

# The Australian Physiotherapy Association Code of Conduct



AUSTRALIAN  
PHYSIOTHERAPY  
ASSOCIATION

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Australian Physiotherapy Association**

The Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA) is the peak national member organisation for physiotherapists in Australia. The APA brings together physiotherapists, physiotherapy students and physiotherapy assistants for the advancement of the profession and for consumers.

### **The purpose of the APA code of conduct**

The APA code of conduct sets out the principles, values, and the standards of behaviour expected from APA members in order to maintain confidence in the behaviour of members. The APA code acknowledges the moral responsibility of physiotherapists to clients, families, colleagues and communities they work with and the healthcare system they work within. All members must be aware of the expected standards of their conduct.

This code outlines the circumstances under which disciplinary action may be taken against members and what those actions may comprise.

### **Guidance and support material**

The code's guidance and support materials are a growing resource. The APA's code of conduct toolkit will help APA members interpret and uphold the code's principles and values in a range of circumstances that are relevant to contemporary physiotherapy practice.

### **Application**

This code of conduct applies to all members of the APA. A member means a member of the Association pursuant to clause 7 of the APA Constitution.

# OUR PRINCIPLES, VALUES, CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOUR

The principles and values of the APA code state what we believe and hold dear as a profession, and how we do things as practitioners, members and volunteers with the APA. The principles support a values-based framework that guides and strengthens our capability to make ethical decisions and provide safe, quality care.

These principles and values apply across a variety of settings, in complex and changing environments to support safe, competent, accountable and caring practice, and to maintain the good standing of the physiotherapy profession.

In many regards, the APA code of conduct mirrors the Physiotherapy Board of Australia's code of conduct and members will value considering both codes concurrently.

## Our principles

We believe that health is a fundamental human right. We promote this by respecting and enabling people to achieve their health needs, and by promoting healthcare that is accessible and sustainable now and into the future for everyone in our communities.

### **The APA code of conduct is based on four ethical principles:**

#### *Respect the rights and autonomy of the individual*

We take into account another person's views, choices, and actions that are based on that person's values, beliefs and culture. We assess a person's capacity to think and act autonomously, and support them to exercise their rights. We demonstrate respect for people who cannot decide or act autonomously, and for those whose choices may cause harm.

#### *Cause no harm*

We act in the best interests of our clients and communities to avoid or minimise harm. We identify the causes and effects of harms, whether intentional or unintentional. We find out how to prevent, manage and mitigate harms, and minimise them once they have been identified.

#### *Advance the common good*

We serve the interests of the whole community by protecting and promoting health to improve the wellbeing of communities and act based not only on what is good for the individual, but also for communities and the wider society.

#### *Act fairly*

We address social injustice and inequity by addressing the social, economic, demographic, or geographic drivers that affect people's health.

# OUR VALUES

## Respect

**We recognise and respect the rights, needs, dignity and diversity of all individuals.**

We demonstrate that we understand and believe in the equality of all clients and their family and carers, and of colleagues and others in the workplace. We are courteous and civil to all others, independent of personal characteristics. Our care is client and family-centred. We act with humility and show empathy and care by taking into account an individual's values, choices and needs, as well as their situation, perspective, and feelings.

## Build trust

**We ensure the trust placed in us is justified.**

We earn the trust of others by demonstrating high-level knowledge and skills in our care and by being accountable for our actions. We understand, practice and promote the principles and values of the APA code of conduct. We comply with the intent and spirit of laws, regulations and other publications governing physiotherapy in Australia as well as those that govern membership of the Australian Physiotherapy Association.

## Collaborate

**We collaborate with consumers and colleagues to promote safe, quality care.**

We create and encourage a culture where open and honest communication is encouraged and safe. We listen and ensure understanding. We promote environments that are characterised by trust and respect. We are courteous and civil with other healthcare providers, regulators, administrators, communities, and with consumers, their families and their carers. We work with common purpose and intent. We share planning and decision-making, solve problems, set goals and assume responsibility. We provide accurate, timely, appropriate and clear information, providing the necessary feedback and follow-up.

## Continuously improve

**We continuously improve our practice.**

We monitor, evaluate, reflect on, and adapt our practice to improve the safety and quality of care as well as the welfare of consumers and ourselves. We understand, apply and promote the concepts of a culture of quality to our area of practice and healthcare setting.

## Use healthcare resources wisely

**We promote the sustainable use of healthcare services.**

We are socially responsible corporate citizens. We ensure that safe, quality healthcare is available now and into the future for all Australians by using healthcare resources appropriately, and by promoting the efficient and responsible use of resources.

# CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOUR

Member conduct is integral to the reputation of the APA and its members. The APA expects the highest standards from its members, consistent with the professionalism and nature of the APA. This section describes the standards of conduct and behaviours expected of members, and the treatment of non-compliance.

## Conduct

Members must:

- a. act in the APA's best interests;
- b. act with a high degree of professionalism, integrity, and mutual respect;
- c. refrain from engaging in any conduct which might damage the APAs reputation;
- d. refrain from bullying, harassment or other inappropriate behaviours towards another member or staff;
- e. use their position at the APA and the APA's resources in a responsible manner;
- f. fully co-operate with any investigation by the Board or the National Professional Standards Panel into any breach of this code;
- g. comply with any applicable APA policies; and
- h. remain free of any charges, alleged conduct, or action bringing yourself, the Association, its members, or the physiotherapy profession into disrepute.

## Behaviour

Members must:

- a. act honestly;
- b. interact with other members and staff in a constructive manner;
- c. behave professionally towards other members, stakeholders, and staff;
- d. treat people fairly, with dignity, courtesy, and respect, objectively, and free from bullying, harassment, or other inappropriate behaviour; and
- e. not ignore actual or perceived behaviour or conduct that may be in breach of this code but to act in good faith to overtly identify and report any such behaviour.

# DISCIPLINARY ACTION

A failure to adhere to the standards in this code may have consequences for a member.

If a member engages in misconduct, disciplinary action under Regulation 33 – Management of complaints about Members - of the National Professional Standards Panel Regulations may commence.

The Board may at its sole discretion, suspend the membership of any member pending a decision by the Board if they are in breach of the Constitution or this code of conduct, or bring the association, its members, or the physiotherapy profession into disrepute.