



## Code of Conduct for Allied Health Assistants

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As an **Allied Health Assistant**, you make a valuable and important contribution to the delivery of high-quality allied health **treatment, care and support**.

Following the guidance set out in this Code of Conduct (“Code”) will give you the reassurance that you are providing safe and **compassionate** care of a high standard, and the confidence to challenge or report others who are not. This Code also tells the public and people who use allied health services what they should expect from an Allied Health Assistant in Australia.

As an **Allied Health Assistant** you must:

1. Provide services in a safe and ethical manner, with care and skill, making sure you are **accountable** and can answer for your actions or **omissions**.
2. **Promote** and **uphold** the privacy, **dignity**, rights, health and **wellbeing** of people who use allied health services and their **carers** at all times.
3. Work in **collaboration** with **clients**, **carers** and colleagues to ensure the delivery of high quality, safe and **compassionate** allied health services.
4. Communicate in an open and **effective** way to **promote** the health, safety and **wellbeing** of **clients** and their **carers**.
5. Strive to improve the quality of your practise through **continuing professional development** and keep your skills and knowledge up to date.
6. **Uphold** and **promote equality, diversity, inclusion** and **cultural safety**, and strive to eliminate **racism** and other forms of **discrimination** in health and human services.
7. Take all reasonable steps to prevent, challenge and report any form of violence, abuse, neglect or **exploitation** including **sexual misconduct** and financial **exploitation**.

## *Purpose*

This Code is designed to protect the public by promoting best practice. Compliance with the Code will ensure that you are 'working to standard', providing high quality, **compassionate** allied health **treatment, care and support**. The Code describes the standards of conduct, behaviour and attitude that the public and people who use health and care services should expect. You are responsible for and have a duty of care to ensure that your conduct does not fall below the standards detailed in the Code. Nothing that you do, or omit to do, should harm the safety and wellbeing of people who use allied health services, and the public.

## *Scope*

The standards set out in this Code apply to you if you are an AHANA:

- **Practising Member**; or
- Student Member.

## *How does the Code help me as an Allied Health Assistant?*

The Code provides a set of clear standards, so you can:

- be sure of the standards you are expected to meet;
- know whether you are working to these standards, or if you need to change the way you are working;
- identify areas for continuing professional development; and
- fulfil the requirements of your role, behave correctly and do the right thing at all times.

This is essential to protect the people who use allied health services, the public and others from harm.

## *How does this Code help people who use allied health services and members of the public?*

The Code helps the public and those who use allied health services to understand what standards they can expect of an Allied Health Assistant.

The Code aims to give people who use services provided by **Practising Members** and Student Members of AHANA the confidence that they will be treated with **dignity, respect** and **compassion** at all times.

## *How does this Code help my employer?*

The Code helps employers to understand what standards they should expect of an Allied Health Assistant who is a member of AHANA. If there are people who do not meet these standards, it will help to identify them and their support and training needs.

## *Glossary*

You can find a glossary of terms and key words (shown in **bold** throughout the Code) at the end of the document.

## Acknowledgements

This Code of Conduct is based on and draws extensively from the *Skills for Care & Skills for Health Code of Conduct for Healthcare Support Workers and Adult Social Care Workers in England* (Skills for Care & Skills for Health, 2013) (the SCSH Code.)

This Code also incorporates provisions and definitions from the following Australian Codes of Conduct:

- *National Code of Conduct for Healthcare Workers* (COAG, 2015) which applies with some minor modifications in NSW (NSW Health, 2022); Queensland (Queensland Health, 2015), South Australia (SA HSCSS, 2019) and Victoria (Victorian Health, 2016);
- *National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Code of Conduct* (NDIS, 2018);
- *Victorian Disability Service Safeguards Code of Conduct* (Victorian Dept of Health and Human Services, 2018);
- *Ahpra and National Boards Code of Conduct. June 2022* (Ahpra, 2022) (the Ahpra Shared Code).

These documents are also fully referenced at the end of the Code, following the Glossary.

***PRINCIPLE 1: Provide services in a safe and ethical manner, with care and skill, making sure you are accountable and can answer for your actions or omissions***

### ***Guidance statements***

As an **Allied Health Assistant**, you must:

1. Act ethically, with integrity, honesty and transparency and never behave or present yourself in a way that calls into question your suitability to work as an Allied Health Assistant.
2. Deliver services in a way that complies with Commonwealth, State and Territory laws and regulations, and any statutory or other codes of conduct that govern your work (e.g. the National Code of Conduct for Healthcare Workers, as implemented in some States, and other workplace and funding-related codes of conduct).
3. Be honest with yourself and others about the services you can safely provide, recognise your abilities and the limitations of your **competence** and only carry out or delegate those tasks agreed in your job description and for which you are **competent**.
4. Be able to justify and be **accountable** for your actions or your **omissions**.
5. Ask your supervisor or employer for guidance if you do not feel able or adequately prepared to carry out any aspect of your work, or if you are unsure how to safely and **effectively** complete a task.
6. Establish and maintain clear and appropriate professional boundaries in your relationships with **clients, carers** and colleagues at all times.
7. Tell your supervisor or employer if you have a **conflict of interest** in relation to a client or their family, or any issues that might affect your ability to do your job **competently** and safely. If you have a conflict, or do not feel **competent** or able to carry out a role, you must report this.
8. If the circumstances require you to provide services to a person you have or have had a personal relationship with, report the nature of this relationship to your employer or a senior member of the team so that the conflict may be managed in the best interests of the client.
9. Work in ways that support government public health messaging and **promote** the health of the community, through infection prevention and control, health education and where relevant, health screening.
10. Adopt **standard precautions** for the control of infection in the course of providing services. If you have been diagnosed with a medical condition that can be passed on to other people, follow the advice of a suitably trained **registered health practitioner** on how to modify your practise to avoid passing on the infection.
11. Never provide services under the influence of alcohol or unlawful drugs.
12. Obtain and follow the advice of suitably trained **registered health practitioner** if you are taking prescribed medication or have an impairment or disorder that could compromise your ability to do your job safely and **competently**.
13. Never participate in or **promote sharp practices** such as overservicing, high pressure sales tactics or inducements, or recommending or promoting services or appliances which are unnecessary or not beneficial to your clients.
14. Never ask for or accept any loans, gifts, benefits or hospitality from anyone you are supporting or anyone close to them which may be seen to compromise your position.

15. Take timely action in relation to any **adverse event** that occurs when you are providing services, including providing emergency assistance and complying with reporting requirements and post-event review and improvement processes.
16. Report any actions or **omissions** by yourself or colleagues that you reasonably believe may compromise or have compromised the safety, treatment or care of **clients**. If necessary, use **whistleblowing** procedures to report any suspected wrongdoing.

***PRINCIPLE 2: Promote and uphold the privacy, dignity, rights, health and wellbeing of people who use allied health services and their carers at all times***

### ***Guidance statements***

As an **Allied Health Assistant** you must:

1. Always act in the **best interests** of **clients**.
2. Treat your **clients** with **respect** and **compassion** and in manner that is **culturally safe** to their needs.
3. Always put the needs, goals and aspirations of your clients first, helping them to be in control and to make decisions and choices about their **treatment, care and support**.
4. Work in ways that **promote** independence and ability to **self-care**, assisting your clients to exercise their rights and make informed choices.
5. Obtain **valid consent** before providing allied health **treatment, care or support**. **Respect** a person's right to refuse to receive healthcare services, if they have the legal or cognitive capacity to do so, or their **carer's** if the person does not
6. Maintain the privacy and **dignity** of **clients**, their **carers** and others and treat all information about **clients** and their **carers** as confidential.
7. Only discuss or disclose information about **clients** and their **carers** in accordance with Commonwealth, state and territory privacy laws and your employer's privacy **policies**. Seek guidance from a senior member of staff regarding any confidentiality or privacy issues that you are concerned about and discuss issues about disclosure of personal information about the services provided with a senior member of staff, or the team.
8. Be alert to any changes that could affect a client's needs or progress and report your observations in line with your role description and your employer's **policies, procedures or protocols**.
9. Make sure that your actions or **omissions** do not harm an individual's health or **wellbeing**. You must never abuse, neglect, harm or **exploit clients**, their **carers** or your colleagues.
10. Take all reasonable steps to prevent or to challenge and report dangerous, abusive, discriminatory, **exploitative** or **racist behaviour** or practice.
11. Take comments and complaints seriously, respond to them in line with your employer's (and any other appropriate) complaints management **protocol** and inform a senior member of the team.
12. Fully cooperate with any investigations by management or external funding or regulatory bodies concerning any incident of violence, abuse, neglect or **exploitation**, or of a complaint.

***PRINCIPLE 3: Work in collaboration with clients, carers and colleagues to ensure the delivery of high quality, safe and compassionate allied health services***

***Guidance statements***

As an **Allied Health Assistant** you must:

1. Understand and value your contribution and the vital part you play in your team.
2. Recognise and **respect** the roles and expertise of your colleagues both in the team and from other agencies and disciplines, and work in partnership with them.
3. Work openly and co-operatively with colleagues including those from other disciplines and agencies, and treat them with **respect**.
4. Work openly and co-operatively with **clients** and their **carers** and treat them with **respect**.
5. Honour your work commitments, agreements and arrangements and be reliable, dependable and trustworthy.
6. Actively encourage the delivery of high-quality allied health **treatment, care and support** and the wise use of resources.

***PRINCIPLE 4: Communicate in an open and effective way to promote the health, safety and wellbeing of clients and their carers***

***Guidance statements***

As an **Allied Health Assistant** you must:

1. Communicate **respectfully** with **clients** and their **carers** in an open, accurate, straightforward and confidential way, and in a form, language and manner that enables people to understand the information and provide their decisions and preferences. Consider the age, maturity, culture, linguistic backgrounds and intellectual capacity of **clients** and **carers** when you do this.
2. Communicate effectively and consult with your colleagues as appropriate.
3. Explain and discuss the treatment, care or procedure you intend to carry out with your **client** (and/or their **carer**) and only continue if you receive a **valid consent**.
4. Maintain clear and accurate records of the services you provide, including of **consent**.
5. Immediately report to a senior member of the team any changes or concerns you have about a client's condition.
6. Recognise both the extent and the limits of your role, qualifications, knowledge and **competence** when communicating with **clients, carers** and colleagues.
7. Never make inaccurate or unsubstantiated claims in connection with the services you provide or their benefits, including in advertising.

***PRINCIPLE 5: Strive to improve the quality of your practise through continuing professional development and keep your skills and knowledge up to date***

***Guidance statements***

As an **Allied Health Assistant** you must:

1. Ensure you are up to date and compliant with all statutory and mandatory training required for your role, in agreement with your supervisor or employer.
2. Participate in **continuing professional development** to achieve and maintain the **competence** required for your role.
3. Improve the quality and safety of the **treatment, care or support** you provide with the help of your supervisor (and a **mentor** if available), in accordance with your role description and your employer's **policies, procedures or protocols**.
4. Maintain an up-to-date record of your training and development.
5. Contribute to the learning and development of others as appropriate.
6. Refresh your skills and knowledge, or arrange to work under more close supervision or **mentorship** if possible, after returning from a long period of leave or absence from practise.

***PRINCIPLE 6: Uphold and promote equality, diversity, inclusion and cultural safety, and strive to eliminate racism and other forms of discrimination in health and human services***

***Guidance statements***

As an **Allied Health Assistant** you must:

1. **Respect** the individuality and **diversity** of **clients**, their **carers** and your colleagues. **Respect** their culture, faith, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexuality, age and disability status.
2. Acknowledge the **systemic racism**, social, cultural, behavioural and economic factors that impact on the individual and community health of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, and take steps to ensure your practise is **culturally safe** and responsive to their needs.
3. Never **discriminate** or condone any **discrimination** or **racism** against **clients**, their **carers** or your colleagues.
4. **Promote** equal opportunities and **inclusion** for **clients** and their **carers**.
5. Report any concerns regarding individual or systemic **discrimination** or inequitable treatment to a senior member of the care team as soon as possible.

***PRINCIPLE 7: Take all reasonable steps to prevent, challenge and report any form of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation including sexual misconduct and financial exploitation***

### ***Guidance statements***

As an **Allied Health Assistant** you must:

1. Never commit, participate in or condone any form of violence, abuse, harassment, neglect or **exploitation** of a **client** or their **carer**.
2. Never commit or participate in any form of **sexual misconduct** or engage in any **inappropriate personal relationship** with a client.
3. Take seriously and report all allegations of abuse made by a **client**, or their **carer**.
4. Identify and report situations that could lead to violence, abuse, neglect or **exploitation** of a **client**.
5. Report any incident of violence, **exploitation**, neglect or abuse of a **client** to your supervisor and other relevant authorities, including **sexual misconduct** or **inappropriate personal relationships**, as quickly as possible.
6. Comply with relevant laws and fully cooperate with any investigation or inquiry by management or an external funding or regulatory body in relation to an incident of violence, abuse, neglect or **exploitation**.



## Glossary of terms

**ACCOUNTABLE:** accountability is to be responsible for the decisions you make and answerable for your actions (SCSH Code: 11).

**ADVERSE EVENT:** any incident in which harm results to a person receiving health care; it includes an infection, a fall resulting in injury, or problem with medication or a medical device; some adverse events may be preventable (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018).

**ALLIED HEALTH ASSISTANT:** An Allied Health Assistant is a healthcare worker who has demonstrated competencies to provide person-centred, evidence-informed therapy and support to individuals and groups, to help protect, restore and maintain optimal function, and promote independence and well-being.

An Allied Health Assistant works:

1. within a defined scope of practice and in a variety of settings, where they actively foster a safe and inclusive environment; and
2. under the delegation and supervision of an Allied Health Professional.

The level of supervision may be direct, indirect or remote and is dependent on the Allied Health Assistant's demonstrated competencies, capabilities and experience (AHANA, 2022).

**CARERS:** see 'client'.

**CLIENT:** this Code uses 'client' to mean a person receiving allied health services from the Allied Health Assistant and/or their employing organisation; the term 'client' includes 'patients', 'participants', 'consumers', 'service users' and 'service recipients'; depending on the context of practice, the term client may also extend to **carers** (family members, partners, guardians and other people authorised to make decisions for, or represent, the **client**) and to groups and/or communities as users of allied health services.

**COLLABORATION:** the action of working with someone to achieve a common goal (SCSH Code: 11).

**COMPASSION:** descriptions of compassionate care include: dignity and comfort; taking time and patience to listen, explain and communicate; demonstrating empathy, kindness and warmth; care centred around an individual person's needs, involving people in the decisions about their healthcare, care and support (SCSH Code: 11). **Compassionate** means done or approached with **compassion**.

**COMPETENCE:** the knowledge, skills, attitudes and ability to practise safely and effectively without the need for close supervision (SCSH Code: 11).

**COMPETENT:** having the necessary ability, knowledge, or skill to do something successfully (SCSH Code: 11). **Competently** means done with the necessary ability, knowledge, or skill to do something successfully.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** includes potential or actual conflict for example, when a worker or a provider is in a position to exploit their own professional or official capacity for personal or corporate benefit (NDIS Code of Conduct: 34).

**CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** this is the way in which a worker continues to learn and develop throughout their careers, keeping their skills and knowledge up to date and ensuring they can work safely and effectively (SCSH Code: 11).

**CULTURAL SAFETY:** the ongoing critical reflection of a worker's knowledge, skills, attitudes, practising behaviours and power differentials in delivering safe, accessible and responsive healthcare free of racism; cultural safety is determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities (adapted from the Ahpra Shared Code: 29). **Culturally safe** means practise or behaviour which is designed or intended to provide **cultural safety**.

**DIGNITY:** covers all aspects of daily life, including respect, privacy, autonomy and self-worth; while dignity may be difficult to define, what is clear is that people know when they have not been treated with dignity and respect. Dignity is about interpersonal behaviours as well as systems and processes (SCSH Code: 11).

**DISCRIMINATION:** discrimination occurs when a person, or a group of people, is treated less favourably than another person or group because of their background or certain personal characteristics (Ahpra Shared Code: 29); discrimination can be the result of prejudice, misconception and stereotyping. Whether this behaviour is intentional or unintentional does not excuse it. It is the perception of the person discriminated against that is important (SCSH Code: 11). **Discriminate** means to act unfavourably towards someone or a group of people because of their background or certain personal characteristics.

**DIVERSITY:** celebrating differences and valuing everyone; diversity encompasses visible and non-visible individual differences and is about respecting those differences (SCSH Code: 11).

**EFFECTIVE:** to be successful in producing a desired or intended result (SCSH Code: 11).

**EQUALITY:** being equal in status, rights, and opportunities (SCSH Code: 11).

**EXPLOITATION:** every relationship between an Allied Health Assistant and a **client** is subject to an imbalance of power; an Allied Health Assistant engages in exploitation of a client if they use or rely on this power imbalance for personal gain or to cause harm or embarrassment to the **client**; **exploitation** may take many forms (physical, emotional, sexual and financial) and arises even where the benefit is initiated or offered unprompted by the client themselves.

**INAPPROPRIATE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP:** means a relationship which crosses **professional boundaries** or could be viewed as **exploitation**.

**INCLUSION:** ensuring that people are treated equally and fairly and are included as part of society (SCSH Code: 11).

**MENTORSHIP:** is a work-based method of training using existing experienced staff to transfer their skills informally or semi-formally to learners (SCSH Code: 11). A **mentor** is an experienced staff member providing **mentorship**.

**OMISSION:** to leave out or exclude, or fail to act when action is indicated or required (SCSH Code: 11).

**POLICIES, PROCEDURES, PROTOCOLS:** Materials provided to an employee by their employer that set out the expectations, requirements and procedures of the service or work setting; these policies and procedures may be less formally documented among individual employers and the self-employed.

**POWER OF ATTORNEY:** a legal document that gives a person, or trustee organisation the legal authority to act for another person, to manage their assets and make financial and legal decisions on their behalf.

**PRACTISING MEMBER:** a member of one of the AHANA classes of practising membership, i.e. Practising Member (Provisional), Practising Member (General) or Practising Member (Provisional).

**PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES:** the clear separation that should exist between professional conduct aimed at meeting the health, support and care needs of clients and your own personal views, feelings and relationships which are not relevant to the therapeutic relationship (adapted from Ahpra Shared Code section 4.9).

**PROMOTE:** to support or actively encourage (SCSH Code: 11).

**RACISM:** includes prejudice, discrimination or hatred directed at someone because of their colour, ethnicity or national origin (Ahpra Shared Code: 30).

**RACIST BEHAVIOUR:** is behaviour which is prejudicial or discriminatory toward or about someone because of their colour, ethnicity or national origin.

**REGISTERED HEALTH PRACTITIONER:** an individual who is registered under the *Health Practitioner National Law Act 2009* (Cth) (as enacted by laws passed in each State and Territory) to practise a regulated health profession, other than as a student. Registered health practitioners are listed in the [Register of Practitioners](#).

**RESPECT:** to have due regard for someone's feelings, wishes, or rights (SCSH Code: 11) and to do something **respectfully** means to do it with **respect**.

**SELF-CARE:** this refers to the practices undertaken by people towards maintaining health and wellbeing and managing their own care needs. It has been defined as: "the actions people take for themselves, their children and their families to stay fit and maintain good physical and mental health; meet social and psychological needs; prevent illness or accidents; care for minor ailments and long-term conditions; and maintain health and wellbeing after an acute illness or discharge from hospital." (SCSH Code: 12).

**SEXUAL MISCONDUCT:** inappropriate behaviour that may include:

- a. asking the person on a date;
- b. touching any part of a person's body in a sexual way;
- c. touching a person in a way they do not wish to be touched;
- d. displaying their genitals to the person;
- e. coercing, by pressuring or tricking, a person to engage in sexual behaviours or acts;
- f. making sexual or erotic comments to the person – in person or by text message, email or social media message (as well as written comments, this includes images and audio);
- g. making sexually suggestive comments or jokes;
- h. intentionally staring at a person in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable;
- i. making comments about a person's sexuality or appearance;
- j. making requests of a sexual nature, including to remove clothing, for sexually explicit photographs, videos or for sexual activities;
- k. showing the person pictures or videos of naked people, or people undertaking sexual activities; and
- l. ignoring or encouraging sexual behaviour between people with disability that is non-consensual or exploitative.

This list does not cover all situations and there may be other activities or behaviours that constitute **sexual misconduct** (NDIS Code of Conduct: pp. 35-36).

**SHARP PRACTICES:** business practices that may in a technical sense be legal but are unethical or dishonest (NDIS Code of Conduct: 37).

**SYSTEMIC RACISM:** is **racism** at a systemic level rather than an individual level. It occurs where the systems (e.g. societal, political, organisational, structural) in place lead to outcomes which are unfair or harmful to some people and/or provide others unfair advantages, based on their race.

**STANDARD PRECAUTIONS:** Work practices that constitute the first-line approach to infection prevention and control in the healthcare environment and recommended for the treatment and care of all patients, including hand hygiene, routine environmental cleaning, appropriate handling of waste and handling of linen. See *The Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare* (National Health & Medical Research Council, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare 2019: 28-96).

**TREATMENT, CARE AND SUPPORT:** treatment, care and support enables people to develop or regain the skills or abilities to do everyday things like walk, eat, work, cook, play, see friends and access the community; it might include implementing a skill development, rehabilitation or other treatment program developed by one or more Allied Health Professionals, or providing practical information, support and referral to access community services (adapted from the SCSH Code: 12).

**UPHOLD:** to maintain a custom or practice (SCSH Code: 12).

**VALID CONSENT:** for consent to be valid, it must be given voluntarily by an appropriately informed person who has the capacity to consent to the intervention in question; this will be the client or patient, the person who uses allied health services or someone with parental responsibility for a person under the age of 18, someone authorised to do so under a Guardianship order or **Power of Attorney** or someone who has the authority to make treatment decisions as a court appointed person); agreement where the person does not know what the intervention entails is not 'consent' (adapted from the SCSH Code: 12).

**WELLBEING:** a person's wellbeing may include their sense of hope, confidence, self-esteem, ability to communicate their wants and needs, ability to make contact with other people, ability to show warmth and affection, experience and showing of pleasure or enjoyment (SCSH Code: 12).

**WHISTLEBLOWING:** whistleblowing is when a worker reports suspected wrongdoing at work. Officially this is called 'making a disclosure in the public interest' and may sometimes be referred to as 'escalating concerns'; you must report things that you feel are not right, are illegal or if anyone at work is neglecting their duties; this includes when someone's health and safety is in danger; damage to the environment; a criminal offence; that the company is not obeying the law (like not having the right insurance); or covering up wrongdoing (SCSH Code: 12).

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