

Code of Ethics for the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist

Preamble

The American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) Code of Ethics offers guidance to the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) to make ethical decisions in all practice roles. The practice of nurse anesthesia may include clinical practice, nurse anesthesia-related administrative, educational or research activities, or a combination of two or more of such areas of practice. The Code of Ethics consists of principles of conduct and professional integrity that guide decision making and behavior of the CRNA. The CRNA's ethical responsibility is primarily to the patient, as well as to the profession, other healthcare providers, self, and society. The CRNA acknowledges, understands, and is sensitive to the vulnerability of the patient undergoing anesthesia, pain management, and related care and preserves the patient's trust, confidence, and dignity.

The CRNA has the personal responsibility to understand, uphold, and adhere to these ethical standards of conduct. Deviation from the Code of Ethics occurs rarely in practice and any deviation must be supported by ethical decision making, compelling reasons, and best judgment specific to the situation. The AANA recognizes the American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics as the foundation for ethical values, duties, and responsibilities in nursing practice.¹

1. Responsibility to Patient

The CRNA respects the patient's moral and legal rights, and supports the patient's safety, physical and psychological comfort, and well-being. The CRNA collaborates with the patient and the healthcare team to provide compassionate, holistic, patient-centered anesthesia, pain management, and related care. The CRNA:

- 1.1 Respects human rights and the values, customs, culture, and beliefs of patients and their families.
- 1.2 Supports the patient's right to self-determination.
 - 1.2.1 Presents accurate, complete and understandable information to the patient to facilitate informed healthcare decisions.
 - 1.2.2 Encourages patients, including minors, to participate in healthcare decision making that is appropriate for their developmental capacity.
 - 1.2.3 Supports a patient's decision making without undue influence or coercion.
- 1.3 Acts in the patient's best interest and advocates for the patient's welfare.
 - 1.3.1 Discloses and manages or resolves perceived or real conflicts of interest (e.g., corporate sponsorships, funding, consulting and other relationships that may present a conflict between the CRNA's interests and the patient's interests.)
 - 1.3.2 If the CRNA has a moral, religious or ethical conflict related to the patient's healthcare decisions or plan for care, the CRNA may, without judgement or bias, transfer care to an appropriately credentialed anesthesia provider willing to perform the procedure.

- 1.4 Prior to providing anesthesia, pain management, and related care:
 - 1.4.1 Introduces self, using name, a term representing the CRNA credential, and role.
 - 1.4.2 Verifies that students have introduced themselves or been introduced to the patient, and the patient has consented to student participation in anesthesia, pain management, and related care.
 - 1.4.3 Discusses the plan of care and obtains informed consent or verifies that the patient has given informed consent in accordance with law, accreditation standards, and institutional policy.²
 - 1.4.4 Discusses the plan of care and obtains informed consent from a legal decision maker (e.g., healthcare proxy, surrogate) when the legal decision maker is responsible for the patient's healthcare decisions or verifies that the legal decision maker has given informed consent.
 - 1.4.5 Protects patient privacy, including confidentiality of patient information, except when necessary to protect the patient or other persons, or when required by law.
- 1.5 Protects patients from healthcare providers who are incompetent, impaired, or engage in unsafe, illegal, deceptive, abusive, disrespectful, or unethical practice.
- 1.6 Participates in honest and transparent disclosure of an adverse or unanticipated event to the patient and others with the patient's consent.

2. Responsibility as a Professional

As an independently licensed professional, the CRNA is responsible and accountable for judgments made and actions taken in his or her professional practice. Requests or orders by physicians, other healthcare professionals, or institutions do not relieve the CRNA of responsibility for judgments made or actions taken. The CRNA:

Competence and Responsibility in Professional Practice

- 2.1 Engages in a scope of practice within individual competence and maintains role-specific competence.
- 2.2 Maintains national certification as a CRNA and a state license as a registered nurse and meets state advanced practice statutory or regulatory requirements.
- 2.3 Engages in continuing education and lifelong professional development related to areas of nurse anesthesia practice, including clinical practice, education, research, and administration.³
- 2.4 Evaluates and integrates personal practice outcome data, scientific research, expert opinion, new technology, patient preferences, and relevant metrics to improve processes and outcomes.
- 2.5 Is physically and mentally fit for duty.
- 2.6 Clearly presents his or her education, training, skills, and CRNA credential.

- 2.7 Is honest in all professional interactions to avoid any form of deception.
- 2.8 Treats all others, including patients, families, staff, students, and colleagues, in a culturally sensitive manner and without prejudice, bias, or harassment.
- 2.9 Maintains professional boundaries in all communications and actions.

Leadership

- 2.10 Creates an ethical culture and safe work environment.
 - 2.10.1 Supports policies and behaviors that reflect this Code of Ethics.
 - 2.10.2 Communicates expectations for ethical behavior and actions in the workplace.
 - 2.10.3 Helps individuals raise and resolve ethical concerns in an effective and timely manner.

Clinical Practice and the Interdisciplinary Team

- 2.11 Respects and engages healthcare providers to foster a collaborative and cooperative patient care environment through a culture of safety and open communication to contribute to the ethical and safe environment of care.
 - 2.11.1 Facilitates review and evaluation of peers and other members of the healthcare team.
- 2.12 Manages medications to prevent diversion of drugs and substances.

Role Modelling and Education of Others

- 2.13 Provides positive role modeling by upholding and promoting quality patient care outcomes, the professional standards of practice, and this Code of Ethics.
- 2.14 Fosters a safe and trusting environment for successful learning for students, colleagues, and members of the healthcare team.
- 2.15 Educates the student registered nurse anesthetist regarding the ethical responsibilities of the profession.

The Profession

- 2.16 Is responsible and accountable to contribute to the dignity and integrity of the profession.
- 2.17 Participates in activities that contribute to the advancement of the profession and its body of knowledge.
- 2.18 Reports critical incidents, adverse events, medical errors, and near misses in accordance with law, accreditation standards, and institutional policy to promote a culture of safety, maintain the integrity of the profession, and advance the profession and its body of knowledge.

3. Responsibility in Research

The CRNA protects the integrity of the research process and the reporting and publication of findings: The CRNA adheres to the ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice relevant to research involving human participants.⁴ The CRNA:

- 3.1 Protects the rights and wellbeing of the people that serve as participants and animals⁵ that serve as subjects in research.
- 3.2 Respects the autonomy and dignity of all human research participants.
- 3.3 Promotes selecting human participants in such a way that all populations have equal access to the potential benefits and risks of the research.
- 3.4 Seeks to minimize the risks and maximize the benefits to research participants.
- 3.5 Conducts research projects according to accepted ethical research and reporting standards established by law, institutional policy, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB).
- 3.6 Obtains informed consent or verifies that the human research participant or legal decision maker, as appropriate, has provided informed consent as required by law, institutional policy, and the IRB.
- 3.7 Protects the human research participant's privacy to the greatest extent possible and in accordance with law, institutional policy, and standards of the IRB.
 - 3.7.1 Maintains confidentiality in the collection, analysis, storage and reuse of data and in accordance with law, institutional policy, and standards of the IRB.
- 3.8 Discloses perceived or real conflicts of interest to organizations where the research will be conducted, organizations that fund the research, and any publication where the research is submitted. Manages or resolves perceived or real conflicts of interest.
- 3.9 Reports research findings in an objective and accurate manner.
- 3.10 Provides appropriate attribution for contributions by other individuals.
- 3.11 Supports, promotes, or participates in research activities to improve practice, education, and public policy relative to the health needs of diverse populations, the health workforce, the organization and administration of health systems, and healthcare delivery.

4. Responsibility in Business Practices

The CRNA, regardless of practice arrangement or practice setting, maintains ethical business practices in dealing with patients, colleagues, institutions, corporations, and others. The CRNA:

- 4.1 Establishes and performs contractual obligations consistent with this Code of Ethics, the professional standards of practice, and the laws and regulations pertaining to nurse anesthesia practice.

4.2 Is honest in all business practices.

5. Responsibility when Endorsing Products and Services

The CRNA may endorse products and services only when personally satisfied with the product's or service's safety, effectiveness, and quality. The CRNA may not say that the AANA has endorsed any product or service unless the Board of Directors of the AANA has done so. The CRNA must not endorse any product or service when presenting content for an AANA-approved continuing education activity as this is a prohibited conflict of interest. The CRNA:

- 5.1 Makes truthful endorsements based on personal experience and factual evidence of efficacy.
- 5.2 Discloses and manages or resolves perceived or real conflicts of interest associated with the endorsed product or service (e.g., corporate sponsorships, funding, consulting and other relationships that may present a conflict).
 - 5.2.1 Only uses the CRNA credential when endorsing products or services that are related to CRNA professional practice or expertise.

6. Responsibility to Society

The CRNA collaborates with members of the health professions and others to improve the public health, including access to healthcare and anesthesia, pain management, and related care. The CRNA:

- 6.1 Works in collaboration with the healthcare community to promote highly competent, ethical, safe, quality patient care.
- 6.2 Supports activities to reduce the environmental impact of disposable items and waste anesthetic gases.

References

1. American Nurses Association Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements. <http://www.nursingworld.org/code-of-ethics>. Accessed February 8, 2018.
2. Informed Consent for Anesthesia Care. Park Ridge, IL: American Association of Nurse Anesthetists; 2016.
3. National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists. The Continued Professional Certification (CPC) Handbook. https://www.nbcrna.com/docs/default-source/publications-documentation/handbooks/cpc_hb.pdf?sfvrsn=941c170c_8. Accessed May 1, 2018.
4. United States National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research. <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/read-the-belmont-report/index.html#xinform>. Accessed March 3, 2018.
5. Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. 8th ed. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press; 2011.

Adopted by the AANA Board of Directors in 1986.

Revised by the AANA Board of Directors in 1992, 1997, 2001, 2005, and July 2018.

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