including the following:
  - (a) any declaration made under that Act, section 18 (Public health risk activities and procedures—declaration);
  - (b) any code about infection control made under that Act, section 133 (Codes of practice).

## 17. Health care worker with transmissible condition

1. This section applies if a health care worker is diagnosed with a medical condition that has a risk of transmission to a client of the health care worker.
2. The health care worker must—
  - (a) seek advice from a health practitioner about how to avoid transmitting the condition to a client; and
  - (b) provide a health service in a way that does not transmit the condition.

## 18. Health care worker under influence of intoxicating or unlawful substance

1. A health care worker must not provide a health service while under the influence of an intoxicating or unlawful substance.
2. A health care worker may provide a health service while under the influence of a medicine if—
  - (a) the health care worker follows the advice of the prescribing health practitioner or dispensing pharmacist about the impact of the medicine on the health care worker's ability to provide a health service; and
  - (b) the health care worker's capacity to provide the service is not impaired.
3. In this section: medicine—see the *Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008*, section 11.

## 19. Health care worker with impairment etc

1. This section applies if a health care worker has a physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder (including an addiction).
2. The health care worker must—
  - (a) ask a relevant health practitioner to determine whether and how the health care worker should modify, suspend or end the provision of the health service to minimise the risk of harm to a client; and
  - (b) follow the advice of the health practitioner.

## 20. Health care worker must comply with privacy laws

A health care worker must comply with privacy laws that apply to a client's health information, including—

- (a) the Health Records (*Privacy and Access*) Act 1997; and
- (b) the *Information Privacy Act 2014*; and
- (c) the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cwlth).

## 21. Health care worker must keep records

1. This section applies if it is reasonably likely that information about the provision of a health service to a client by a health care worker will be relevant to the ongoing health or wellbeing of the client after the health service is provided.
2. The health care worker must—
  - (a) make accurate, legible and up-to-date records in relation to the health service provided to the client; and
  - (b) keep the record secure; and
  - (c) prevent unauthorised access to the record; and
  - (d) if a client asks for information in a record about the client—give the client access to the information; and
  - (e) if a client or the client's legal representative asks for the transfer of a record about the client—transfer the record in a timely manner.

## 22. Health care worker must have insurance

A health care worker must have appropriate indemnity insurance arrangements in relation to the health care worker's practice.

## 23. Health care worker must report concern about conduct of other health care worker

A health care worker must tell the commission if the health care worker believes on reasonable grounds that another health care worker has put a client at serious risk of harm.

## 24. Health care worker must display code and other information

A health care worker must make the following easily visible and accessible at all premises where the health care worker provides a health service:

- (a) the code of conduct;
- (b) information about how a client may make a complaint to the commission.

