

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVES CODE OF ETHICS*

* As amended by the Board of Governors on November 14, 2011.

PREAMBLE

The purpose of the *Code of Ethics* of the American College of Healthcare Executives is to serve as a standard of conduct for affiliates. It contains standards of ethical behavior for healthcare executives in their professional relationships. These relationships include colleagues, patients or others served; members of the healthcare executive's organization and other organizations; the community; and society as a whole.

The *Code of Ethics* also incorporates standards of ethical behavior governing individual behavior, particularly when that conduct directly relates to the role and identity of the healthcare executive.

The fundamental objectives of the healthcare management profession are to maintain or enhance the overall quality of life, dignity and well-being of every individual needing healthcare service and to create a more equitable, accessible, effective and efficient healthcare system.

Healthcare executives have an obligation to act in ways that will merit the trust, confidence, and respect of healthcare professionals and the general public. Therefore, healthcare executives should lead lives that embody an exemplary system of values and ethics.

In fulfilling their commitments and obligations to patients or others served, healthcare executives function as moral advocates and models. Since every management decision affects the health and well-being of both individuals and communities, healthcare executives must carefully evaluate the possible outcomes of their decisions. In organizations that deliver healthcare services, they must work to safeguard and foster the rights, interests and prerogatives of patients or others served.

The role of moral advocate requires that healthcare executives take actions necessary to promote such rights, interests and prerogatives.

Being a model means that decisions and actions will reflect personal integrity and ethical leadership that others will seek to emulate.

I. THE HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PROFESSION OF HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT

The healthcare executive shall:

- A. Uphold the *Code of Ethics* and mission of the American College of Healthcare Executives;
- B. Conduct professional activities with honesty, integrity, respect, fairness and good faith in a manner that will reflect well upon the profession;
- C. Comply with all laws and regulations pertaining to healthcare management in the jurisdictions in which the healthcare executive is located or conducts professional activities;
- D. Maintain competence and proficiency in healthcare management by implementing a personal program of assessment and continuing professional education;

- E. Avoid the improper exploitation of professional relationships for personal gain;
- F. Disclose financial and other conflicts of interest;
- G. Use this *Code* to further the interests of the profession and not for selfish reasons;
- H. Respect professional confidences;
- I. Enhance the dignity and image of the healthcare management profession through positive public information programs; and
- J. Refrain from participating in any activity that demeans the credibility and dignity of the healthcare management profession.

II. THE HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO PATIENTS OR OTHERS SERVED

The healthcare executive shall, within the scope of his or her authority:

- A. Work to ensure the existence of a process to evaluate the quality of care or service rendered;
- B. Avoid practicing or facilitating discrimination and institute safeguards to prevent discriminatory organizational practices;
- C. Work to ensure the existence of a process that will advise patients or others served of the rights, opportunities, responsibilities and risks regarding available healthcare services;
- D. Work to ensure that there is a process in place to facilitate the resolution of conflicts that may arise when values of patients and their families differ from those of employees and physicians;
- E. Demonstrate zero tolerance for any abuse of power that compromises patients or others served;
- F. Work to provide a process that ensures the autonomy and self-determination of patients or others served;
- G. Work to ensure the existence of procedures that will safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of patients or others served; and
- H. Work to ensure the existence of an ongoing process and procedures to review, develop and consistently implement evidence-based clinical practices throughout the organization.

III. THE HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE ORGANIZATION

The healthcare executive shall, within the scope of his or her authority:

- A. Provide healthcare services consistent with available resources, and when there are limited resources, work to ensure the existence of a resource allocation process that considers ethical ramifications;
- B. Conduct both competitive and cooperative activities in ways that improve community healthcare services;
- C. Lead the organization in the use and improvement of standards of management and sound business practices;
- D. Respect the customs and practices of patients or others served, consistent with the organization's philosophy;
- E. Be truthful in all forms of professional and organizational communication, and avoid disseminating information that is false, misleading or deceptive;
- F. Report negative financial and other information promptly and accurately, and initiate appropriate action;
- G. Prevent fraud and abuse and aggressive accounting practices that may result in disputable financial reports;
- H. Create an organizational environment in which both clinical and management mistakes are minimized and, when they do occur, are disclosed and addressed effectively;
- I. Implement an organizational code of ethics and monitor compliance; and
- J. Provide ethics resources and mechanisms for staff to address ethical organizational and clinical issues.

IV. THE HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO EMPLOYEES

Healthcare executives have ethical and professional obligations to the employees they manage that encompass but are not limited to:

- A. Creating a work environment that promotes ethical conduct;
- B. Providing a work environment that encourages a free expression of ethical concerns and provides mechanisms for discussing and addressing such concerns;
- C. Promoting a healthy work environment which includes freedom from harassment, sexual and other, and coercion of any kind, especially to perform illegal or unethical acts;
- D. Promoting a culture of inclusivity that seeks to prevent discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability;
- E. Providing a work environment that promotes the proper use of employees' knowledge and skills; and
- F. Providing a safe and healthy work environment.

V. THE HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

The healthcare executive shall:

- A. Work to identify and meet the healthcare needs of the community;
- B. Work to support access to healthcare services for all people;
- C. Encourage and participate in public dialogue on healthcare policy issues, and advocate solutions that will improve health status and promote quality healthcare;
- D. Apply short- and long-term assessments to management decisions affecting both community and society; and
- E. Provide prospective patients and others with adequate and accurate information, enabling them to make enlightened decisions regarding services.

VI. THE HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT VIOLATIONS OF THE CODE

An affiliate of ACHE who has reasonable grounds to believe that another affiliate has violated this *Code* has a duty to communicate such facts to the Ethics Committee.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES – Available on ache.org or by calling ACHE at (312) 424-2800.

1. ACHE *Ethical Policy Statements*
 - “Considerations for Healthcare Executive-Supplier Interactions”
 - “Creating an Ethical Culture Within the Healthcare Organization”
 - “Decisions Near the End of Life”
 - “Ethical Decision Making for Healthcare Executives”
 - “Ethical Issues Related to a Reduction in Force”
 - “Ethical Issues Related to Staff Shortages”
 - “Health Information Confidentiality”
 - “Impaired Healthcare Executives”
 - “Promise Making, Keeping and Rescinding”
2. ACHE Grievance Procedure
3. ACHE Ethics Committee Action
4. ACHE Ethics Committee Scope and Function