

Code of Ethics

Nova Scotia College of Dietitians and Nutritionists

The Nova Scotia College of Dietitians and Nutritionists (NSCDN) is the regulatory body for the profession of dietetics in Nova Scotia. In the public interest, the NSCDN regulates dietitians and nutritionists to practice in a safe, ethical and competent manner.

Ethical Expectations

Ethical practice is an integral part of the professional commitment dietitians make to the health and well-being of their clients. The Code of Ethics for Dietitians in Nova Scotia is a statement of values, behaviours, and responsibilities that guide interactions and fair decision-making in any professional situation and work environment.

The Code of Ethics was developed collaboratively and through partner consultation by the Nova Scotia College of Dietitians and Nutritionists, the Saskatchewan College of Dietitians, the College of Dietitians of British Columbia, the College of Dietitians of Manitoba, the College of Dietitians of Newfoundland and Labrador and the New Brunswick Dietitians Association, to articulate the following five (5) ethical standards.

As registrants of a self-regulated profession, all dietitians in Nova Scotia are bound to the Code of Ethics as part of a regulatory process that services and protects the public. In the event of any concerns or allegations of a breach, the NSCDN will investigate allegations of a breach of the Code.

The Code of Ethics is not a stand-alone document and should be applied with other relevant legislation, regulations, standards, policies, and guidelines. At times, ethical standards may overlap with NSCDN-specific regulations, bylaws, and standards, as requirements may be both legal and ethical. Definitions are found at the end of this document and may be province specific. Some definitions may have a narrower interpretation in other regulatory policy documents that are specific to the nutrition care relationship between a dietitian and an individual client. The Code of Ethics is a living document that is subject to change from time to time, as dietetic practice and health professional regulations evolve.

Ethical Standards

A dietitian will practice ethically by ensuring that they:

1. Provide Services in the Best Interest of Clients

- a. Maintain objectivity when exercising professional judgement.
- b. Present information in a way that is easy to understand and is adapted to the client's context.
- c. Obtain informed consent from a client for services, including any changes, refusal and/or withdrawal of services.
 - i. Take all reasonable steps to ensure client consent is not given under conditions of intimidation or undue pressure.
 - ii. If a client lacks capacity, obtain consent for planned services from a substitute decision maker.
 - iii. Encourage the substitute decision maker to honour the client's previously expressed wishes, or when unknown, act in the client's best interest.
- d. Respect the client's right to refuse treatment and/or obtain a second opinion.
- e. Discuss choices with, and support clients to make decisions for services.
- f. Use an evidence-based and evidence-informed approach to meet client needs.
- g. Respect and maintain client privacy and confidentiality.

- i. Refer to the NSCDN Standards of Practice.
- ii. Confidential client information should only be disclosed:
 - with client consent,
 - when the failure to disclose confidential information would cause imminent and significant harm to the health or safety of any person or others, or
 - in accordance with law.
- h. Advocate for clients, families, and other caregivers when appropriate.
 - i. Provide client-centred care that recognizes cultural safety and humility, respects diversity, and is fair and inclusive.
 - ii. Explore solutions and use all reasonable resources to supply quality services which meet the needs of both client and employer.
- i. Supply services until care is no longer needed, the client requests discontinuation, or care is transferred to another dietitian or health professional.
- j. Be sensitive to your position of power as a dietitian.

2. Communicate Effectively

- a. Communicate in a civil, respectful, and truthful manner.
- b. Apply professional judgment to review Artificial Intelligence (AI) output. Ensure data input and information generated is consistent with obligations related to privacy, equity, diversity and inclusion and ensure that the information provided is both accurate and reflects current and up to date dietetic practice.
- c. Adhere to the Dietitians Act, NSCDN standards and policies regarding client records, advertising and media.
- d. Do not make false, fraudulent, misleading, deceptive, or derogatory statements or claims.
- e. Do not verbally, emotionally, or sexually harass any person in any communication.
- f. Manage interpersonal conflict appropriately.

3. Collaborate Effectively

- a. Collaborate with clients, interprofessional colleagues, workplace leaders, client's family, caregiver, guardian, or substitute decision maker to provide quality services.
- b. Recognize and respect other health professionals' scope of practice.
- c. Collaborate with others in the development and revision of policies to support ethical and quality healthcare services, implement and monitor the impact of these initiatives.
- d. Support learning within the profession when there are opportunities to teach students and mentor colleagues.

4. Practice Safely and Competently

- a. Recognize and practice within the limits of individual scope of practice and the scope of practice of the profession.
 - i. Act as a credible and reliable source of evidence-based food and nutrition information
 - ii. Provide safe, client-centered services using knowledge, skills, judgment, and professional attitude.

- iii. Refer to members of the interprofessional team if a needed service is beyond the dietitian's skill, knowledge, and the dietetic scope of practice.
- b. Reflect on current practice to determine knowledge, skills, and ability development needed to ensure safe, competent, and ethical practice.
- c. Uphold professional boundaries.
 - i. Where possible, refer client(s) to another dietitian when a relationship exists or could be perceived to exist that would compromise a dietitian's objective decisions and actions toward the client(s).
 - ii. If professional boundaries cannot be kept due to geographical, workforce, and/or resource limitations:
 - Identify, disclose, document, and mitigate risks of boundary crossings.
 - Re-establish boundaries as soon as reasonably possible.
 - iii. Balance the ability to remain objective with compassion regarding issues of sensitivity and/or personal trauma that may arise during treatment.
- d. Be risk aware. Identify any potential type of harm, mitigate the risk of harm, and apply preventative measures when practicing dietetics.
- e. Recognize and engage in trauma-informed practice ([Trauma-informed Approaches](#)).

5. Be Honest and Responsible

- a. Do not act in a way that negatively affects the reputation of the profession.
- b. Recognize and resolve ethical situations by applying critical thinking skills in problem solving and decision making.
 - i. Identify and address conflicts of interest. Disclose actual or potential conflicts of interest that arise in professional roles and relationships and resolve them in the interest of the needs and concerns of the client.
 - ii. Refrain from accepting gifts or services, which may influence or give the appearance of influencing professional judgement.
- c. Assume responsibility for services provided by those under your supervision.
- d. Maintain transparent, accurate, and truthful financial records.
 - i. Inform clients of all fees and methods of payment prior to delivering services.
 - ii. Allow your name and registration number to be used for the purpose of verifying professional services rendered only if you provided or supervised the provision of those services.
- e. Be accountable for your actions when practicing dietetics.
 - i. Disclose to the client for any error which causes or has potential to cause harm or distress to a client.
 - ii. Propose solutions, alternatives, or referral, as appropriate.
 - iii. Maintain fitness to practise and withdraw from practice when circumstances arise that may impair reasonable skill or judgment or may endanger the health or safety of clients.
- f. Do not discriminate on the basis of a person's age, race, colour, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability or mental disability, origin, family status, marital status, political belief or affiliation, source of income, or any other protected ground within the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.

- g. Do not enter into agreements, assignments, or contracts that require you to breach the NSCDN Code of Ethics or Standards of Practice.
- h. Fulfil reporting obligations.
 - i. Report to the appropriate supervisor or NSCDN Registrar if you have reasonable grounds to believe that another registrant:
 - (i) has engaged in professional misconduct, incompetence or conduct unbecoming the profession,
 - (ii) is incapacitated, or
 - (iii) is practising in a manner that otherwise constitutes a danger to the public.
 - ii. Report to the appropriate supervisor or regulator of another health profession if you have reasonable grounds to believe that a member of that health profession
 - (i) has engaged in professional misconduct, incompetence or conduct unbecoming the profession,
 - (ii) is incapacitated, or
 - (iii) is practising in a manner that otherwise constitutes a danger to the public.
 - iii. Report incidents as per employer policy.
- i. Cooperate with any regulatory body, any committee of a regulatory body with respect to any regulatory process or requirements under applicable Acts, regulations and by-laws.
- j. Present your professional qualifications and credentials accurately.
- k. Maintain integrity in all professional interactions.

Definitions

Advertisement: Any publication or communication in any medium with any client, prospective client or the public generally in the nature of an advertisement, promotional activity or material, a listing in a directory, a public appearance or any other means by which professional services or products are promoted or marketed, including contact with a prospective client initiated by or under the discretion of a registrant.

Client: refers to an individual, family, substitute decision-maker, team members, group, population, agency, government, employer, employee, business, organization, or community, who is the direct or indirect recipient of the dietitian's skill and knowledge.

Conflict of interest: When a dietitian's personal, business, commercial, political, academic, or financial interests, or the interests of the dietitian's family or friends, interfere with the dietitian's professional responsibilities or a client's best interests.

A conflict of interest may exist whether or not the competing interest actually influences a dietitian. The conflict of interest may affect dietitians in any practice setting. A conflict of interest can be actual, potential, or perceived, and promotes (or is perceived to be promoting) a competing interest; instead, the results of which may or may not lead to negative client outcomes and service delivery.

Cultural Safety: An outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent to health care relationships. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe and supported to access, receive, and make informed decisions about their health care.

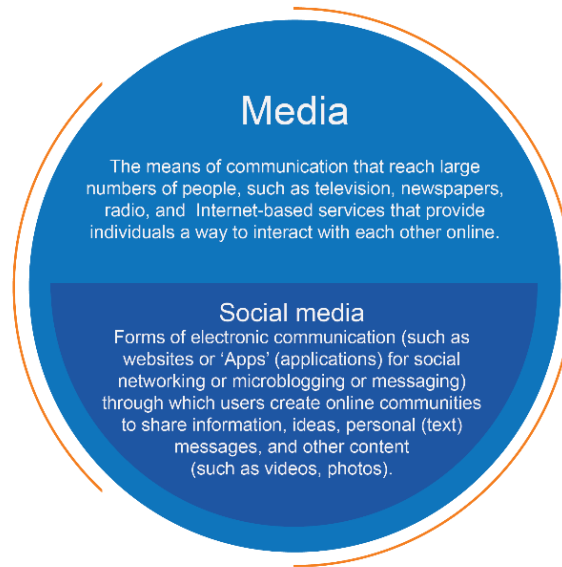
Cultural Humility: A process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another's experience.

Evidence-based dietetic practice involves evaluating the validity, applicability, and importance of research and subsequently integrating the most reliable and available research evidence with dietetic expertise and client values into the nutrition care process.

Evidence-informed dietetic practice involves balancing the evidence, data, and professional judgment with client interests, preferences, context, risks related to the client's care, needs for best care, and available resources in the decision-making process.

Risk: In dietetics, a risk can be defined as a situation or action that involves exposure to danger, physical or mental harm (including financial), or loss to a client and/or to the dietitian.

Media: The means of communication that reach large numbers of people (the public), such as television, newspapers, radio, flyers and brochures, and Internet-based services that provide individuals a way to interact with each other online. Media includes social media, which encompasses a wide variety of web-based platforms, applications, and text messages.



Substitute Decision Maker: A person who helps make or makes decisions on behalf of another adult, when the adult is unable to make them.

Trauma-informed practice: a universal and systemic approach to service provision. It is based on an understanding of the prevalence of many forms of violence and trauma among children and adults – developmental, historical, simple/complex, weather-related, war-related, gender-based – and the wide range of adaptations people make to cope. TIP can be implemented in any service setting.

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