

**Professional Ethics:
Navigating the Current
Landscape**

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**Standards of Professional
Conduct**

- Established by various entities
 - Professional associations
 - Legal and regulatory bodies
 - Places of employment
- Audiologists and SLPs must understand
 - Codes of Ethics of professional associations
 - Licensure regulations
 - Standard practice guidelines

Conflicts of Interest

- Understanding the impact of competing priorities on decisions
 - Real conflicts of interest
 - Perceived conflicts of interest
- Avoiding engaging in conflicts of interest
- Recognizing when “strings” are attached

The Role of Professional Associations

- Moral principles that underlie most codes of conduct
 - Freedom of action and choice
 - Justice and fairness
 - Doing good for others
 - Preventing or avoiding harm
 - Fidelity and loyalty
- Standards of conduct are outlined in each Code

ASHA Code of Ethics

- Core principles
- Role of the Board of Ethics
- History of the ASHA Code of Ethics
- Purpose
 - Protect consumers
 - Protect the integrity of the discipline
- Jurisdiction

ASHA Code Principles and Rules

- Principles of Ethics' areas of responsibility
 - To persons served and to research participants
 - For one's own professional competence
 - To the public
 - For professional relationships
- Rules of Ethics are statements about acceptable and unacceptable behavior
 - Each Principle is supported by several Rules

MSHA Code of Ethics

- Purpose is preservation of highest standards
- Fundamental rules of ethical practice highlighted
- Any act that is in violation shall be unethical
- Each member shall advise the Ethical Standards Committee of instances of violation

MSHA Code of Ethics

- Section A and B address specific relationships
 - Client relationships
 - Professional relationships
- Section C addresses other responsibilities
- Section D addresses specialized Codes
- Section E addresses Code revision
 - Most recent revision occurred in 2010

Ethical Issues in Practice Management

- Relationships with vendors
 - Real and perceived conflicts of interest
- Professional communications
 - Individuals served
 - Other professionals
 - Dismissing patients/clients
- Other issues in practice management

Ethical Issues in Supervision

- Several ethical issues including
 - Conflicts of interest
 - Being sure to identify student status in clinical interactions
 - Balancing the need of the student experience against the need for an experienced clinician
 - Modeling professional behavior to learners
- Excellent guidance available at www.asha.org

Ethical Issues in Academia

- Specific issues for academia include
 - Academic honesty
 - Research responsibilities
 - Student/faculty relationships
- Complexity of relationships in student-supervision-client paradigm

Ethical Dilemmas

- Ethical dilemmas due to pressures applied by employers
 - Caseloads or schedules
 - Billing practices
 - Requirements for supervision
 - Academic expectations
- Ethical dilemma examples

Unethical Complaints ASHA

- ASHA Board of Ethics (BOE)
 - Jurisdiction
 - Complaints filed by ASHA affiliated individuals as well as those not ASHA affiliated
 - Respondent notified immediately and given a copy of complaint
 - Information from complainant and respondent considered in deliberations held in person only
 - Confidential process

Sanctions – ASHA

- Reprimand (private)
- Censure (public reprimand)
- Withholding, suspension, or revocation of membership and/or certification for years (up to life)
- Only public sanctions published with names

ASHA Disclosure Requirements

- Need to report one's own Code violations
 - During application process
 - Following the application process
- Examples of violations include
 - Misdemeanors
 - Felonies
 - Public sanctions
 - Denials of license and other credentials

ASHA Appeals Process

- Two levels of appeal
 - Request for further consideration
 - with written defense
 - further consideration hearing
 - Decision by BOE
 - Appeal to the ASHA Ethics Appeal Panel

Ethics Education – ASHA

- Ethics section under Practice Management on the ASHA website with active links to the Code, processes and procedures, and the area for Ethics Education

Recent Changes and Future Directions

- Changes driven by need for efficiency and increased focus on patient/family centered care
 - Move to the use of electronic medical records
 - Increased use of technicians and assistants
 - Onset of telepractice in both professions
- Trends are likely to continue as the need for our services increase despite reduced resources

Summary of Topics Covered

- Standards of professional conduct
- Conflicts of interest
- Role of professional associations
- Ethical issues in practice management, supervision, and academia
- How to manage ethical dilemmas
- Unethical behavior complaint processes
- The importance of ethics education

Critical Thinking Questions

- What would you do if you faced an ethical dilemma that was not covered in your professional Code of Ethics? What steps are appropriate for reporting an ethical violation?
- How do the expanding scopes of practice in SLP and audiology affect our Codes of Ethics? How will you keep abreast of changes in ASHA and/or MSHA Codes of Ethics?
- Suppose you have made an "honest mistake." Is this a violation of the Code of Ethics? What should you do?
- Use of technology presents some unique ethical challenges. How will you protect your clients' confidentiality when you use electronic records?
