



CODE OF CONDUCT

Enacted on the 1st of July 2016

Audiology Australia (AudA)
Australian College of Audiology (ACAud)
Hearing Aid Audiometrist Society of Australia (HAASA)

Preamble

Audiology Australia (AudA), the Australian College of Audiology (ACAud) and the Hearing Aid Audiometrist Society of Australia (HAASA) are the three Practitioner Professional Bodies (PPBs) representing audiologists and/or audiometrists in Australia. This Code of Conduct sets the fundamental standards of behaviour and responsibilities that members of these three PPBs (hereafter referred to as 'members') must abide to.

This Code of Conduct is a collaborative document developed by the three PPBs. It is based on the previous Codes of Conduct and Ethics of these organisations and the National Code of Conduct for Health Care Workers¹.

Every individual who is a member of Audiology Australia, ACAud or HAASA is subject to this Code of Conduct and agrees to abide to it when delivering hearing services within their scope of practice.

Any action by a member that is seen to violate this Code of Conduct may be subject to their professional body's process for dealing with complaints about the ethical behaviour or the conduct of members. The relevant PPB(s) should be contacted for more information regarding this Code of Conduct or to make a complaint:

Audiology Australia- PO Box 504, Brentford Square, VIC 3131, PH: 03 9877 2727,
E: info@audiology.asn.au, F: 03 9877 0645

Australian College of Audiology (ACAud)- Suite 7, Level 4, 201 Wickham Terrace, Spring Hill, QLD 4000, PH: 07 3839 1622, M: 0429 357 375, E: acaud@acaud.org, F: 07 3839 1822

Hearing Aid Audiometrist Society of Australia (HAASA)- PO Box 283, Blacktown, NSW 2148, PH: 02 9671 4445, E: haasa@haasa.org.au, F: 02 9671 5938

This Code of Conduct sets the overarching standards and requirements that members must abide to. For more information on how these standards can be met in practice, members should refer to relevant government guidelines and legislation, as well as the following documents published by the three PPBs:

- Audiology Australia's Professional Practice Standards (July 2013)
- Australian College of Audiology, By-Law 97-5 Professional Competency Standards for Hearing Care Professionals in Australia (August 2015)
- Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare –Audiology Australia Abridged Version (2010)
- Hearing Aid Audiometrist Society of Australia, Rules- Standards of Practice (November 2008)

¹ Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council. Final Report- A National Code of Conduct for health care workers. COAG Health Council; 2015.

Definitions

Health care workers- “A person who provides a health service”².

Health complaints entity- “Has the same meaning as in section 5 of the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Victoria) Act 2009*, that is, an entity that is established by or under an Act of a participating jurisdiction and whose functions include conciliating, investigating and resolving complaints made against health service providers and investigating failures in the health system”².

Health service- “Is defined in each state and territory health complaints statute and has different meaning depending on the statute”².

Hearing services- Are provided by a member and may include:

- assessment of hearing loss,
- hearing device fitting,
- the assessment of balance disorders,
- hearing rehabilitation, support and education, and
- hearing loss prevention.

Member- A member of Audiology Australia, the Australian College of Audiology (ACAud) or the Hearing Aid Audiometrist Society of Australia (HAASA).

Practitioner Professional Body (PPB)- An overarching term encompassing the three practitioner professional bodies representing audiologists and/or audiometrists in Australia, namely: Audiology Australia (AudA), the Australian College of Audiology (ACAud) or the Hearing Aid Audiometrist Society of Australia (HAASA). These organisations:

- promote and advance the audiometry and/or audiology professions,
- set minimum qualification requirements and professional standards for clinical practice, and
- maintain a program of continuing professional development.

Registered health practitioner- A person who provides health services and who is subject to the scheme for registration under that *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law*.

Scope of practice- The area or areas of members’ professions in which they have the knowledge, skills and experience to practice lawfully, safely and effectively, in a way that meets professional standards and does not pose any danger to the public or to themselves.

² Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council. Final Report- A National Code of Conduct for health care workers. COAG Health Council; 2015.

Standard 1- Members must provide hearing services in a safe and ethical manner

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must provide hearing services in a safe and ethical manner, which involves:
 - a. Holding the client's welfare and needs paramount.
 - b. Protecting client safety and limiting harm.
 - c. Acting with fairness, honesty and integrity.
2. Without limiting subclause 1, members must comply with the following:
 - a. Members must ensure they have a full understanding of, and adhere to, this Code of Conduct and cooperate fully with any review of their conduct by their PPB(s).
 - b. Members must obtain the competencies required to deliver the hearing services they offer and maintain these competencies through continuing education and professional development. This includes meeting the membership requirements of their PPB(s) as regards education and continuing professional development.
 - c. Members must not make claims to cure hearing loss and associated disorders and must only provide hearing services that serve the needs of the client.
 - d. Members must ensure that all equipment used in the provision of hearing services is maintained. The testing, location, equipment and all its calibration facilities must conform to Australian Standards.
 - e. Members must ensure that any therapeutic materials they supply are of good quality and fit for purpose, namely to improve the communication ability of the client. Devices must conform with the appropriate standards specified by the Australian Standards or other relevant authority.
 - f. Members must be aware of, and only engage in, those aspects of their profession that are within their scope of practice.
 - g. Members must recognise the limitations of the hearing services they can provide and refer clients to other competent health service providers where clinically indicated.
 - h. Members must recommend that additional opinions and services be sought where clinically indicated.
 - i. Members must assist a client to find other appropriate health care services, if required and practicable. A particular practitioner may be recommended, but it must be made clear that the client may attend a practitioner of his or her own choice.
 - j. Members must encourage the client to inform his or her treating medical practitioner (if any) of the hearing services being provided.
 - k. Members must encourage the client to discuss the hearing services being provided and any potential interactions with other medications or treatments with their medical and/or health care practitioner(s).
 - l. Members must provide hearing services in a respectful manner and not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, beliefs, sexual preference, cultural identity, financial circumstances, health status or disability. This includes the provision of hearing services that are culturally sensitive to the needs of the client.

Standard 2- Members must obtain consent prior to delivering a hearing service

Member Responsibilities

1. Prior to delivering a hearing service, members must ensure that consent appropriate to the hearing service has been obtained and that the nature of the consent complies with the laws of the jurisdiction.

Standard 3- Members must promote the client's right to participate in decisions that affect their hearing health

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must accept the right of their clients to make informed choices in relation to their hearing health, which involves:
 - a. Promoting the client's ability to make informed choices in relation to their hearing health by providing sufficient, accurate and up-to-date information in terms which the client can understand.
 - b. Respecting a client's right to refuse a hearing service, seek a second opinion and/or to terminate a hearing service, without prejudice.
 - c. When more than one hearing service may meet the client's needs, providing information to the client which clearly outlines the differences in expected outcomes.
 - d. When evidence is available, making evidence-based decisions as to which hearing service best fits the client's needs. This involves considering the best available evidence, the client's needs and wishes, professional judgement and clinical expertise during the decision making process and communicating this process to the client.
2. Members must not attempt to dissuade a client from seeking or continuing medical treatment.

Standard 4- Members must not misinform their clients as to their scope of practice, qualifications and competencies

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must not engage in any form of misinformation or misrepresentation in relation to the:
 - a. Hearing services or devices they provide.
 - b. Qualifications, industry experience, training or professional affiliations they have.
2. Without limiting subclause 1:
 - a. Members must not use their possession of a particular qualification to mislead or deceive clients as to their competence in a field of practice or ability to provide services.
 - b. Members must provide truthful information as to their qualifications, industry experience, training and professional affiliations.
 - c. Members must not make claims to clients, either directly or indirectly via advertising or promotional materials, about the efficacy of hearing services they provide if those claims cannot be substantiated.

Standard 5- Members must not financially exploit clients

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must not financially exploit their clients.
2. Members must make recommendations to clients based on clinical assessment and the client's needs, not on the basis of financial gain on the part of the member.
3. Without limiting subclauses 1 and 2:
 - a. Members must only provide services appropriate to clients' hearing needs.
 - b. Members must not accept or offer financial inducements or gifts as part of client referral arrangements with other health care workers.
 - c. Members must offer their clients information regarding the likely cost of the hearing services before providing these services or entering into any contract.
 - d. When more than one hearing service may meet the client's needs, members must provide information to the client about the costs of each hearing service option.
 - e. Members must not ask clients to give, lend or bequeath money or gifts that will benefit the member directly or indirectly.

Standard 6- Members must interact professionally and ethically with the public, other professionals and agencies

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must communicate and cooperate with members of their own profession, other health service providers, and relevant agencies in order to promote the best interests of their clients.
2. Members must not misrepresent their qualifications, industry experience, training and professional affiliations in their interaction with the public, other professionals and agencies. This includes:
 - a. Only using titles that honestly and accurately represent their credentials.
3. Members must promote public understanding of the profession, which includes:
 - a. Providing accurate information regarding the nature and management of hearing impairments.
 - b. Adhering to state, territory and federal legislative requirements regarding advertising materials.
 - c. Not making any false, misleading or deceptive claims in communications with the public, including advertising materials.
4. Members shall not engage in dishonesty, misrepresentation or any form of conduct that adversely reflects on their profession or other members' suitability to provide hearing services.
5. Members shall respect, encourage, support and provide fair treatment and working conditions to students, interns, co-workers and employees.

Standard 7- Members must report concerns about the conduct of other health care workers

Member Responsibilities

1. Members who, in the course of providing hearing services, form the reasonable belief that another health care worker has placed or is placing clients at serious risk of harm must refer the matter to the relevant state or territory complaints entity.
2. Without limiting subclause 1, members who form the reasonable belief that another member of Audiology Australia, the Australian College of Audiology (ACAud) or the Hearing Aid Audiometrist Society of Australia (HAASA) is in breach of this Code of Conduct must inform the appropriate PPB(s) and maintain confidentiality at all times.

Standard 8- Members must take appropriate action in response to adverse events

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must take appropriate and timely measures to minimise harm to clients when an adverse event occurs in the course of providing a hearing service.
2. Without limiting subclause 1, members must:
 - a. Ensure that appropriate first aid is available to deal with any adverse event.
 - b. Obtain appropriate emergency assistance in the event of any serious adverse event.
 - c. Promptly disclose the adverse event to the client and take appropriate remedial steps to reduce the risk of recurrence.
 - d. Ensure that the adverse event is appropriately documented.
 - e. Report the adverse event to the relevant authority, where appropriate.

Standard 9- Members must adopt standard precautions for infection control

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must adopt standard precautions for the control of infection in the course of providing hearing services as according to the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) *Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare*.
2. Without limiting subclause 1, members who carry out skin penetration or other invasive procedures must comply with the relevant state or territory law under which such procedures are regulated.

Standard 10- Members must take appropriate measures to avoid placing clients at risk if diagnosed with an infectious medical condition

Member Responsibilities

1. Members who have been diagnosed with a medical condition that can be passed on to clients must ensure that they practice in a manner that does not put clients at risk.
2. Without limiting subclause 1, members who have been diagnosed with a medical condition that can be passed on to clients must take and follow advice from a suitably qualified registered health practitioner on the necessary steps to be taken to modify their practice to avoid the possibility of transmitting that condition to clients.

Standard 11- Members must not provide hearing services under the influence of alcohol or unlawful substances

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must not provide hearing services to clients while under the influence of alcohol or unlawful substances.
2. Members who are taking prescribed medication must obtain advice from the prescribing health practitioner or dispensing pharmacist on the impact of the medication on their ability to practise and must refrain from providing hearing services to clients in circumstances where their capacity may be impaired.

Standard 12- Members must not provide hearing services if they suffer from a physical or mental impairment that is likely to place clients at risk of harm

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must not provide hearing services to clients while suffering from a physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder (including an addiction to alcohol or a drug, whether or not prescribed) that places or is likely to place clients at risk of harm.
2. Without limiting subclause 1, if members have a mental or physical impairment that could place clients at risk, members must seek advice from a suitable qualified health practitioner to determine whether, and in what ways, they should modify their practice, including stopping practice if necessary.

Standard 13- Members must not engage in sexual misconduct or other inappropriate intimate behaviour with a client

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must be aware of and carefully consider the appropriateness of providing care to people they have a close personal relationship with (e.g. friends, work colleagues or family members) as this may result in a lack of objectivity, possible discontinuity of care, and other risks to the client and member. This involves, but is not limited to:
 - a. Not engaging in inappropriate behaviour of a sexual nature with a client.
 - b. Not engaging in other inappropriate close personal, physical or emotional relationships with a client.
 - c. Ensuring that a reasonable period of time has elapsed since the conclusion of the therapeutic relationship before engaging in a sexual relationship with a client.

Standard 14- Members must comply with all relevant laws and regulations

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must comply with all relevant federal and state or territory laws and regulations.
2. Without limiting subclause 1, members must comply with the relevant privacy laws that apply to clients' health information, including the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the relevant state or territory legislation.

Standard 15- Members must adhere to appropriate documentation standards

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must maintain accurate, legible and up-to-date clinical records for each client consultation and ensure that these are held securely and not subject to unauthorised access.
2. Members must retain clinical records for a period of time as determined by relevant legal and legislative requirements.
3. Reports or documents signed or published by members in their professional capacity must be accurate in all details. Fact and expression must be clearly differentiated.
4. Members must take necessary steps to facilitate clients' access to information contained in their clinical records if requested.
5. Members must facilitate the transfer of a client's clinical information in a timely manner when requested to do so by the client or their legal representative.

Standard 16- Members must be covered by appropriate indemnity insurance

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must ensure that appropriate indemnity insurance arrangements are in place in relation to their scope of practice.

Standard 17- Members must take full responsibility for people under their supervision

Member Responsibilities

1. Members shall prohibit anyone under their supervision from engaging in any practice that violates this Code of Conduct.
2. Members may employ non-member staff to conduct certain tests or procedures provided they are competent to carry out those duties and are under the immediate and personal supervision of the member. Under these circumstances members maintain full responsibility for the client's welfare.
3. Members who supervise students and interns shall provide appropriate supervision in accordance with clinical internship protocols.

Standard 18- Members must display the summary of the code of conduct and inform clients of how they can make a complaint

Member Responsibilities

1. Members must display or make available a copy of the summary of the Code of Conduct (available for downloading and printing on the PPBs' websites) at all premises where they deliver hearing services.
2. Members must provide information regarding how a client can make a complaint to their PPB and the relevant state or territory complaints entity. Any complaints made must be managed and/or referred judiciously.
3. Copies of the summary of the Code of Conduct (available for downloading and printing on the PPBs' websites) must be displayed or made available in a manner that makes them easily accessible to clients.
4. If further information on this Code of Conduct is requested by clients, members must provide the full version of the Code of Conduct and/or refer the client to their PPB.

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