

Quick Reference Guide: Ethical Codes & Standards for Addiction Professionals

Objective: To provide addiction professionals with a concise overview of key ethical codes and standards that guide professional conduct, ensuring compliance, accountability, and ethical integrity in practice.

NAADAC Code of Ethics

- Outlines professional conduct for addiction counselors.
- Emphasizes client welfare, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity, and competency in addiction treatment.
- Provides guidance on professional boundaries, self-disclosure, and ethical decision-making in complex cases.

Key Areas Covered:

- Non-discrimination and cultural humility in treatment.
- Client rights and informed consent in addiction counseling.
- Ethical use of technology and social media in professional practice.
- Dual relationships and conflict of interest considerations.
- Mandated reporting and legal obligations in addiction treatment.

* Full Code Available at: NAADAC Code of Ethics

ACA, APA, NASW Ethical Standards

- Provide ethical frameworks for mental health professionals, including those working in addiction treatment.
- Address confidentiality, autonomy, professional responsibility, and client-centered care.
- Guide ethical decision-making in clinical supervision, research, and advocacy.

Key Areas Covered:

- ACA (American Counseling Association) – Professional integrity, informed consent, and ethical use of assessments.
- APA (American Psychological Association) – Ethical principles in research, therapy, and dual relationships.
- NASW (National Association of Social Workers) – Social justice, advocacy, and ethical responsibilities in client care.

 Full Guidelines: ACA Code of Ethics; APA Ethical Principles; NASW Code of Ethics

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State Licensing Boards & Legal Mandates

- State boards enforce legal and ethical standards for addiction professionals, including scope of practice, confidentiality laws, and disciplinary actions.
- Licensing boards vary by state, but typically align with HIPAA, 42 CFR Part 2 (confidentiality of substance use records), and informed consent laws.

Key Considerations:

- Verify licensing requirements specific to your state for addiction professionals.
- Follow state-mandated reporting laws for child abuse, elder abuse, and threats of harm.
- Ensure compliance with telehealth regulations and cross-state licensure rules.

*Find Your State Board: Federation of State Licensing Boards

Reflection Questions

How do these ethical guidelines impact daily decision-making in addiction treatment?

Am I fully compliant with my state's ethical and legal requirements?

What areas of ethical practice require further development in my professional work?

Do I engage in ongoing training and supervision to ensure ethical competency?
