

Code of Ethics for the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist

Preamble

The American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology (AANA) *Code of Ethics for the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist* offers guidance to the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA), also referred to as nurse anesthesiologists or nurse anesthetists, in making ethical decisions across all roles and practice settings. The practice of nurse anesthesiology may include clinical, administrative, educational or research activities, or a combination thereof.

The *Code of Ethics for the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist* sets forth principles of professional conduct and integrity that guide the CRNA's decision-making and behavior. The CRNA's ethical responsibility is primarily to the patient and also extends to the nurse anesthesiology 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 is committed to preserving patients' trust, confidence, and dignity.

The CRNA has a personal and professional responsibility to understand, uphold, and apply to these ethical standards of conduct. Circumstances may arise in which ethical principles are in conflict; in such situations, any departure from this *Code of Ethics for the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist* must be guided by sound ethical reasoning, compelling justifications, and the CRNA's best professional judgment specific to the situation.

The AANA recognizes the American Nurses Association (ANA) *Code of Ethics for Nurses* as the foundational framework 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 and caregivers.

- 34 1.1.1 Promotes fair and equitable treatment of all patients, regardless of diagnosis,
35 prognosis, socioeconomic status, insurance coverage, or other nonclinical
36 characteristics, and works to reduce barriers that compromise safe anesthesia
37 and pain management care.
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- 39 1.2 Supports the patient's right to self-determination.
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- 41 1.2.1 Presents accurate, complete and understandable information to the
42 patient to facilitate informed healthcare decisions.
- 43 1.2.2 Encourages patients, including minors, to participate in healthcare decision
44 making that is appropriate for their developmental capacity.
- 45 1.2.3 Supports a patient's decision-making without undue influence or coercion that is
46 consistent with their values.
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- 48 1.3 Acts in the patient's best interest and advocates for the patient's welfare.
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- 50 1.3.1 Identifies and seeks to prevent or reduce risks of harm related to anesthesia,
51 pain management, and related services and takes action to protect the patient
52 when such risks are recognized.
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- 54 1.3.2 If the CRNA has a moral, religious or ethical conflict related to the patient's healthcare
55 decisions or plan for care, the CRNA may, without judgment or bias, transfer care to an
56 appropriately credentialed anesthesia provider willing to perform the procedure.
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- 58 1.4 Prior to providing anesthesia, pain management, and related care:
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- 60 1.4.1 Introduces self, using name, a term representing the CRNA credential, and role.
- 61 1.4.2 Verifies that residents have introduced themselves or been introduced to the
62 patient, and the patient has consented to resident participation in anesthesia,
63 pain management, and related care.
- 64 1.4.3 Discusses the plan of care and either obtains informed consent or verifies that
65 the patient has given informed consent in accordance with law, accreditation
66 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 and security of patient information, in accordance with applicable federal and state privacy laws, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and relevant facility policies, except when disclosure is necessary to protect the patient or other persons or is otherwise required or expressly permitted by law.

1.5 Protects patients by taking appropriate action when the CRNA knows or reasonably suspects that a healthcare provider is incompetent, impaired, or engaging in unsafe, illegal, deceptive, abusive, disrespectful, or unethical practice, consistent with applicable law and facility policy.

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 and do not justify participating in unsafe, illegal, or unethical practices. 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.

- 99 2.3 Engages in continuing education and lifelong professional development related to areas
100 of nurse anesthesia practice, including clinical practice, education, research, and
101 administration.³
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- 103 2.4 Understands and practices in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local law
104 and regulations, facility accreditation standards, and facility policies, procedures, and
105 bylaws in which they practice, and seeks clarification when such requirements are
106 unclear.
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- 108 2.5 Evaluates and integrates personal practice outcome data, scientific research, expert
109 opinion, new technology, patient preferences, and relevant metrics to improve processes
110 and outcomes.
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- 112 2.5.1 Uses artificial intelligence and other digital decision-support tools only to augment,
113 and never replace, professional judgment.
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- 115 2.6 Is physically and mentally fit for duty.
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- 117 2.7 Clearly presents his or her education, training, skills, and CRNA credential.
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- 119 2.8 Is honest in all professional interactions to avoid any form of deception.
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- 121 2.9 Treats all others, including patients, families, staff, students, and colleagues, in a
122 culturally sensitive manner and without prejudice, bias, or harassment.
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- 124 2.10 Maintains professional boundaries in all communications and actions.
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126 **Leadership**

- 127 2.11 Creates an ethical culture and safe work environment.
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- 129 2.11.1 Supports policies and behaviors that reflect this Code of Ethics.
130 2.11.2 Communicates expectations for ethical behavior and actions in the workplace.
131 2.11.3 Helps individuals raise and resolve ethical concerns in an effective and timely
132 manner.

Clinical Practice and the Interdisciplinary Team

2.12 Promote a culture of safety and collaboration through open, respectful communication with other healthcare providers to support ethical, evidence-based, and safe patient care.

2.12.1 Facilitates review and evaluation of peers and other members of the healthcare team.

2.13 Manages medications and controlled substances in accordance to applicable law and facility policy to prevent diversion, misuse, and unauthorized access, and promptly reports known or reasonably suspected diversion or tampering as delineated in facility policy.

Role Modeling and Education of Others

2.14 Provides positive role modeling by upholding and promoting quality patient care outcomes, professional standards of practice, and this Code of Ethics.

2.15 Fosters a safe, respectful, and trusting environment for effective learning and feedback for students, colleagues, and members of the healthcare team.

2.16 Educates resident registered nurse anesthetists regarding the ethical responsibilities of the nurse anesthesiology profession.

The Profession

2.17 Is responsible and accountable for conduct that upholds the dignity, integrity, and public trust in the nurse anesthesiology profession.

2.18 Participates in activities that contribute to the advancement of the profession and its body of knowledge such as education, mentorship, research, quality improvement, and policy or advocacy efforts.

2.19 Reports critical incidents, adverse events, medical errors, and near misses in accordance with applicable law, facility accreditation standards, and facility policy.

Participates in the promotion of a culture of safety, supports quality improvement, and maintains the integrity and advancement of the nurse anesthesia profession.

2.20 Maintains accurate, complete, and timely records and uses electronic systems and other information technologies in a manner that protects the integrity, security, and reliability of healthcare and business data, in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and facility policies.

3. Responsibility in Research

The CRNA upholds ethical, professional, and legal standards in the conduct of and participation in research, quality improvement, and scholarly activities, including those undertaken as part of doctoral work within a nurse anesthesia educational program. In all such activities, the CRNA acts in accordance with applicable laws, facility policies, and required oversight requirements (e.g., Institutional Review Board). The CRNA:

3.1 Protects human participants affected by research, quality improvement, and scholarly activities by respecting their rights, dignity, privacy, and wellbeing.

3.2 Promotes the humane treatment of animals used as research subjects by taking reasonable steps to minimize pain and distress and by participating only in activities that are scientifically justified.

3.3 Seeks and adheres to appropriate oversight, including IRB or institutional review, exemption, or quality improvement determination, and obtains or verifies human research participant informed consent when required by law, policy, or protocol.

3.4 Conducts or participates in activities in a manner consistent with the ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice relevant to research involving human participants. Respects the autonomy and dignity of all human research participants.

3.5 Maintains appropriate boundaries between clinical care and research roles, minimizing potential therapeutic misconception and ensuring that clinical decisions prioritize patient welfare independent of research participation.

3.6 Supports equitable inclusion of human research participants, consistent with ethical principles and approved study or project design, so that populations have fair access to the potential benefits of the research. Takes reasonable steps to minimize any risks to the research participants.

3.7 Applies appropriate methodology consistent with the purpose and design of the research, quality improvement, or scholarly project.

3.8 Protects participant privacy and data confidentiality to the greatest extent possible and maintains data integrity in the collection, analysis, storage, reuse, and reporting of research or quality improvement data.

3.9 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.

3.10 Reports findings accurately, objectively, and transparently, avoiding fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of results.

3.10.1 Supports transparency and reproducibility by following relevant reporting guidelines (e.g., CONSORT, PRISMA, STROBE, SQUIRE) and, when feasible, maintaining accessible protocols, analytic plans, and documentation.

3.11 Provides appropriate authorship and attribution, consistent with recognized publication standards, ensuring that authorship reflects substantive intellectual contributions, participation in drafting or critical revision, final approval of the work, and accountability for integrity, while appropriately acknowledging contributors.

3.12 Supports and engages in research, quality improvement, and scholarly activities that advance safe, effective, and equitable anesthesiology practice; contribute to professional knowledge and education; inform health policy; and improve patient, workforce, and health system outcomes, including for diverse populations.

4. Responsibility in Business Practices

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

4.1 Establishes, performs, and terminates contractual obligations in a manner consistent with this Code of Ethics, professional standards of practice, and the applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

4.2 Conducts business practices truthfully and transparently and does not engage in fraud, misrepresentation, or other deceptive conduct.

4.3 Avoids financial relationships, ownership interests, and referral or compensation arrangements that create real or perceived conflicts between the CRNA's financial interests and the welfare of patients. When conflicts are unavoidable, the CRNA appropriately discloses and manages such conflicts to protect professional judgment and patient interests.

4.4 Conducts marketing, advertising, and public communication regarding services, outcomes, and qualifications in a truthful, accurate, and non-misleading manner.

4.5 Maintains accurate, complete, and timely business and financial records and cooperates with lawful audits, investigations, and required reporting.

5. Responsibility when Endorsing Products and Services

The CRNA may endorse products and services only when, based on reasonable professional judgment, the CRNA is personally satisfied with the product's or service's safety, effectiveness, and quality. The CRNA may not state that the AANA has endorsed any product or service unless such endorsement has been formally approved by the AANA Board of Directors. The CRNA must not endorse any product or service when presenting content for an AANA-approved continuing education activity, as such endorsements constitute a prohibited conflict of interest.

The CRNA:

5.1 Makes endorsements that are truthful, accurate, and not misleading, and that are based on personal experience and reliable, factual evidence regarding the product's or service's efficacy.

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- 270 5.2 Discloses and appropriately manages or resolves any real or perceived conflicts of
- 271 interest related to the endorsed product or service, including but not limited to corporate
- 272 sponsorships, funding arrangements, consulting relationships or other financial or
- 273 professional affiliations.
- 274 5.3 Uses the CRNA credential only when endorsing products or services that are related to
- 275 CRNA professional practice or expertise.
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277 **6. Responsibility to Society**

278 The CRNA engages with members of the health professions, public health entities,

279 policymakers, and the community to improve public health through collaboration, advocacy,

280 stewardship of healthcare resources, and leadership in advancing access to safe, equitable,

281 and sustainable healthcare and anesthesia, pain management, and related care. The CRNA:

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- 283 6.1 Works in collaboration with the healthcare community to promote highly competent,
- 284 ethical, safe, high-quality patient care.
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- 286 6.2 Acts as a responsible steward of healthcare resources by supporting cost-effective,
- 287 evidence-based practices that do not compromise patient safety or quality of care.
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- 289 6.3 Recognizes the impact of healthcare delivery on public health and the environment and
- 290 integrates environmentally sustainable practices into anesthesia delivery when clinically
- 291 appropriate and when such practices do not compromise patient safety or quality of
- 292 care.

- 293 6.3.1 Supports and promotes efforts to reduce the environmental impact of anesthesia
- 294 practice, including by minimizing waste associated with disposable items,
- 295 reducing emissions from waste anesthetic gases, and participating in facility
- 296 sustainability initiatives related to anesthesia and pain management care.

- 297 6.3.2 Demonstrates ethical stewardship of medications, energy, and natural resources
- 298 by taking reasonable steps to minimize medication wastage and unnecessary
- 299 use of electricity, water, and other resources in healthcare and anesthesia
- 300 delivery.
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