

The National Cancer Registrars Association

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE CODE OF ETHICS

[Established 1986, Revised 1995, Revised 2002, Revised 2005, Revised 2008.
Revised 2023 (administrative updates October 2024)]

Preamble

The cancer registrar is concerned with the development, use, and maintenance of hospital, centralized, or special purpose cancer programs that meet the needs of physicians, administrators, and planners; protect the patients' rights to privacy; and comply with ethical and legal requirements of the health care delivery system. To provide members of the Association and other registry professionals with definitive and binding guidelines of conduct, the National Cancer Registrars Association, Inc., adopted the following Professional Practice Code of Ethics, outlining principles of professional conduct.

I. GENERAL GUIDELINES

- A. Conduct myself in the practice of the cancer registry profession to bring honor and dignity to myself, the cancer registry profession, and the Association.

GUIDING PRACTICES

- 1. The cancer registrar shall maintain high standards of conduct, integrity, and fairness in all professional actions and decisions to establish and sustain an irreproachable, professional reputation. Examples:
 - a. Make judgments and decisions without personal bias or prejudice.
 - b. Give primary consideration in all decisions as to the effect actions may have on a patient's health and welfare.
 - c. Respect all with whom you interact. Be kind, polite, and understanding. Respect for others' personal space, opinions, and privacy. Any kind of violence is strictly prohibited. Harassment or victimizing others is unacceptable.
 - d. Recognition that collaboration is necessary to achieve specific outcomes. Individual behavior should contribute to the Association goals, whether financial or organizational.
 - e. It is expected that a healthy amount of effort is put into work assigned or accepted. Incomplete or deliberately underproductive work might hinder other's work or cause inequitable situations.
- 2. Business on behalf of the employer should be conducted honestly and ethically,

declining favors that will influence any decision and avoiding commercialization of one's position.

3. A member has the obligation to refrain from commenting disparagingly about the professional work of another member.
4. The cancer registrar shall follow workplace "fitness for duty" protocols of an employer or contractor to ensure that work is completed to the highest standard possible.
 - a. While working onsite at a facility, a cancer registrar must follow facility tobacco use protocols. When working from a home office, tobacco use is at the discretion of the cancer registrar.
 - b. A cancer registrar must not work as a cancer registrar under the influence of alcohol, marijuana or other legal or illegal recreational drugs.
 - c. A cancer registrar must not work as a cancer registrar under the influence of unprescribed Scheduled I or Schedule II medications. If Scheduled I or Schedule II medications are prescribed, a cancer registrar must use as prescribed by a duly licensed practitioner in order to work as a cancer registrar.
 - d. It is an employer's responsibility to manage drug testing to verify if the cancer registrar has not met the above conditions.
5. Evaluation of performance of another registrar should be done fairly and with objectivity following strict adherence to employer's evaluation protocol.
6. The cancer registrar shall use professional titles and degrees as earned and consistent with the dignity of the profession. An individual with an NCRA credential should use the acronym for that credential. Example:
 - a. Oncology Data Specialist should use the letters ODS. Alternatively, one may use ODS-C or ODS-Certified.
 - b. ODS (Retired) is used for an ODS credentialed individual that received approval by the Council on Certification that they are deemed retired from the cancer registry workplace.
 - c. "CTR (Retired)" is used for a CTR credentialed individual that received approval by the Council on Certification that they are deemed retired from the cancer registry workplace. This designation is only used by those who retired their credential prior to 1/1/2024.
7. A member has the obligation to appropriately recognize the contributions of fellow members and co-workers to advance cancer registry practice.

- a. Publications should give credit where due to one's peers.
- 8. A member has the right to speak out against policies espoused by the Association; however, representing one's own view as that of the Association or the majority of the members is unethical.
- B. Uphold the doctrine of confidentiality and the individual's right to privacy in the disclosure of personally identifiable medical and social information.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND RIGHT TO PRIVACY GUIDELINES

- 1. The patient has a right to feel confident that all identifiable information about them possessed by the cancer registry will be kept confidential unless they waive the privilege, or release of the information is compelled by statute, regulations, or other legal means.
- 2. Use and release of identifiable and non-identifiable information shall be according to the established institutional policies.
- 3. Every effort must be made to ensure that the computerization of cancer registry information is accomplished in a manner that protects the confidentiality of patient information. Example:
 - a. Actively participate in establishing controls to protect the patient's privacy when processing information electronically.
- 4. One is obligated to follow all laws which apply to the employer, regional, state (provincial) and federal laws that intersect with your work. Depending on one's role and professionalism, there are various laws one needs to observe. Cancer registrars must adhere to HIPAA. For example, accountants and medical professionals have their own legal restrictions and they must be fully aware.
 - a. Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act of 1996:
<https://www.cdc.gov/phlp/publications/topic/hipaa.html>
 - b. HIPAA lays out three rules for protecting patient health information.
 - i. The Privacy Rule
 - ii. The Security Rule
 - iii. The Breach Notification Rule
- C. Cooperate with other health professions and organizations to promote the quality of health care programs and the advancement of medical care, ensuring respect and consideration for the responsibility and the dignity of medical and other health professions and associations.

COOPERATION AND SUPPORT GUIDELINES

1. Cooperation with other professions engaged in or supportive of health services is an essential factor in the cancer registry profession's greater aim of improving health services and supporting research relevant to the advancement of medical care.

Examples:

- a. Accept the right of other health professions / associations to have purpose in their occupation and attempt to understand the thinking and work patterns of professional groups whose primary interest may be different from yours.
 - b. Treat all members of the medical and component professional staff and other associations with equal respect and due recognition of the status, privilege, and authority belonging to their respective professions.
 - c. Refrain from making decisions or expressing opinions for which you are not qualified.
 - d. Assist the medical staff and/or institution in working with other professional groups or associations engaged in utilization review and patient care evaluation, continuing education for professional staff, health services planning, clinical studies, proposed legislation or regulations affecting medical and statistical record systems, and like activities.
2. Courtesy, respect, and cooperation should govern the relationships of fellow cancer registrars.
 - a. Recognize that consultants and co-workers may have differing opinions regarding certain proposals or recommendations. Do not allow such differences to lead to utterances or actions inconsistent with the professional stature and dignity of a colleague.
 - b. Do not place loyalty above duty by protecting a fellow cancer registrar who is guilty of unfair or unethical practices. Questions of conduct should be referred to the Ethics Committee for review and evaluation.
 - c. Don't discriminate against people with protected characteristics, as forbidden by federal and state/provincial mandates

II. JOB ORIENTATION

- A. Recognize the source of the authority and powers delegated to the cancer registrar and conscientiously discharge the duties and responsibilities thus entrusted.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES GUIDELINES

1. It is the cancer registrar's duty to give loyal service and competently carry out the

- responsibilities of the position. Accepting a position for which one is inadequately prepared or vacating a position without responsibility vested in the position or with the policies of the institution, is unethical.
2. The cancer registrar shall always responsibly carry out the duties entrusted to him/her, including:
 - a. Render a truthful accounting of the status of the work over which one has responsibility.
 - b. Assist the medical staff and other health professional staff in programs related to cancer patient care, cancer education, research, and committee activities in accordance with assigned responsibilities.
 - c. Resort to the special knowledge, skill, or experience of fellow professionals for referral, counsel, guidance, or consultation when one lacks in some detail the capability required to serve an employer.
 3. For the protection of the employer/client and cancer registrar (including consultants and part-time supervisors), an agreement should specify responsibilities, functions, objectives, and terms of service to be fulfilled.
 4. Relationships with cancer registry and other institutional personnel should be characterized by courtesy and respect. When serving as a consultant, part-time supervisor, or official surveyor/observer, one's responsibility and authority for seeking and obtaining certain information, files, and statistical data should be tempered with respect for another individual's tenable position and the institution's good name in the community.
 5. The cancer registrar, including consultants and other advisors, should maintain personal integrity and should not hesitate to advise the employer/client if, in the professional judgment of the registrar, the facility is in danger of errors of commission or omission.
- B. Preserve and secure cancer registry records, the information contained therein, and the appropriate secondary records in the registrar's custody in accordance with professional management practices, employer's policies, and existing legal provisions.

GUIDE

1. The cancer registrar shall always support and uphold the professional standards that would produce complete, accurate, and timely information to meet the health and related needs of the patient. The cancer registrar shall not participate in any improper preparation, alteration, or suppression of medical/health records or official

documentation duly maintained as part of the operation of the health institution. In the process of case consolidation in a state, central or federal registry, it remains the judgement of a cancer registrar to retain the most accurate information. This may result in alteration of inaccurate or incomplete data.

2. Preserve the confidential nature of professional determinations made by official committees of health and health-service organizations.

GUIDE

- a. The cancer registrar shall abstain from discussing observations, comments, or findings concerning the practice of individuals that result in violating privacy.
 - b. Per requirements of business agreements or contracts.
 - c. Per the requirements or standards within an institution or throughout its affiliated network.
3. Disclose to only proper authorities, of any evidence of conduct or practice observed or revealed in medical reports that suggests possible violation of established rules and regulations of the employer or professional practice.

GUIDE

The cancer registrar shall exercise discretion when releasing or discussing sensitive information acquired during employment or fulfillment of contracted services which concerns the administrative conduct or professional practices within the health institution. Examples:

- a. Disclose only to proper authorities, the conduct or practices believed to be violating the institution's internal policies and rules.
 - b. Disclose to proper regulatory or law enforcement agencies, the conduct or practices believed to be illegal only when, after informing the health institution, no corrective action has been enacted.

III. CONFLICT OF INTEREST (COI)

- A. The cancer registrar should avoid conflict of interest by providing full disclosure to the employer or client of any interest in a provider of services or products.

IV. PROFESSIONALISM

- A. Represent true and accurate professional credentials, education, and experience in any official transaction or notice, including other positions and duality of interests.

PROFESSIONALISM GUIDELINES

1. Misrepresentation of one's professional qualifications, employment, and interests reflects adversely on the profession and on oneself and lowers the public esteem for the profession.
 2. A statement of any other positions of duality of interest in the health or health- related fields, either remunerative or non-remunerative in nature, should be made available on request of the employer. Examples of duality of interest include: outside consultation services, committee appointments, advisory positions, elected office, business enterprise interests, and the like.
 3. Credentials, professional education, and experience are to be stated truthfully and accurately in any official transaction with NCRA or any other professional association, any employer or prospective employer, and any program coordinator or publisher.
 4. Those documents that authenticate registration, accreditation, academic achievements, and membership status in recognized professional organizations may be displayed. Displays that imply qualifications not possessed are unethical.
- B. The cancer registrar shall strive to increase the profession's body of systematic knowledge and individual competency through continued self-improvement and application of current advancements to the conduct of cancer registry practices.

GUIDE

1. The achievements and preservation of professional status are accomplished through the mastery of cancer registry activities competently applied and the continual striving for the application of new knowledge and increased skills. Examples:
 - a. Acquire information by reading pertinent literature.
 - b. Attend workshops, institutes, and other continuing education programs.
 - c. Examine and scrutinize functions performed as a cancer registrar for purpose of self-evaluation in carrying out professional duties.

- C. Participate in developing and strengthening professional manpower and appropriately represent the profession in public.

GUIDE

The future of the profession is dependent upon the affirmative and responsible activities of members to recruit and train fellow cancer registrars. Examples:

- a. Encourage and assist in the recruitment of students for professional training when the need exists.
- b. Help the student and new cancer registrar to participate in activities and services for their continued development as cancer registrars.
- c. Use your special skills and knowledge to enhance the status and productivity of professional colleagues through participation in continuing education programs and publication of scholarly papers.
- d. Promote understanding of, respect for, and interest in the profession within one's community.

V. ASSOCIATION

- A. Discharge honorably the responsibility of any Association position to which I am appointed or elected.

GUIDE

The association has a dual responsibility: safeguarding the members of the profession and promoting the services to be rendered by the professional to the health field. These two functions should be borne in mind in any deliberation undertaken by members, committees, officers, or delegates of the association. Examples:

- a. Discharge one's obligation to the profession with integrity, discretion, and by one's best endeavors in representing the association.
- b. Perform conscientiously the duties of any association office to which elected or the assignments of any committee to which

appointed.

- c. Resign one's office or assignment if unforeseen circumstances prevent one from carrying out the responsibilities of an office or committee after the acceptance of the post.
- d. Preserve the confidentiality of any privileged information obtained as a member of the Executive Board or of a committee or other empaneled group, including information about qualifying examinations gained while serving the National Cancer Registrars Association, Inc.

- B. Uphold the standards of the profession by reporting to the Ethics Committee of this Association any breach of this code of ethics by fellow members of the profession.

GUIDE

- 1. Any evidence of illegal, unfair, or incompetent practice or unethical conduct by fellow members or persons credentialed by this Association should be reported to the Ethics Committee of the National Cancer Registrars Association, Inc.
 - a. Transmit all referrals in writing, accompanied by supportive evidence of the unethical behavior or alleged violation.
 - b. Do not shield an individual guilty of unfair or unethical practices.
- 2. Judgments of unethical behavior and recommendations for sanctions are the responsibility of the Ethics Committee rather than of individuals.
- C. Acknowledge that a finding of guilt of a violation of the Code of Ethics may be subject to the following:
 - a. suspension of NCRA membership.
 - b. revocation of NCRA membership.
 - c. suspension of NCRA professional credential.
 - d. revocation of NCRA professional credential.

