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Code of Ethics

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National Student Nurses' Association encourages nursing programs to adopt the Code of Ethics.

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SECTION 1

CORE VALUES

LEADERSHIP and AUTONOMY

- Definition: A process of social influence which promotes innovative problem solving to move an autonomous, independent organization forward by providing a clear vision, maximizing the efforts of others, by respecting each individual and in collaboration with other appropriate resources.
- Interpretive Statement: NSNA promotes each member to build their democratic leadership skills with conflict resolution through shared governance and community, with respect for others. Student nurses in leadership positions of NSNA make their own decisions based on fiduciary research, and historical and current evidence along with membership input when appropriate. NSNA chapter leaders establish and acknowledge their autonomy and independence in bylaws, policies and procedures.

QUALITY EDUCATION

- Definition: An act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for a profession
- Interpretive Statement: NSNA informs, prepares, and inspires members to develop continuous, life-long learning and ethics of the profession. Nursing students are encouraged

to take full advantage of their education and develop their professional leadership skills as members of NSNA.

ADVOCACY

- **Definition:** An activity or process to work on behalf of self and/or others to raise awareness of a concern and to promote solutions to the issue
- **Interpretive statement:** The nursing profession is based on advocating for patients and families in order to help facilitate the healing process; NSNA serves as an advocate for nursing students by representing them as one united voice.

PROFESSIONALISM

- **Definition:** Characteristics that describe an individual striving to maintain the highest standards for one's chosen path – honesty, integrity, responsibility and conducting oneself with responsibility, integrity, accountability, and excellence.
- **Interpretive Statement:** As NSNA members, it is important to create a culture of professionalism in our organization and to uphold the values of professionalism in order to conduct ourselves and our organization in the most respectful, honest way. This value translates into respecting our patients and maintaining the ethics of our profession.

CARE

- **Definition:** A feeling and exhibiting concern and empathy for others while showing or having compassion for others.
- **Interpretive Statement:** Caring is a fundamental value of registered nurses and the nursing profession. The NSNA cultivates a climate of caring in its publications, programs, relationships, and leadership development. NSNA members care for their patients, peers and the future of the profession.

DIVERSITY

- **Definition:** Differences that can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, nationality or other ideologies.
- **Interpretive Statement:** Each individual is unique, and we recognize our individual differences through acceptance and respect. We explore these differences in a safe, positive and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

Adopted in March 2015 by the 2014-15 NSNA Board of Directors.

SECTION 2

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

As a member of the National Student Nurses' Association, I pledge myself to:

1. Maintain the highest standard of personal and professional conduct.
2. Actively promote and encourage the highest level of ethics within nursing education, the profession of nursing, and the student nurses' association.
3. Uphold and respect all Bylaws, policies and responsibilities relating to the student nurses' association at all levels of membership, reserving the right to propose changes and to critique rules and laws.
4. Strive for excellence in all aspects of collaboration, decision making, leadership, and management at all levels of the student nurses' association.
5. Use only legal, ethical, and human rights standards in all association decisions and activities in accordance with NSNA Core Values.
6. Ensure the proper use of all association funds and resources in accordance with the fiduciary responsibilities set forth in NSNA bylaws, policies and state/federal law.
7. Ensure impartiality and prevent conflicts of interest, neither provide nor accept personal compensation to or from another individual while serving as members of student nurses' associations.
8. Maintain the confidentiality of privileged information entrusted or known to me by virtue of an elected or official position in the student nurses association.
9. Affirm and support diversity and inclusion by refusing to engage in or condone unjust discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, citizenship, religion, national origin, disability, illness, legal status, or personal attributes.
10. Uphold integrity in personal, professional, and academic life by refraining from and reporting any form of dishonesty, using proper established channels of communication and reporting as set by the policies of the organization in question.

11. Always communicate internal and external association statements in a truthful and accurate manner by ensuring that there is accuracy in the data and information used by the student nurses' association.

12. Cooperate in every reasonable and proper way with association volunteers and staff by working with them to advocate for student rights and responsibilities and the advancement of the profession of nursing.

13. Use every opportunity to improve faculty and student understanding of the role of the student nurses' association.

14. Use every opportunity to raise awareness of the student nurses' association mission, values, purpose, and goals at the school, state and national chapter level as defined in bylaws and policies.

First adopted by the 1999 House of Delegates, Pittsburgh, PA. Amended by the House of Delegates at the NSNA Annual Convention on April 7, 2017 in Dallas, TX.

SECTION 3

CODE OF ACADEMIC AND CLINICAL CONDUCT

PREAMBLE

Students of nursing have a responsibility to actively promote the highest level of moral and ethical principles and to embody the academic theory and clinical skills needed to continuously provide evidence-based nursing care given the resources available. Grounded in excellence, altruism and integrity, the clinical setting presents unique challenges and responsibilities while caring for people in a variety of health care environments.

The Code of Academic and Clinical Conduct is based on an agreement to uphold the trust that society has placed in us while practicing as nursing students. The statements of the Code provide guidance for nursing students in the personal development of an ethical foundation for nursing practice. These moral and ethical principles are not limited to the academic or clinical environment and have relevance for the holistic professional development of all students studying to become Registered Nurses.

CODE OF ACADEMIC AND CLINICAL CONDUCT

As students who are involved in the clinical and academic environments, we believe that ethical principles, in adherence with the NSNA Core Values, are a necessary guide to professional development. Therefore, within these environments we:

1. Advocate for the rights of all patients.
2. Diligently maintain patient confidentiality in all respects, regardless of method or medium of communication.
3. Take appropriate action to ensure the safety of patients, self, and others.
4. Provide care for the patient in a timely, compassionate, professional, and culturally sensitive and competent manner.
5. Are truthful, timely and accurate in all communications related to patient care.
6. Accept responsibility for our decisions and actions.
7. Promote excellence and leadership in nursing by encouraging lifelong learning, continuing education, and professional development.

8. Treat others with respect and promote an inclusive environment that values the diversity, rights, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs of all patients and fellow healthcare professionals.
9. Collaborate with academic faculty and clinical staff to ensure the highest quality of patient care and student education.
10. Use every opportunity to improve faculty and clinical staff understanding of the nursing student's learning needs.
11. Encourage mentorship among nursing students, faculty, clinical staff, and interprofessional peers.
12. Refrain from performing skills or procedures without adequate preparation, and seek supervision and assistance when necessary.
13. Refrain from any deliberate action or omission in academic or clinical settings that create unnecessary risk of injury to the patient, self, or others.
14. Assist the clinical nurse or preceptor in ensuring that adequate informed consent is obtained from patients for research participation, for certain treatments, or for invasive procedures.
15. Abstain from the use of any legal or illegal substances in academic and clinical settings that could impair judgment.
16. Strive to achieve and maintain an optimal level of personal health.
17. Support access to treatment and rehabilitation for students who are experiencing impairment related to substance abuse and mental or physical health issues.
18. Uphold school policies and regulations related to academic and clinical performance, reserving the right to challenge and critique rules and regulations as per school grievance policy.

First adopted by the 2001 House of Delegates, Nashville, TN. Amended by the House of Delegates at the NSNA Annual Convention on April 7, 2017 in Dallas, TX.

SECTION 4

BILL OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR STUDENTS OF NURSING

1. Under no circumstances should a student be barred from admission to a particular institution on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, citizenship, religion, national origin, disability, illness, legal status, or personal attributes, or economic status.
2. The freedom to teach and the freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom and quality education; students should exercise their freedom in a responsible manner.
3. Each institution has a duty to develop policies and procedures which provide for and safeguard the students' freedom to learn.
4. Students should be encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and engage in an autonomous, sustained, and independent search for truth.
5. Students should be free to take reasoned exception in an informed, professional manner to the data or views offered in any course of study. However, students are accountable for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.
6. Students should have protection, through orderly approved standard procedures, against prejudicial or capricious academic evaluation. However, students are responsible for maintaining standards of academic performance established for each course in which they are enrolled.
7. Information about student views, beliefs, political ideation, legal status, United States citizenship status, sexual orientation or other personal information which instructors acquire in the course of their work or otherwise, should be considered confidential and not released without the knowledge or consent of the student, and should not be used as an element of evaluation.
8. The student should have the right to advocate for themselves and other students in the construction, delivery and evaluation of the curriculum.
9. Institutions should have a clearly written published policy as to the disclosure of private and confidential information which should be a part of a student's permanent academic record in compliance with state and federal laws.

10. Students and student organizations should be free to examine and discuss all questions of interest to them, and to express opinions in an informed, professional manner, both publicly and privately.
11. Students should be allowed to invite and hear any individual of their own choosing within the institution's guidelines, thereby advocating for and encouraging the advancement of their education.
12. The student body should have clearly defined means to participate in the formulation and application of institutional policy affecting academic and student affairs, thereby encouraging leadership, e.g., through a faculty-student council, student membership, or representation on relevant faculty committees.
13. The institution has an obligation to clarify those standards of conduct which it considers essential to its educational mission, community life, and its objectives and philosophy. These may include, but are not limited to, policies on academic dishonesty, plagiarism, punctuality, attendance, and absenteeism.
14. Disciplinary proceedings should be instituted only for violations of standards of conduct. Standards of conduct should be formulated with student participation, clearly written and published in advance through an available set of institutional regulations. It is the responsibility of the student to know these regulations.
15. The nursing program should have readily available a set of clear, defined grievance procedures.
16. As citizens and members of an academic community, students are exposed to many opportunities and they should be mindful of their corresponding obligations.
17. Students have the right to belong to or refuse membership in any organization.
18. Students have the right to personal privacy in their individual/personal space to the extent that their wellbeing and property are respected.
19. Adequate safety precautions should be provided by nursing programs, for example, adequate street and building lighting, locks, patrols, emergency notifications, and other security measures deemed necessary to ensure a safe and protected environment.
20. Dress code, if present in school, should be established with student input in conjunction

with the school administration and faculty. This policy ensures that the highest professional standards are maintained, but also takes into consideration points of comfort and practicality for the student.

21. Grading systems should be carefully reviewed initially and periodically with students and faculty for clarification and better student-faculty understanding.
22. Students should have a clear mechanism for input into the evaluation of their nursing education and nursing faculty.
23. The nursing program should track their graduates' success in finding entry-level employment as registered nurses and make this information available to all who apply and enroll.
24. The nursing program should provide comprehensive, clear and concise information related to student loans, scholarships and any other student financial aid.

The NSNA Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities was initially adopted in 1975. The document was updated by the NSNA House of Delegates in San Antonio, Texas (1991); and item #4 was revised by the NSNA House of Delegates in Baltimore, Maryland (2006). Further amendments were adopted by the House of Delegates at the NSNA Annual Convention on April 7, 2017 in Dallas, TX.

SECTION 5

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE GUIDELINES

What steps can be taken if a student believes that his or her rights have been violated?

It is wise to first review the school's policies and procedures related to violation of rights, clinical, academic and non-academic disputes. Efforts should be made to first resolve the issue between the individuals in question. After thorough examination of the facts and circumstances of the violation and discussion with the parties involved, if resolution is not reached, the next step is to review the policies and procedures related to filing a grievance where there is a violation of academic, clinical, and non-academic rights and responsibilities. In the unlikely event that the college/university does not have such a procedure, the following "Grievance Procedure Guidelines" offer some guidance.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE GUIDELINES

1. Before a set of grievance procedures can be discussed, a Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities must be adopted. It is suggested that students use the guidelines developed by NSNA for this. The Bill should be a written statement mutually agreed upon by both faculty and students.

Rationale: The Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities is the guideline on which the grievance committee can depend or to help in making a decision on the issue at hand.

2. The procedure for handling grievances should be a well-defined, written statement consistent with the principles of due process. Both faculty and students should have equal representation in the development of such a procedure.

Rationale: It is necessary to have a procedure that both students and faculty will support.

3. Once grievance procedures are developed, students should be made aware of the existence of these procedures at orientation.

Rationale: Students should know what steps they can take if a situation should develop where their rights are infringed upon.

4. The grievance committee should be composed of an equal representation of students and faculty, with a minimum ratio of four to four.

Rationale: Equal representation with at least eight on the committee provides for broader range, more objective opinions.

a. Student members on the committee should be composed of at least one representative from each class. These members should be elected by the student body.

Rationale: Students from different classes often have differing outlooks and viewpoints on a situation.

Election insures that student members have the support of and are representative of the student body.

b. Faculty members on the committee should be chosen by the faculty, except in the situation as described in item 12.

Rationale: Committee members should be representative of their group.

5. There should be a written statement, drawn up by student and faculty representatives, which indicates the actions that may be taken by the grievance committee, and the types of situations that fall under the committee's jurisdiction.

Rationale: Defining this will help to support the decisions made by the committee.

Some suggestions:

- Enforcement of the Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities can be encouraged by including the following statement: "The Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities shall be recognized by administration, faculty and students, and any violations of such bill shall be brought to the attention of the Grievance Committee for action."
- Review student evaluations of courses and faculty, and make recommendations to the appropriate people.
- Review curriculum and grading system on a yearly basis, and initiate change as necessary.
- Review dress code, if any, every 5 years.
- Review other grievances not necessarily included in Student Bill of Rights.

6. The committee should meet regularly—at least every other month, and all students should be informed as to the date, time, and place of these meetings.

Rationale: To give students an opportunity to voice comments and suggestions on a continuing basis.

7. Accurate records, including complete minutes, and in individual cases, a verbatim record, shall be kept on file for all meetings of the committee. Even when tape recordings are used, written minutes to officially document proceedings must be prepared. These minutes should be signed by the two recording secretaries, who shall be one faculty member and one student on the committee.

Rationale: To serve as evidence of the committee's action, and as a precedent for future committee action.

8. Any student shall have the right to ask for an "emergency meeting" of the grievance committee on matters that are crucial and cannot wait until the regularly scheduled meeting. The grievance committee shall define whether a matter is crucial, and may postpone consideration of the matter if a majority of the members considers the matter appropriate for a regularly scheduled meeting.

Rationale: To provide a means of handling grievances in a "crisis" situation.

9. State and local constituents of the National Student Nurses' Association may request their board members be available for advice and support for any student initiating a grievance.

Rationale: Students filing complaints need positive reinforcement in their efforts. Also, nursing students need to know that their Student Nurses' Association is truly interested in and representing them and their concerns.

10. As a preliminary step, the student's case will be heard by a subcommittee of the regular grievance committee. This subcommittee will consist of two faculty members and two students. If the subcommittee cannot satisfactorily solve the grievance, they will report to the main grievance committee, which will then hear the case and take action as necessary.

Rationale: Often grievance cases can be adequately handled by persons who are impartial. A subcommittee can conserve the workload of the entire committee, and narrow the issues in the cases that are presented to them.

11. The student appearing before the grievance committee should have the right to have a representative or advisor of his/her choice with him/her at the meeting.

Rationale: To allow the student to have the necessary resources he/she needs in order to adequately present his/her case. Also, sometimes students who are emotionally involved with a case are not able to present it in the way they would like.

12. If the grievance is against a member of the committee, the student should have a right to ask the member to abstain from participation in the committee while his/her grievance is being considered. The committee should then appoint someone to take that member's place.

Rationale: To protect the student from a biased decision by the committee, and to allow the student more freedom to express his/her opinion.

13. A mediator should be allowed to sit on the committee. This should be someone who is neither a faculty member nor a student, but is closely associated with nursing. The mediator should be without vote. The purpose of the mediator is to make sure that each member on the committee has an equal opportunity to speak and that full and fair review of the facts takes place.

Rationale: To prevent an individual or group on the committee from becoming too powerful and domineering.

14. Reasonable evidence, names of prospective witnesses, and background material concerning the case should be submitted to the committee at least three days prior to the date when the case is to be discussed. The evidence should be relevant to the issues and not discussed by committee members prior to the formal meeting.

Rationale: To allow the committee adequate time to examine documentary evidence.

15. Any charges against the student or faculty member should be in writing and be made available to both the committee and the student or faculty member at least seven days before his/her scheduled appearance.

Rationale: To give the student or faculty member adequate time to prepare a defense against charges.

16. The student should be given full opportunity to present evidence and witnesses that are relevant to the issue at hand. He/she should also be given the opportunity to question any witnesses against him/her and also be informed of any evidence against him/her and its source.

Rationale: To make sure that the facts are being presented fully and fairly.

17. The student should be allowed to continue class as usual until the committee has reached a decision. However, if the student is considered to present immediate danger to patient welfare, he/she should be removed from clinical practice areas.

Rationale: To avoid the possibility of falling behind in school while the case is being considered, and avoid any delaying tactics that may be employed to prevent the student from returning to class.

18. Group grievances should be presented to the committee by one representative of that group. That representative may then appoint a consultant to appear with him.

Rationale: To provide an organized systematic way of dealing with group grievances.

19. The decision of the committee should be made in writing to the student within two weeks of hearing the case.

Rationale: To assure a fair and timely review and conclusion of the student's case.

20. Decisions made by the committee are final, that is, immediately enforced by both faculty and students, except in cases with legal implications (example, discrimination, in which the student plans to take the case to court).

Rationale: To avoid delay in enforcing the decision.

21. Provision should be made for a "right of appeal," in which the student can take his case to the Dean or a governing board of the school. However, until the "appeals board" reaches a decision, the student is still bound by the "grievance committee's" decision.

Rationale: To allow the student a solution to take if he feels that his case has been unfairly handled by the committee.

The Grievance Procedure Guidelines were developed by the NSNA Board of Directors in January 1975, and updated by the Board of Directors in April 1991.

Notes on Revisions/Amendments

Starting with the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) Bill of Rights and Responsibilities in the 1970s until the release of the NSNA Core Values by the Board of Directors in 2015, NSNA members have been in the forefront of inspiring moral courage and demonstrating exemplary ethical conduct for almost five decades. The NSNA Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities was initially adopted in 1975. The document was updated by the NSNA House of Delegates in San Antonio, Texas (1991); and item #4 was revised by the NSNA House of Delegates in Baltimore, Maryland (2006).

The 2015-16 NSNA Board of Directors took on the challenge of reviewing NSNA's primary documents related to ethics and found that they all need a general review by the membership to ensure continued relevance today and in the future.

The NSNA Code of Ethics will combine the current 3 documents into one NSNA Code of Ethics with three distinct parts. The three documents include: The Code of Professional Conduct; the Code of Clinical and Academic Conduct; and the Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for Students of Nursing.

NSNA members discussed the Code at the MidYear Career Planning Conference in Kansas City, Missouri on November 10, 2016. Over 100 members and faculty participated. At the 65th Annual NSNA Convention, delegates discussed the Code at the Forum on the Code of Ethics and voted on revisions and amendments to the Code of Ethics on April 7, 2017. The anti-discrimination description received the most comments and was amended on the floor of the House of Delegates. Many thanks to the 2016-17 NSNA Board of Directors and to the members and 2017 delegates who were engaged in this work.

4/27/2017 Word document is available by writing to nsna@nsna.org
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