

**SPEECH THERAPISTS AND AUDIOLOGISTS'
ASSOCIATION OF GHANA (STAAG)**

CODE OF ETHICS



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CODE OF ETHICS

PREAMBLE:

The Speech Therapists and Audiologists' Association of Ghana (STAAG, hereafter known as The Professional Body) has been committed to a framework of common principles and standards of practice since its formation in 2015. This ethics was accepted and implemented on 1st July 2016. The STAAG was first registered as an Association in 2017 and became a professional body on 12 March 2024 by the Professional Bodies Decree, NCRD 143 of 1973.

The Professional Body's Code of Ethics is a focused guide for professionals, supporting members' day-to-day activities and professional conduct. Ethical practice and professionalism are integral values of the Professional Body. The Professional Body's principles and values guide the practice of its members and provide a framework to review possible breaches of ethical practice.

Members and associates of the Professional Body shall abide by the Professional Body's Code of Ethics, bylaws, and policies.

In the case that a Regulatory Body governs the Professional Body's member's or associate's practice, the member or associate must abide, first and foremost, by the ethical standards and professional conduct requirements of their regulatory body. Any action that violates the spirit and purpose of the Professional Body's Code of Ethics is considered unethical.

The fundamentals of ethical conduct are described by Principles of Ethics and by Rules of Ethics as they relate to persons served by members of the Association including every individual who is

- a) a member of the Association, whether certified or not,
- b) a non-member holding the Certificate of Clinical Competence from the Allied Health Professions Council of Ghana,
- c) an applicant for membership or certification or
- d) clinical fellow seeking to fulfill standards for certification shall abide by this document

Members and Associates shall honour their responsibility to hold paramount the welfare of the persons they serve professionally. Individual members who violate the Code of Ethics as specified in this document shall face the appropriate sanctions. Sanctions may include Supervision, Retraining, Mediation, Suspension, or Expulsion from the Professional Body.

TERMINOLOGY

Ethics is the systematic analysis of and reflection on morality. For our purposes, we are concerned with concrete and practical questions related to the morality of our character traits

and actions. This is directly relevant to our profession when we need to know what makes something right or wrong.

Principles are the premises of a logical argument. We may apply principles as we attempt to decide whether to act in one way or the other. In doing so, we obtain different perspectives and understand what the consequences of a particular course of action might be.

Principles of Ethics form the underlying moral basis for the Code of Ethics. Members of the Association shall observe these principles as affirmative obligations under all conditions of professional activity.

Rules of ethics are specific statements of acceptable professional conduct and apply to all Members and Associates.

Standards refer to established norms and criteria that Speech Therapists and Audiologists in Ghana are expected to adhere to to ensure high-quality care and services.

Beneficence emphasizes the moral importance of doing good to others and promotes what is good for the patient.

Non-maleficence is the direct opposite of beneficence, based on the premise that the practitioner should not harm the patient. It is based on the premise that we have a moral duty not to harm anyone.

Every now and then, we are confronted with complex situations that require an ethical response.

In such situations, the principles and rules should be considered relative to the nature of the problems and the context in which they occur. Below are the principles and the Rules of Ethics that guide the operation of the Professional Body.

STANDARDS

Principle I: Beneficence and non-maleficence

Members of the Professional Body seek to benefit others through professional activities (beneficence) and provide services that enhance the well-being of their clients and their families. They should promote the welfare of participants in their clients' and their families' research and scholarly activities and treat humans and animals involved in research in a humane manner.

Rule of Ethics

- A. Consider the needs of clients and families and provide services that are appropriate and accessible.
- B. Seek to avoid causing harm, suffering inconvenience, or unnecessary expense, whether in person or via distance (e.g., telehealth) methods.

- C. Fully inform clients of the nature and possible effects of services provided and fully inform participants in research about the possible effects of their participation in the research.
- D. Members and Associates shall use persons in research or as subjects for teaching demonstrations only with their informed consent.
- E. Members and Associates shall not charge for services not rendered, nor shall they misrepresent, in any fashion, services rendered or products dispensed.
- F. Respect the confidentiality and privacy of clients, their families, and colleagues unless required by law not to do so or unless doing so is necessary to protect the welfare of the person or the community.
- G. Members and Associates shall evaluate the effectiveness of services provided, technology employed and products dispensed, and they shall provide services or dispense products only when benefit can reasonably be expected.
- H. Members and Associates shall treat fairly, equally and with respect all those with whom they have professional relationships. That is, they shall not discriminate in the delivery of professional services on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability.
- I. Members and Associates shall not sexually harass anyone. Sexual harassment may take the form of unwelcome sexual advances, a request for sexual favours, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- J. Members and Associates shall use independent and evidence-based clinical judgment, keeping paramount the best interests of their clients.
- K. Members and Associates shall provide reasonable notice and information about alternatives for obtaining care if they can no longer provide professional services.
- L. Members and Associates shall prioritize client safety by following all relevant health and safety guidelines, infection prevention practices, and calibration of equipment.
- M. Members and Associates shall ensure that all employees comply with health and safety regulations and infection control procedures.

Principles II: Professional competence

Members of the Professional Body have the responsibility to achieve and maintain the highest level of professional competence and performance.

Rule of Ethics

- A. Members and Associates shall provide all services competently.

- B. Members and Associates shall engage in the provision of clinical services only when they hold certificates of clinical competence from the Allied Health Professions Council or when they are in the certification process and are supervised by an individual who holds the appropriate certificate of clinical competence.
- C. Members and Associates shall work within the scope of their practice or competence concerning the level of education, training, and experience.
- D. Members and Associates shall continue their professional development throughout their career and shall ensure they are current in their knowledge of professional activities and skills.
- E. Members and Associates shall delegate the provision of clinical services only to Members and Associates who are competent.
- F. Members and Associates shall prohibit any of their professional staff from providing services that exceed the staff member's competence, considering the staff member's level of education, training and experience.
- G. Members and Associates shall ensure that all equipment used in the provision of services are in proper condition and are properly calibrated and meets either ANSI (American National Standards Institute) or ISO (International Standard Organisation) specifications

Principles III: Development of the profession. Promotion and Business Practices

The Professional Body members have a responsibility to support the development of the profession and promote public understanding of the profession.

Rules of Ethics

- A. Members and Associates shall ensure all advertising, promotions, sales, and fee structures for products or services are truthful, fair, and appropriate.
- B. Members and Associates shall disclose all associated fees, charges, and billing procedures before providing services or products.
- C. Members and Associates shall provide appropriate explanations of findings, treatment recommendations, and outcomes to clients, research participants, or professionals.
- D. Members and Associates shall not misrepresent their credentials, competence, education, training, or experience.
- E. Members and Associates shall not misrepresent diagnostic information, services rendered, or products dispensed, or engage in any scheme to defraud clients.

- F. Members and Associates' statements to the public shall provide accurate information about the nature of speech, language, feeding, swallowing, vestibular and hearing disorders, and the nature of the profession and professional services.
- G. Members and Associates' services to the public, such as announcing, advertising, and marketing their professional services, reporting research results, and promoting products, shall adhere to prevailing professional standards and shall not contain misrepresentations.
- H. Members and Associates shall not knowingly declare false financial statements and shall file all tax-related materials honestly and without omission.
- I. Members and Associates shall not bring the profession into disrepute and will uphold and foster its values and ethics.

Principle IV: Professional Integrity and Conflict of Interest

This includes acting honestly, consistently, and in a trustworthy manner with all clients and colleagues and avoiding unacceptable conduct that represents a real or perceived conflict of interest

Rules of Ethics

- A. Members and Associates shall prohibit anyone under their supervision from engaging in any practice that violates the Code of Ethics.
- B. Members and Associates shall not engage in dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation, or any form of conduct that adversely reflects on the profession or on Members and Associates' ability to serve persons professionally.
- C. Members and Associates shall not provide professional services without exercising independent professional judgment, regardless of referral source.
- D. Members and Associates shall recognize the privileged nature of their relationship with clients and refrain from exploiting them.
- E. Members and Associates shall not use employer information or resources for personal or financial gain.
- F. Members and Associates shall not initiate or continue interventions that are ineffective, unnecessary, or no longer clinically indicated.
- G. Members and Associates shall not endorse any service, product, or individual for personal benefit.
- H. Members and Associates shall not accept any form of benefit, financial reward, or gift that could compromise professional judgment or service recommendations.

- I. Regularly reflect on their practice and recognize when stress, fatigue, illness, or any other condition may impact negatively on their skills and seek appropriate support.

Principle V: Records

This refers to adhering to established protocols concerning keeping and retrieving institutional and client records, whether in hard copy or electronic formats.

Rules of Ethics

- A. Members and Associates must keep clear, complete, and up-to-date records of the services they provide and any products they sell to clients.
- B. Members and Associates must grant clients access to records upon reasonable request, appropriate authorization, or as required by law.
- C. Members and Associates must follow strict rules for keeping electronic records of clients.
- D. Members and Associates must protect client privacy by not sharing clients' digital or electronic data with third parties without their consent.

Principle VI: Scholarly, Clinical and Research Practices

This refers to the adherence to established scientific protocols and standards.

Rules of Ethics

- A. Adherence to rigorous research standards, including obtaining necessary approvals, such as ethics clearance for human or animal subjects, and ensuring compliance with national, and institutional guidelines.
- B. Ensuring that participation in research does not delay or interfere with evidence-based methods of assessment or intervention.
- C. Subjecting research to peer review prior to public dissemination.
- D. Acknowledging the contributions of colleagues in scholarly outputs.
- E. Members and Associates shall accurately represent their credentials, competence, education, training, experience, or scholarly research contributions.
- F. Members and Associates shall reference the source when using other persons' ideas, research, and results in the provision of services

EDUCATION

The primary function of the Ethics Committee is to educate members about the Code of Ethics and its practical application. The Committee aims to assist members in achieving compliance through education and guidance.

NON-COMPLIANCE

The Professional Body members are obligated to adhere to the Professional Body Code of Ethics in both personal and professional conduct. Members are responsible for reporting potential Code of Ethics violations to the Ethics Committee of the Professional Body without using such reports for malicious intentions or retaliation. In such cases, the identity of the Member shall be protected at all times. The Ethics Committee will promptly investigate alleged breaches and implement corrective measures in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the Allied Health Professions Council and the Constitution of the Professional Body.

All discussions, correspondence, deliberations, and records related to members under review by the Ethics Committee must be kept strictly confidential. Similarly, all information related to investigations or complaints against Members and Associates, past or present, must be kept confidential. Such information can only be shared with the Ethics Committee, relevant stakeholders of the member or associate, the complainant, the respondent, and their respective legal representatives, unless otherwise required by law.

All information regarding ethics can be addressed to the committee via info@staag.org.gh

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This Code of Ethics is adapted, after consulting the Code of Ethics of the following Institutions;

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). US
- South African Speech Language and Hearing Association (SASLHA), South Africa
- New Zealand Speech Language Therapists Association (NZSTA), New Zealand
- Speech-Language and Audiology, Canada
- American Academy of Audiology (AAA), US