



National Board for Health
& Wellness Coaching

Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

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NBHC Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

The National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching (NBHC) is committed to maintaining and promoting excellence in health and wellness coaching. The NBHC Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is built upon the industry's ethical standards of behavior and is designed to provide appropriate guidelines, accountability, and enforceable standards of conduct for all National Board Certified Health and Wellness Coaches (NBC-HWCs).

The expectation is that NBC-HWCs adhere to and abide by the outlined elements and principles of ethical conduct. In practicing as NBC-HWCs, coaches further demonstrate competence and effective integration of the health and wellness coach competencies as outlined in the NBHC Content Outline.

The NBHC Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is composed of three (3) main parts:

1. Definitions
2. Standards of Ethical Conduct
 - a. Professional Conduct with Clients
 - b. Professional Conduct at Large
 - c. Professional Conduct of Approved Training Programs, Faculty, and Mentors
 - d. Conflicts of Interest
 - e. Confidentiality and Privacy
 - f. Professional Accountability
3. Pledge of Ethical Conduct

Part One: Definitions

- **Health and Wellness Coaching:** The profession and process by which health and wellness coaches partner with clients who seek self-directed, lasting changes aligned with their values, promoting health and wellness, and enhancing well-being.
- **The National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching (NBHC):** A nonprofit, credentialing body for the health and wellness coaching industry partnered with the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME); dedicated to championing the advancement of health and wellness coaching through evidence-informed standards of education, training, credentialing and research.
- **National Board Certified Health & Wellness Coach (NBC-HWC):** A health and wellness coach certified by the NBHC following the successful completion of an NBHC Approved

Program and passing of the NBHWC Board Exam. NBC-HWCs practice within the defined NBHWC Health and Wellness Coach Scope of Practice and pledge adherence to the NBHWC Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

- **NBHWC Scope of Practice:** The range of activities that an NBC-HWC is allowed to perform under the professional credential. These activities are based on the NBC-HWCs's education, training, and experience, and include roles, functions, responsibilities, and services a health and wellness coach is considered competent to perform.
- **Code of Ethics:** A framework of professional responsibility, ethical principles, and conduct guidelines that affirms commitment to the core values of the health and wellness coaching field and assists health and wellness coaches to act ethically in the professional role.
- **Coaching Relationship:** Exists between a health and wellness coach and a client when coaching includes an agreement, such as a contract that defines the rights, roles and responsibilities of each party.
- **Conflict of Interest:** A situation in which an NBC-HWC has multiple interests that appear to influence the objectivity of the professional health and wellness coaching role or responsibilities as a faculty or mentor; or when serving one interest may be in conflict with another or could compromise judgment, decisions, or actions.
- **Confidentiality:** The protection of any information obtained in and around the coaching relationship and coaching process with a client. Confidentiality is mandated unless otherwise outlined by relevant laws and guidelines or when consent to release information is specifically provided by the client.
- **Client (Patient):** An individual being coached in the context of a coaching relationship.
- **Sponsor:** An entity, including its representatives, paying for or arranging for coaching services to be provided to a specific client or client group.
- **Employer:** An individual, organization, institution, or entity that engages and contracts with an individual or groups of individuals to provide services, perform work, or undertake specific tasks in exchange for compensation. An employer-employee relationship is formalized through a legal agreement or contract which outlines the terms and conditions of employment, including roles, responsibilities, and expectations.
- **Student:** An individual enrolled in an NBHWC Approved Training Program.
- **Faculty:** An individual who provides primary instruction in coaching competencies to students enrolled in an NBHWC Approved Training Program.
- **Mentor:** An individual who oversees or provides support with the practical skill development of students, either in an NBHWC Approved Training Program or as additional professional training. Mentors provide feedback on practice coaching sessions, including Practical Skills Assessments in NBHWC Approved Training Programs, and provide feedback to students for the purpose of developing and advancing health and wellness coaching skills.

Part Two: Standards of Ethical Conduct

Professional Conduct with Clients

– As an NBC-HWC, I:

- Ethically share what I know to be true to clients, prospective clients, sponsors, and employers about the potential value of the health and wellness coaching, including what I offer as a health and wellness coach.
- Clearly outline the process of health and wellness coaching and what activities fall within the NBHWC Scope of Practice. I also openly discuss the potential outcomes that can reasonably be expected.
- Create clear, detailed coaching service agreements with clients (and sponsors as appropriate) before beginning any coaching relationship. Such agreements shall include the roles, responsibilities and rights of all parties involved and will be honored as the foundation of the coaching relationship (when the client and sponsor are different entities, the coaching agreement will be respective to each).
- Explain any and all conditions of the coaching agreement prior to or at the initial meeting, including the nature and limits of confidentiality, financial arrangements, and any other terms relevant to the specific coaching relationship.
- Diligently follow through on all commitments outlined in the coaching agreement, honoring obligations and deadlines, delivering services as promised, and ensuring transparency and accountability in all actions.
- Maintain a consistent quality of health and wellness coaching services and ensure that all clients receive equitable, respectful, and high-quality support. Hold responsibility for being aware of and setting clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern interactions. Additionally, I am attune to and proactively address any power or status differences that may arise due to cultural, relational, psychological or contextual issues.
- Attend to signs that the value gained from the coaching relationship may be changing and, if indicated, manage discord in the relationship. As appropriate and deemed necessary, I will encourage that a client or sponsor seeks another coach or relevant professional when discord cannot be resolved.
- Respect a client's right to terminate the coaching relationship at any point and for any reason subject to the provisions of the coaching agreement.
- Avoid any and all sexual or romantic relationships and engagements with current clients and sponsor(s) and take the appropriate action to address any issues that arise, including ending the coaching relationship when deemed necessary.
- Strive to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the client at all times. I encourage a change if the client or sponsor would be better served by another coach or resource, and I provide support to my client when seeking the services of other professionals deemed necessary or appropriate.

Professional Conduct at Large

– As an NBC-HWC, I:

- Accurately and honestly identify my health and wellness coach training and education, qualifications, expertise, experience, certifications, and coaching credentials, including NBC-HWC certification.
- Make verbal and written statements that are true and accurate about the NBHWC, the coaching profession, and what I offer as an NBC-HWC.
- Adhere to the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct in all health and wellness coaching interactions and recognize that this Code applies to, but is not limited by, my relationships with clients, sponsors, employers, and other coaches as well as students in Approved Programs, faculty, and mentors or mentees.
- Hold responsibility for understanding and complying with the NBHWC Scope of Practice, including communicating with employers or sponsors what activities fall within Scope of Practice and outcomes that can reasonably be expected.
- Openly communicate and create awareness in others, including but not limited to organizations, employees, sponsors, coaches, clients, and potential clients, regarding the responsibilities established by this Code.
- Strive to recognize when personal issues impair, conflict with, or interfere with my coaching performance or my professional coaching relationships. I will promptly seek professional assistance for support and determine action to be taken, including suspending or terminating my coaching relationship(s) when the facts and circumstances necessitate.
- Refrain from unlawful discrimination, including but not limited to age, race, gender orientation, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, national origin or disability. I will consistently demonstrate dignity and respect in all professional relationships.
- Disclose the use of artificial intelligence or emerging technologies if they are utilized in the delivery of coaching services, including how they may affect client privacy and confidentiality.
- Understand the ethical implications and responsible use of digital health technology and platforms, ensuring that such tools are integrated into coaching practices in ways that align with the NBHWC Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct and uphold client trust, privacy, and well-being.
- Commit to taking appropriate action to address ethics violations or possible breach of ethics as soon as I become aware of such a situation, regardless of whether it involves me or others. I will respectfully raise concerns directly with those involved and, if unable to resolve the situation, will refer to NBHWC as the formal authority on such matters.
- Recognize and honor the contributions of others, only claiming ownership of my own material. I am aware that violating this principle may leave me subject to legal action by a third party.
- Conduct and report research with competence, honesty, and within recognized scientific standards and applicable subject guidelines. If conducting or participating in research, I will ensure informed consent of those participating and the approval of all regulatory bodies

as necessitated; research efforts will be performed in a manner that complies with the applicable laws and regulations of the jurisdictions involved.

- Maintain the privacy of other NBC-HWC coaches and their personal information (e.g. email addresses, telephone numbers) unless otherwise authorized by the NBC-HWC or the NBHWC.

Professional Conduct of Approved Training Programs, Faculty, and Mentors

– As an NBC-HWC, I:

- Deliver accurate, up-to-date content aligned with the NBHWC Content Outline, reflecting current knowledge and best practices in the health and wellness coaching field.
- Model and promote honesty in all interactions, including providing accurate information about training or mentoring to current and prospective students (e.g., requirements for participation, completion criteria, attendance and grading policies, and evaluation methods for both written and practical assessments).
- Foster an inclusive learning environment that respects diversity in all its forms, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and cultural background. I ensure equal access to learning opportunities for all students.
- Thoroughly prepare for instructional roles and avoid any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and misrepresentation of information. Encourage and support students to develop their own professional identity and decision-making skills and abilities. I demonstrate respect for each student's individual learning path.
- Provide clear, constructive, and timely feedback to students using assessments based on objective criteria.
- Safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of student personal information and discussions within the educational context.
- Avoid misrepresentation of credentials or experience and avoid imposing personal beliefs or biases in the education environment. Additionally, I maintain and continually update my own professional skills and knowledge and seek additional training when necessary.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students and refrain from engaging in dual relationships to avoid conflicts of interest, favoritism, or exploitation.
- Act as a role model of ethical behavior and professional conduct, including demonstrating respect for the ethical codes and standards of the health and wellness coaching profession and encouraging students to do the same.
- Avoid any sexual or romantic relationship with students, mentees or supervisees. Further, I will be alert to the possibility of any potential sexual intimacy among the parties including my support staff or assistants and will take the appropriate action to address the issue in order to provide a safe environment overall.
- Commit to taking appropriate action to address ethics violations or possible breach of ethics as soon as I become aware of such a situation, including those that involve myself, another faculty member, faculty assistant, coach, coach mentor or other instructional staff. I will respectfully raise concerns directly with those involved and, if unable to resolve the situation, will refer to NBHWC as the formal authority on such matters.

Conflicts of Interest

- As a NBC-HWC, I:

- Honor an equitable coach/client relationship, regardless of the form of compensation.
- Seek to be conscious of any conflict or potential conflict of interest, openly disclosing any such conflict to all stakeholders involved and offering to remove myself when a conflict arises.
- Understand the implications of having multiple contracts and relationships running concurrently with the same client and sponsor, and am attentive to avoiding conflict of interest situations.
- Disclose to clients and sponsors all anticipated compensation from third parties that I may receive for referrals of clients or pay to receive clients. Compensation from the sale of products or non-coaching services to clients is disclosed fully before coaching begins.
- Ensure that the quality of coaching services and the quantity of coaching sessions as defined in the coaching agreement is not be dependent in any way upon the purchase of any additional products or services by the client.

Confidentiality/Privacy

- As a NBC-HWC, I:

- Maintain the strictest levels of confidentiality with all client and sponsor information unless release is required by law, specifically adhering to all applicable state and federal regulations.
- Have a clear agreement about how coaching information will be exchanged among coach, client and sponsor, including mobile and electronic health data collected by the client.
- Have a clear agreement when acting as a coach, coach faculty or mentor, coaching supervisor or trainer, with both client and sponsor, student, mentee, or supervisee about the conditions under which confidentiality may not be maintained (e.g., illegal activity, pursuant to valid court order or subpoena; imminent or likely risk of danger to self or to others; etc.) and make sure there is voluntary agreement in writing to that limit of confidentiality. Where I reasonably believe that because one of the above circumstances is applicable, I inform appropriate authorities.
- Maintain, store and dispose of any records, including electronic files and communications, created during my professional interactions in a manner that promotes confidentiality, security and privacy, and complies with any applicable laws and agreements. Furthermore, I seek to make proper use of emerging and growing technological developments that are being used in coaching services (technology-assisted coaching services) and to be aware of how various ethical standards apply to them.
- Require all those who work with me in support of my clients to adhere to the NBHWC Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, Confidentiality and Privacy Standards, and any other sections of the NBHWC Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct that might be applicable.

Professional Accountability

- As a NBC-HWC, I:

- Engage in regular self-assessment and reflection to identify areas for personal and professional growth.
- Uphold the reputation of the health and wellness coaching profession by contributing positively to the community.
- Represent services accurately and truthfully in all marketing and communication efforts, avoiding exaggerated claims and the use of high-pressure sales tactics. Adhere to all ethical standards of practice for any relevant, respective health care licensures and credentials, understanding the parameters of Scope of Practice for each respective profession.
- Commit to staying current with evolving standards, guidelines, and regulations governing the health and wellness coaching, including changes in laws, ethical guidelines, and best practices, and integrating this knowledge into practice.
- Engage in supervision or peer review processes and support to maintain accountability and receive constructive feedback.
- Maintain the NBC-HWC credential by meeting the requirements for continuing education and ongoing skill development, including keeping accurate records of completed training and submitting necessary documentation for recertification.
- Commit to excellence through personal, professional and ethical development of the health and wellness coaching role.

Part Three: Pledge of Ethics:

As a National Board Certified Health & Wellness Coach, I acknowledge and agree to honor my ethical and legal obligations to my health and wellness coaching clients, sponsors, colleagues, and to the public at large and pledge to comply with the NBHWC Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. If I breach any part of the NBHWC Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, I agree that NBHWC may, as its sole discretion, hold me accountable for ethical violations and fully understand that my accountability for any breach may include sanctions, such as mandatory additional training or other education, or the loss of my NBC-HWC credential.