

The Code of Ethics for Nurses

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lecture, students will be able to:

1. conclude the benefits of the code of ethics
2. categorize the list of provisions
3. distinguish the functions of each provision

A list of provisions that makes explicit the primary goals, values, and obligations of the nursing profession and expresses its values, duties, and commitments to the society of which it is a part.

The *Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements* (“The Code”; ANA, 2015) serves as the ethical framework in nursing regardless of practice setting or role, and provides guidance for the future. The nine provisions explicate key ethical concepts and actions for all nurses in all settings.

It is foundational to nursing theory, practice, and praxis in its expression of the values, virtues, and obligations that shape, guide, and inform nursing as a profession. It establishes the ethical standard for the profession and provides a guide for nurses to use in ethical analysis and decision-making.

The Code also describes the ethical characteristics of the professional nurse:

Individuals who become nurses, as well as the professional organizations that represent them, are expected not only to adhere to the values, moral norms, and ideals of the profession but also to embrace them as a part of what it means to be a nurse.

A code of ethics for the nursing profession makes explicit the primary obligations, values, and ideals of the profession.

It provides normative, applied moral guidance for nurses in terms of what they ought to do, be, and seek.

The values and obligations in the *Code of Ethics for Nurses* apply to nurses in all roles, in all forms of practice, and in all settings.

The nine provisions of the *Code of Ethics for Nurses* involve:

Provision 1. The nurse practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and unique attributes of every person.

Provision 2. The nurse's primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, community, or population.

Provision 3. The nurse promotes, advocates for, and protects the rights, health, and safety of the patient.

Provision 4. The nurse has authority, accountability, and responsibility for nursing practice; makes decisions; and takes action consistent with the obligation to promote health and to provide optimal care.

Provision 5. The nurse owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to promote health and safety, preserve wholeness of character and integrity, maintain competence, and continue personal and professional growth.

Provision 6. The nurse, through individual and collective effort, establishes, maintains, and improves the ethical environment of the work setting and conditions of employment that are conducive to safe, quality health care.

Provision 7. The nurse, in all roles and settings, advances the profession through research and scholarly inquiry, professional standards development, and the generation of both nursing and health policy.

Provision 8. The nurse collaborates with other health professionals and the public to protect human rights, promote health diplomacy, and reduce health disparities.

Provision 9. The profession of nursing, collectively through its professional organizations, must articulate nursing values, maintain the integrity of the profession, and integrate principles of social justice into nursing and health policy.

Specialty Practice in Nursing

The continuation of the profession depends on:

The education of nurses,

Appropriate organization of nursing services,

Continued expansion of nursing knowledge, and

the development and adoption of policies.

Nursing first expanded into public health interventions on behalf of at-risk communities and vulnerable populations.

In 1893, Lillian Wald pioneered public health nursing at the Henry Street Settlement House in New York City.

In 1899, Teacher's College at Columbia University offered the first university program for graduate nurses to specialize in public health nursing.