

CODE OF ETHICS FOR DENTAL HYGIENISTS

1. Preamble

California Dental Hygienists' Association (CDHA) members agree to abide by the tenets embodied in the CDHA Code of Ethics. Dental hygienists are a community of health care professionals devoted to the promotion and improvement of public health through the prevention of disease. Dental hygienists serve in multiple roles or settings, whether paid or volunteer, including direct care provider, alternative practice setting, care coordinator, educator, administrator, researcher, policy developer, or other forms of dental hygiene practice. They are essential health care providers and preventive oral health professionals who provide educational, clinical, and therapeutic services to the public. Their actions, behaviors, and attitudes are consistent with their commitment to public service. California Dental Hygienists' Association (CDHA) members agree to abide by the tenets embodied in the CDHA Code of Ethics

2. Purpose

The purpose of a professional code of ethics is to achieve high levels of ethical consciousness, decision making, and practice by the members of the profession. Specific objectives of the CDHA Code of Ethics are:

- To increase professional and ethical consciousness and sense of ethical responsibility.
- To lead in recognition of ethical issues and choices and to guide in making more informed ethical decisions.
- To establish a standard for professional judgement and conduct.
- To provide a statement of the ethical behavior the public can expect.

Beliefs, principles, values, and ethics are concepts reflected in the Code. They are the essential elements of a comprehensive and definitive code of ethics and are interrelated and mutually dependent. The CDHA Code of Ethics is meant to influence dental hygienists throughout their careers. It stimulates their continuing study of ethical issues and challenges them to explore their ethical responsibilities. The Code establishes concise standards of behavior to guide the public's expectations of the dental hygiene profession and supports dental hygiene practice, laws, and regulations. Dental hygienists endorse and incorporate the CDHA Code of Ethics into their daily lives to build public trust and maintain high ethical standards for the benefit of all.

3. Beliefs

Dental hygienists recognize the importance of the following beliefs that guide their practice and provide context for their ethics:

- The services they provide contribute to the health and well-being of society.
- Their education and licensure qualify them to serve the public by preventing and treating oral disease and helping individuals achieve and maintain optimal health.

- Individuals have intrinsic worth, are responsible for their own health, and are entitled to make choices regarding their health.
- Dental hygiene care is an essential component of overall health care and they function interdependently with other health care providers.
- All people should have access to health care, including oral health care.
- Dental hygienists are individually responsible for their actions and the quality of care they provide.

4. Ethical principles

As health care providers, dental hygienists assume publicly entrusted responsibilities founded on fundamental principles. These fundamental principles, universal concepts and general laws of conduct provide the foundation for their ethics.

Universality

The principle of universality expects that, if one individual judges an action to be right or wrong in a given situation, other people considering the same action in the same situation would make the same judgment.

Complementarity

The principle of complementarity recognizes the existence of an obligation to justice and basic human rights. In all relationships, it requires considering the values and perspectives of others before making decisions or taking actions affecting them.

Ethics

Ethics are the general standards of right and wrong that guide behavior within society. As generally accepted actions, they can be judged by determining the extent to which they promote good and minimize harm. Ethics compel dental hygienists to engage in health promotion/disease prevention activities.

Community

This principle expresses concern for the bond between individuals, the community, and society in general. The principle preserves natural resources and inspires dental hygienists to show concern for the global environment.

Responsibility

Responsibility is central to ethics. There are guidelines for making ethical choices and accepting responsibility for knowing and applying them. Accepting the consequence of actions or the failure to act and willingness to make ethical choices and publicly affirm them is also included in this principle.

5. Core Values

Dental hygienists acknowledge these values as general for their choices and actions.

Individual autonomy and respect for human beings

People have the right to be treated with respect. They have the right to informed consent prior to treatment, and they have the right to full disclosure of all relevant information so

that they can make informed choices about their care.

Confidentiality

Dental hygienists respect the confidentiality of client information and relationships as a demonstration of the value placed on individual autonomy. There is an obligation to justify any violation of confidence.

Societal Trust

Dental hygienists value client trust and understand that public trust in the profession is based on their actions and behavior.

Nonmaleficence

Dental hygienists accept the fundamental obligation to provide services in a manner that protects all clients and minimizes harm to them and others involved in their treatment.

Beneficence

Dental hygienists have a primary role in promoting the well-being of individuals and the public by engaging in health promotion/disease prevention activities.

Justice and Fairness

Dental hygienists value justice and support the fair and equitable distribution of health care resources. They believe all people should have access to high-quality, affordable oral healthcare.

Veracity

Dental hygienists accept the obligation to tell the truth and expect that others will do the same. They value self-knowledge and seek truth and honesty in all relationships.

6. General Social Media Policy Guidance

Dental hygienists should always consider the content of their professional and personal social media posts. They should be mindful that certain content when shared could reflect poorly on themselves or those with whom they associate. For that reason, in addition to exercising sound, professional judgment when using social media, dental hygienists should also learn to use, enable, and check privacy settings on all of their social media accounts.

Dental hygienists should be aware that posting complaints, criticism, statements, photographs, video, or audio viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating, or that disparages or constitutes harassment or bullying, violates the CDHA Code of Ethics.

7. Standards of Professional Responsibility

Dental hygienists are obligated to practice the profession in a manner that supports their purpose, beliefs, and values in accordance with the fundamental principles that support ethics. They acknowledge the following responsibilities:

To Dental Hygienists as Individuals...

- Avoid self-deception, and continually strive for knowledge and personal growth.
- Establish and maintain a lifestyle that supports optimal health.
- Create a safe work environment.
- Assert their own interests in ways that are fair and equitable.
- Seek the advice and counsel of others when challenged with ethical dilemmas.
- Have realistic expectations of themselves and recognize their limitations.

To Dental Hygienists as Professionals...

- Enhance professional competencies through continuous lifelong learning in order to practice according to high standards of care.
- Support dental hygiene peer-review systems and quality-assurance measures.
- Develop collaborative professional relationships and exchange knowledge to enhance their own lifelong professional development.

To Family and Friends...

- Support the efforts of others to establish and maintain healthy lifestyles and respect the rights of friends and family.

To Clients...

- Provide oral health care utilizing high levels of professional knowledge, judgment, and skill.
- Maintain a work environment that minimizes the risk of harm.
- Serve all clients without discrimination and avoid action toward any individual or group that may be interpreted as discriminatory.
- Hold professional client relationships confidential.
- Communicate with clients in a respectful manner.
- Promote ethical behavior and high standards of care by all dental hygienists.
- Serve as an advocate for the welfare of clients.
- Provide clients with the information necessary to make informed decisions about their oral health and encourage their full participation in treatment decisions and goals.
- Refer clients to other healthcare providers when their needs are beyond their ability or scope of practice. Educate clients about high-quality oral health care.

To Colleagues...

- Conduct professional activities and programs, and develop relationships in ways that are honest, responsible, and appropriately open and candid.
- Encourage a work environment that promotes individual professional growth and development.
- Collaborate with others to create a work environment that minimizes risk to the personal health and safety of their colleagues.
- Manage conflicts constructively.
- Support the efforts of other dental hygienists to communicate the dental hygiene philosophy and preventive oral care.
- Inform other health care professionals about the relationship between general and oral health.
- Promote human relationships that are mutually beneficial, including those with

other health care professionals.

To Employees and Employers...

- Conduct professional activities and programs, and develop relationships in ways that are honest, responsible, open, and candid.
- Manage conflicts constructively.
- Support the right of their employees and employers to work in an environment that promotes wellness.
- Respect the employment rights of their employers and employees.

To the Dental Hygiene Profession...

- Participate in the development and advancement of the profession.
- Avoid conflicts of interest and declare them when they occur.
- Seek opportunities to increase public awareness and understanding of oral health practices.
- Act in ways that bring credit to the profession while demonstrating appropriate respect for colleagues in other professions.
- Contribute time, talent, and financial resources to support and promote the profession.
- Promote a positive image for the profession.
- Promote a framework for professional education that develops dental hygiene competencies to meet the oral and overall health needs of the public.

To the Community and Society...

- Recognize and uphold the laws and regulations governing the profession.
- Document and report inappropriate, inadequate, or substandard care and/or illegal activities by a health care provider, to the responsible authorities.
- Comply with local, state, and federal statutes that promote public health and safety.
- Develop support systems and quality-assurance programs in the workplace to assist dental hygienists in providing the appropriate standard of care.
- Promote access to dental hygiene services for all, supporting justice and fairness in the distribution of healthcare resources.
- Act consistently with the ethics of the global scientific community of which the profession is a part.
- Create a healthful workplace ecosystem to support a healthy environment.
- Recognize and uphold the obligation to provide pro bono service.

To Scientific Investigation...

Dental hygienists accept responsibility for conducting research according to the fundamental principles underlying their ethical beliefs in compliance with universal codes, governmental standards, and professional guidelines for the care and management of experimental subjects. They acknowledge their ethical obligations to the scientific community:

- Conduct research that contributes knowledge that is valid and useful to clients and society.

- Use research methods that meet accepted scientific standards.
- Use research resources appropriately.
- Systematically review and justify research in progress to insure the most favorable benefit-to-risk ratio to research subjects.
- Submit all proposals involving human subjects to an appropriate human subject review committee.
- Secure appropriate institutional committee approval for the conduct of research involving animals.
- Obtain informed consent from human subjects participating in research that is based on specification published in Title 21 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46.
- Respect the confidentiality and privacy of data.
- Seek opportunities to advance dental hygiene knowledge through research by providing financial, human, and technical resources whenever possible.
- Report research results in a timely manner.
- Report research findings completely and honestly, drawing only those conclusions that are supported by the data presented.
- Report the names of investigators fairly and accurately.
- Interpret the research and the research of others accurately and objectively, drawing conclusions that are supported by the data presented and seeking clarity when uncertain.
- Critically evaluate research methods and results before applying new theory and technology in practice.
- Be knowledgeable concerning currently accepted preventive and therapeutic methods, products, and technology and their application to the practice of dental hygiene.