

CODE OF ETHICS FOR THE HEALTH EDUCATION PROFESSION

PREAMBLE

The Code of Ethics provides a framework of shared values within Health Education professions. The Code of Ethics is grounded in fundamental ethical principles, including: value of life, promoting justice, ensuring beneficence, and avoiding harm. A Health Education Specialist's responsibility is to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct and to encourage the ethical behavior of all those with whom they work.

Health Education professionals are dedicated to excellence in the practice of promoting individual, family, group, organizational, school, community, public, and population health. Guided by common goals to improve the human condition, Health Education Specialists are responsible for upholding the integrity and ethics of the profession as they perform their work and face the daily challenges of making ethical decisions. Health Education Specialists value equity in society and embrace a multiplicity of approaches in their work to support the worth, dignity, potential, quality of life, and uniqueness of all people.

Health Education Specialists promote and abide by these guidelines when making professional decisions, regardless of job title, professional affiliation, work setting, or populations served.

Article I: Core Ethical Expectations

1. Health Education Specialists display personal behaviors that represent the ethical conduct principles of honesty, autonomy, beneficence, respect, and justice. The Health Education Specialist should, under no circumstances, engage in derogatory language, violence, bigotry, racism, harassment, inappropriate sexual activities or communications in person or through the use of technology and other means.
2. Health Education Specialists respect and support the rights of individuals and communities to make informed decisions about their health, as long as such decisions pose no risk to the health of others.
3. Health Education Specialists are truthful about their qualifications and the qualifications of others whom they recommend. Health Education Specialists know their scope of practice and the limitations of their education, expertise, and experience in providing services consistent with their respective levels of professional competence, including certifications and licensures.
4. Health Education Specialists are ethically bound to respect the privacy, confidentiality, and dignity of individuals and organizations. They respect the rights of others to hold diverse values, attitudes, and opinions. Health Education Specialists have a responsibility to engage in supportive relationships that are free of exploitation in all professional settings (e.g.: with clients, patients, community members, students, supervisees, employees, and research participants.)
5. Health Education Specialists openly communicate to colleagues, employers, and professional organizations when they suspect unethical practices that violate the profession's Code of Ethics.
6. Health Education Specialists are conscious of and responsive to social, racial, faith-based, and cultural diversity when assessing needs and assets, planning, and implementing programs, conducting evaluations, and engaging in research to protect individuals, groups, society, and the environment from harm.
7. Health Education Specialists should disclose conflicts of interest in professional practice, research, evaluation, and the dissemination process.

Article II: Ethical Practice Expectations

Section 1: Responsibility to the Public

Health Education Specialists are responsible for educating, promoting, maintaining, and improving the health of individuals, families, groups, and communities. When a conflict of issue arises among individuals, groups, organizations, agencies, or institutions, Health Education Specialists must consider all issues and give priority to those that promote the health and well-being of individuals and the public, while respecting both the principles of individual autonomy, human rights, and equity as long as such decisions pose no risk to the health of others.

A: Health Education Specialists advocate and encourage actions and social policies that promote maximal health benefits and the elimination or minimization of preventable risks and health inequities for all affected parties.

B: Health Education Specialists contribute to the profession by redefining existing practices, developing new practices, and by sharing the outcomes of their work.

C: Health Education Specialists actively involve individuals, groups, stakeholders, and communities in the entire educational process to maximize the understanding and personal responsibilities of those who may be affected.

Section 2: Responsibility to the Profession

Health Education Specialists are responsible for their professional behavior, the reputation of their profession, promotion of certification for those in the profession, and promotion of ethical conduct among their colleagues.

A: Health Education Specialists recognize the boundaries of their professional competence and are accountable for their professional activities and actions.

B: Health Education Specialists maintain, improve, and expand their professional competence through continued education, research, scholarship, membership, participation, leadership in professional organizations, and engagement in professional development.

C: Health Education Specialists contribute to the profession by refining existing professional health-related practices, developing new practices, and by sharing the outcomes of their work.

D: Health Education Specialists give recognition to others for their professional contributions and achievements.

Section 3: Responsibility to Employers

Health Education Specialists are responsible for their professional behavior in the workplace and for promoting ethical conduct among their colleagues and employers.

A: Health Education Specialists apply current, evidence informed standards and theories when fulfilling their professional responsibilities.

B: Health Education Specialists accurately represent and report service and program outcomes to employers.

C: Health Education Specialists maintain competence in their areas of professional practice through continuing education on a regular basis to maintain their competence.

Section 4: Responsibility in the Delivery of Health Education/Promotion

Health Education Specialists deliver evidence informed practices with integrity. They respect the rights, dignity, confidentiality, inclusivity, and worth of all people by using strategies and methods tailored to the needs of diverse populations and communities.

A: Health Education Specialists remain informed of the latest scientific information and advances in health education theory, research, and practice.

B: Health Education Specialists support the development of professional standards grounded in theory, best-practice guidelines, and data.

C: Health Education Specialists adhere to a rigorous and ethical evaluation of health education/promotion initiatives.

D: Health Education Specialists promote healthy behaviors through informed choice and advocacy, and do not use coercion or intimidation.

E: Health Education Specialists disclose potential benefits and harms of proposed services, strategies, and actions that affect individuals, organizations, and communities.

F: Health Education Specialists actively collaborate with a variety of individuals and organizations, and demonstrate respect for the unique contributions provided by others.

G: Health Education Specialists do not plagiarize.

Section 5: Responsibility in Research and Evaluation

Through research and evaluation activities, Health Education Specialists contribute to the health of populations and the profession. When planning and conducting research or evaluation, Health Education Specialists abide by federal, state, and tribal laws and regulations, organizational and institutional policies, and professional standards and ethics.

A: Health Education Specialists ensure that participation in research is voluntary and based upon the informed consent of participants. They follow research designs and protocols approved by relevant institutional review committees and/or boards.

B: Health Education Specialists respect and protect the privacy, rights, and dignity of research participants and honor commitments made to those participants.

C: Health Education Specialists treat all information obtained from participants as confidential, unless otherwise required by law, and inform research participants of the disclosure requirements and procedures.

D: Health Education Specialists take credit, including authorship, only for work they have performed and give appropriate authorship, co-authorship, credit, or acknowledgment for the contributions of others.

E: Health Education Specialists report the results of their research and evaluation objectively, accurately, and in a timely manner.

F. Health Education Specialists promote and disseminate the results of their research through appropriate formats while fostering the translation of research into practice.

Section 6: Responsibility in Professional Preparation and Continuing Education

Those involved in the professional preparation and training of Health Education students and continuing education for Health Education Specialists, are obligated to provide a quality education that meets professional standards and benefits the individual, the profession, and the public.

A: Health Education Specialists foster an inclusive educational environment free from all forms of discrimination, coercion, and harassment.

B: Health Education Specialists engaged in the delivery of professional preparation and continuing education demonstrate careful planning; state clear and realistic expectations; present material that is scientifically accurate, developmentally appropriate and inclusive; conduct fair assessments; and provide reasonable and prompt feedback to learners.

C: Health Education Specialists provide learners with objective and comprehensive guidance about professional development and career advancement.

D: Health Education Specialists facilitate meaningful opportunities for the professional development and advancement of learners.

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