



The New AHEAD Code of Ethics: Guidance for Professional Behavior and Decision Making

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AHEAD Webinar

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Code of Ethics Development Team

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Agenda

- Background
- What is a Professional Code of Ethics?
- Importance of a Professional Code of Ethics
- The Process of Revising and Updating the Code
- Notable Features of the Revised Code
- Introducing the New AHEAD Code of Ethics
- Thoughts About Use
- Q&A

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Background

- The foundational documents of AHEAD were published in 1997.
- Have not been revised or updated since.
- Summer 2018 – Decision made to update the *AHEAD Professional Standards and Program Standards*.
- Fall 2020 – Decision made to update the *AHEAD Code of Ethics*.
- The new *AHEAD Code of Ethics* was approved and adopted in July 2021.
- The new *AHEAD Code of Ethics* was released to the AHEAD membership in September 2021.

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What is a Professional Code of Ethics?

A set of principles designed to help a profession:

- Govern its decision-making
- Distinguish right from wrong
- Outline the mission and values
- Guide approaches to problems
- Outline standards to which employees are held

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Importance of a Professional Code of Ethics

Designed to:

- Ensure members are behaving in a manner that is socially acceptable and respectful of one another.
- Establish the rules and expectations for behavior.
- Serve as a statement of a profession’s values and commitments.

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The Process of Revising and Updating the Code

Phase 1

- Evaluate the existing AHEAD Code of Ethics written by Lynda Price in 1997.
- Review professional codes of ethics from related professional associations reviewed for organizational structure and new ideas for principles.

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The Process of Revising and Updating the Code

Phase 1 (cont.)

- New principles based on this research were written and added to a working version of the *AHEAD Code of Ethics*.
- Themes were identified and principles were organized accordingly.

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The Process of Revising and Updating the Code

Phase 2

- A survey was developed that asked participants to:
 - Review and comment on each theme and principle,
 - Offer suggestions for revisions,
 - Determine appropriateness of each principle under theme,
 - Write any new principles, and
 - Note any missing themes.

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The Process of Revising and Updating the Code

Phase 2 (cont.)

- 10 participants with varying demographic backgrounds, types of institutions, and leadership positions within the field participated.
- Data reviewed from the survey and extensive revision of the working Code was undertaken.
- Determined additional representation by 2-year institutions, small disability resource offices, and individuals identifying as men should be sought.

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The Process of Revising and Updating the Code

Phase 2 (cont.)

- Determined that insight from an expert in disability and social justice should be sought to ensure that this important perspective was clearly reflected in the new *AHEAD Code of Ethics*.

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The Process of Revising and Updating the Code

Phase 3

- 6 semi-structured interviews were conducted with AHEAD members with identified insights of need.

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The Process of Revising and Updating the Code

Phase 3 (cont.)

- Participants were asked to:
 - Review themes and principles,
 - Comment on whether they believed that they should be included with a revised Code and why,
 - Provide suggestions for revising themes or principles, (d) indicate whether principles listed under themes were appropriate, and
 - Discuss any themes or principles that they believed were missing.

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The Process of Revising and Updating the Code

Phase 3 (cont.)

- Transcripts were reviewed, several items were revised, and some additional items were included.
- Revisions in this phase included rephrasing of some principles and expanding the focus on issues of social justice.

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Notable Features of the Revised Code

- Expanded and revised principles.
- Expanded scope of the *AHEAD Code of Ethics* to cover all members of the Association and not just disability resource professionals.
- Emphasized social justice.

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Introducing the New AHEAD Code of Ethics

Equity and Inclusion

- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals act as leaders and advocates for equitable and inclusive policies, procedures, and systems in all facets of campus and community life.
- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals facilitate and advocate for the highest levels of access, inclusion, and equity for all disabled people.
- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals strive to utilize and facilitate high quality and effective processes, procedures, and services to promote equity and inclusion for disabled people within disability resources offices and the institution.
- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals recognize and value the importance of collaborating with the campus and community to promote access, equity, and inclusion.

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Respect and Acknowledgement

- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals act in ways that acknowledge, consider, and respect disabled peoples' voices, lived experiences, and complex intersectional identities.
- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals strive to respect the dignity, worth, and self-determination of all people.
- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals take steps to develop awareness of their potential biases, the boundaries of their competence, and the limitations of their experience to ensure that they do not lead to or condone unjust practices.
- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals act in ways that respect and acknowledge diversity within higher education and work to create inclusive, equitable, and socially just environments for all.
- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals act in ways that respect and acknowledge the professional expertise of campus and community colleagues, while recognizing that professionals may have differing opinions.

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Professional Competence

- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals work to achieve and maintain the highest levels of competence and integrity in their work to mitigate barriers to disabled people with various intersecting identities.
- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals use objective professional judgment in making decisions that impact equitable access and inclusion.
- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals continually participate in professional activities and educational opportunities to promote effective disability advocacy, social justice, resources, and services.
- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals who engage in scholarly activity contribute to the knowledge base of the profession in ways that respect participants, are accessible, and adhere to standards of federal, institutional, and local research ethics.
- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals use a social justice perspective to work collaboratively with students and relevant campus and community stakeholders to support the profession.

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Laws and Standards of Practice

- Postsecondary disability resource professionals support and clarify applicable local and federal laws to foster equity for disabled people.
- Postsecondary disability resource professionals value and act in ways that respect the confidential nature of records and information about disabled individuals as outlined by relevant federal and local laws.
- Postsecondary disability resource and affiliated professionals value and carry out their responsibilities in accordance with the AHEAD Professional Standards and Program Standards. When certified, licensed, or affiliated with other professions or organizations, they value and comply with those professional guidelines as appropriate.

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Thoughts About Use

- Can be shared with senior administrators to highlight the values of our profession.
- Can be shared with new and prospective professionals to articulate the values of our profession.
- With Professional Competencies, it can be used as a framework for performance evaluations.
- With revised *AHEAD Program Standards* and *Professional Competencies* can guide professional development and staff training.
- With other foundational documents, can guide emerging professional training programs.

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