CODE OF ETHICS FOR THE
AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION/
NATIONAL CENTER FOR ASSISTED LIVING

PREAMBLE

The American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living’s
(AHCA/NCAL) Code of Ethics is concerned not only with what is right and what is good,
but also with the association’s obligation to others. The purpose of this Code is to
contribute to a culture of ethical behavior in the long term care field. It is intended for
AHCA/NCAL as an organization. However, it is also intended to serve as a model for
AHCA/NCAL’s affiliates and their facility members.

This Code articulates a set of values and behaviors that AHCA/NCAL believes is an
appropriate standard of conduct for the organization and its leadership. AHCA/NCAL
believes it should be held accountable to its affiliates, their members, and the general
public. This Code provides a guide for the way business should be conducted by
AHCA/NCAL and, by extension, its state affiliates and their member facilities.

This Code is not a tool of certification, nor does it contain sanctions to be imposed for not
meeting the standards contained in the Code. Its primary sanction lies in the
organizational and personal consciences of the Association, its state affiliates and their
individual members.

In addition, this Code is an educational tool, designed to inspire individuals to act in a way
that assures good care, sound community relationships and helps establish and reinforce
public confidence in the entire long term care field.

AHCA/NCAL believes that its affiliates and their members have a right to expect the
Code’s ideals to be embodied in the Association’s positions and policies. Further,
AHCA/NCAL’s affiliates and their members have the right to expect the Association’s
leaders to act in accordance with the values and standards of conduct articulated in this
Code.

The following organizational values are the foundation of AHCA/NCAL’s Code of
Ethics.
Concern for Individuals in Need

AHCA/NCAL recognizes that a growing number of people in the United States need long term care. Many of those people have multiple needs: physical, emotional, spiritual, social and economic. AHCA/NCAL exists not only to support its affiliates and their member facilities, but also to be an advocate for all people who need long term care services and supportive environments.

Quality Service

People in need of long term care deserve quality services. AHCA/NCAL is committed to providing its constituents with quality products and services, which in turn will assist providers in serving their patients well. AHCA/NCAL advocates for quality care, including appropriate standards and their implementation. AHCA/NCAL also advocates for appropriate funding through government and other entities to support the provision of quality long term care.

Service to the Community

AHCA/NCAL and its members perceive themselves to be good neighbors, contributing to the overall good of the community. AHCA/NCAL supports this community service ideal and strives to mirror it in its values, ideals, and policies.

Integrity and Honesty

Honesty is the glue of social relationships, both personal and corporate. AHCA/NCAL is committed to honesty and integrity in all of its internal and external activities. To be honest is to be forthright and open. It requires individuals and organizations to actively provide complete and truthful information when making decisions or when influencing others to make responsible decisions.

Fairness

AHCA/NCAL believes that in establishing policies, advocating for the long term care community, developing employment practices, pricing products and services, seeking grants or business opportunities, and in resolving disputes, the association and its members and staff must do what is fair and just. To be just is to do what is right and proper -- free of prejudices -- so as to achieve a balance of conflicting needs, rights and demands. Concepts of fairness must apply to dealing with/acknowledging conflicts of interest and, when appropriate, competing interests.

Accountability

AHCA/NCAL, as a service organization, understands that it is accountable to its constituent members and, by extension, to those whom they serve. AHCA/NCAL also understands that the association, its affiliates and their members are accountable to the public at large. AHCA/NCAL recognizes that the association, its affiliates and their member facilities must comply with all laws and regulations that govern their operation.

Respect for Employees
People are the heart of organizations. AHCA/NCAL and its constituencies are committed to enhancing the individual well-being and positive social interaction of all who are employed directly as well as those who are employed by its constituent organizations. AHCA/NCAL, its affiliates and their members are committed to providing a safe and supportive work environment for their employees. AHCA/NCAL and its members also recognize their responsibility to provide employees fair compensation and to deal with employees fairly.

Stewardship

AHCA/NCAL recognizes that it occupies a privileged position as the voice of the long term care field in the United States. Many individuals and organizations support the association financially, at a significant cost to themselves and their organizations. Additionally, AHCA/NCAL plays an important mediating role between people in need and governmental agencies with the capacity to relieve personal suffering. Such commitments and roles demand that AHCA/NCAL use its resources -- financial, social, and moral -- prudently.

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The Code of Ethics for AHCA/NCAL is intended to direct people’s actions toward a desired end. It is not intended as a set of policies or procedures for AHCA/NCAL, but is an attempt to embody the Association’s aspirations, values, and beliefs.

Moral Responsibility

As an organization with a moral responsibility, AHCA/NCAL reflects on the ethical implications of its choices, but AHCA/NCAL also recognizes that in many instances cherished values may be in conflict. Such conflicts do not excuse AHCA/NCAL from recognizing differing perspectives or from making difficult decisions. AHCA/NCAL holds itself accountable for its decisions and the way in which they are made.

Good Business Practice

As a trade organization, AHCA/NCAL manifests a commitment to the values and behaviors which mark good business practice. Individuals in leadership have a responsibility to act responsibly and fairly to its state affiliates and to their member facilities. As an organization of state associations, AHCA/NCAL is committed to the interests of those affiliates and is accountable to them and their member facilities.
Making Difficult Choices

Society often is faced with decisions that are divisive. Similarly, AHCA/NCAL has and will continue to be faced with difficult choices. AHCA/NCAL affirms that it is proper to forcefully present one’s views but that it is also vital that we do so with civility and openness to other perspectives. In all of its decision making, AHCA/NCAL will adhere to the spirit and to the processes of its constitution and bylaws.

Acting Responsibly

Individuals and organizations vested with powers to affect the life of AHCA/NCAL have both the right and the responsibility to exercise their powers in the best interest of AHCA/NCAL and the entire field of long term care. The staff, in turn, will exercise diligence both in providing truthful information for decision makers and in fulfilling responsibilities in accord with the will of the members.

Obligations to Provide Quality Services

Because the field of long term care is in a state of flux, AHCA/NCAL must constantly learn from the field and continually develop best practice models for use in the field. AHCA/NCAL will forward standards and techniques to assist providers in meeting their obligations to provide high quality care and services.

Dealing with Conflicting Values

AHCA/NCAL recognizes that its constituency involves families, volunteers, employees and suppliers, as well as individual facilities. While in many instances the interests of all constituencies are aligned, at times they are not. It is vital that any ambiguity and tension that arise from differing views and conflicting values be faced with forthrightness and sensitivity, recognizing that at times the interests of important, albeit secondary, constituencies must not only be heard, but they may be so compelling as to be controlling. In some instances, persons of good will differ about choices to be made. AHCA/NCAL is committed to facing difficult issues and differing perspectives with honesty, forthrightness, and civility.

Use of Information

AHCA/NCAL recognizes that information can be used to confuse, obfuscate, and bolster a particular perspective. AHCA/NCAL is committed to gathering and distributing relevant information to the best of its ability and to making it part of a fair and open decision making process.
Responsible Advocacy

AHCA/NCAL has a special responsibility in the area of advocacy. AHCA/NCAL must promote good practice within the field of long term care through promotion of education, training, research and the identification of best practice models. AHCA/NCAL also must promote the development of ethically based practice by its behavior and through its various publications and other educational vehicles.

AHCA/NCAL believes that the Association’s policies and agenda must reflect a willingness to self-regulate. While AHCA/NCAL will support and help develop reasonable regulations that are fair and promote quality and cost efficiency, AHCA/NCAL believes that quality must be internal to an organization and be motivated through strong leadership and clear vision. As an advocate for people in need of long term care, AHCA/NCAL will promote reimbursement policies which make possible the provision of quality care to all individuals, including the economically disadvantaged. Similarly, AHCA/NCAL will promote stewardship in the field so that both public and private resources will be used wisely and efficiently.

Potential Conflicts of Interest

All individuals within the AHCA/NCAL leadership, both staff and volunteer, will be sensitive to potential conflicts and duality of interest. In areas that are questionable, leaders will declare such and subject themselves to the judgment of their peers as to the appropriateness of their participation in the decision at hand.

Respect for Others

Respect for the dignity of others is a key element in all ethical behavior. AHCA/NCAL recognizes the right to privacy and the importance of confidentiality. AHCA/NCAL will be scrupulous in safeguarding these principles in the use of information -- whether about individuals or about organizations.

Fairness in Competition

Entrepreneurship and healthy competitiveness are part of American cultural values. However, fairness and decency are values of high moral order. Especially at a time when there are difficult societal decisions affecting the lives of all Americans, AHCA/NAL recognizes the importance of joining together with other organizations with similar values and concern for people needing long term care.
HOW THE CODE APPLIES TO LONG TERM CARE PROVIDERS

The long term care field deals with issues of great human drama: frailty, dependency, suffering, and death -- and the multiple costs they entail. With the role of caring for frail and vulnerable individuals comes special responsibility:

- Concern for emotional, physical, social and spiritual well-being of patients and their families.
- Recognition that family and friends are integral to the care process.
- Recognition that the corporate ethic of the facility and its policies and procedures should be made explicit and available for patients and families. These include appropriateness of medical interventions; clinical decision making processes; dispute resolution processes; grounds for transfer to other parts of the facility or out of the facility; decisions about hospitalization; provision of nutrition and hydration; do not resuscitate orders; the dying process.
- Recognition that residents, as well as long term care employees, have responsibilities to one another, to promote the common good and to treat each other with the respect they expect for themselves.

In addition, long term care facilities have characteristics of both businesses and community service agencies. Facilities that are members of AHCA/NCAL affiliates are held to ethical standards which are common to all business enterprises and also to those which arise from a responsibility to care for the poor, frail, and vulnerable.

Responsibility for Quality

The primary responsibility for quality care lies with the facility and all who are part of it. However, government must play a role in protecting both vulnerable individuals and payment structures. While regulatory structures must be reasonable, humane, and cost effective, facilities, not government, must develop internal structures that assure quality, and they must engage in decision making that is grounded in sound ethical principles.

Commitment to Quality and Patient Autonomy

Member facilities are committed to the provision of quality services. All long term care services should be provided in a safe environment, though a degree of risk is inevitable if patient autonomy is to be respected and enhanced.

Honesty and Integrity

The vulnerability of patients and their families make it especially important that advertising be honest, that contractual arrangements be understood and that processes are in place and used in the event of disagreements. In particular, admission agreements should be clear and the prospective patient and his family should be fully informed so that they understand its terms.
The Costs of Care

Providing long term care brings with it costs to individuals: economic, psychological, and opportunity costs. Formal long term care also involves monetary exchanges. Facility members of AHCA/NCAL affiliates are committed to stewardship of resources, both private and public. Member facilities are committed to efficiency in the provision of quality care.

Obligation to the Poor

AHCA/NCAL, its affiliates and their member facilities affirm that society has the obligation to provide quality long term care services for people who do not have the personal resources for decent care. Providers also have an obligation to provide cost-effective, quality services that are accessible to the greater proportion of society.

Support for Employees

AHCA/NCAL, its affiliates and their member facilities also affirm that competent, compassionate, and dedicated employees are key to the provision of high quality services. Member facilities are committed to treating all employees with dignity and to providing safe and supportive working conditions. Member facilities affirm that people are entitled to decent wages and working conditions.

Stewardship

Governmental, non-profit, and investor-owned facilities provide long term services. All must operate efficiently. All must charge for their services. All must recognize that they are engaged in a special activity, a kind of ministry. Furthermore, all must be active participants in assuring that publicly funded programs are administered and utilized fairly, efficiently, and honestly. AHCA/NCAL, its affiliates and their member facilities also affirm that individuals and organizations that supply capital are entitled to a reasonable return on their investment.
Code of Ethics Acknowledgement

In submitting my application for elected office, I acknowledge that I have received and read a copy of the AHCA/NCAL Code of Ethics and I am committed to abiding both personally and professionally to the Code if I am elected to office.

Signature:

Date: