

Code of Ethical Practice

July 2009

Background

It is important to establish, publicise and maintain standards of ethical behaviour in fitness instructing practice, and to inform and protect members of the public and customers using the services of exercise professionals.

Physical activity and exercise can contribute positively to the development of individuals. It is a vehicle for physical, mental, personal, social and emotional development. Such development is enhanced if the individual is guided by an informed, thinking, aspiring and enlightened exercise professional operating within an accepted ethical framework as a professional.

The role of an exercise professional is to:

- Identify and meet the needs of individuals
- Improve performance or fitness through programmes of safe, effective and enjoyable exercise
- Create an environment in which individuals are motivated to maintain participation and improve performance or fitness
- Conform to ethical standards in a number of areas – humanity, relationships, co-operation, integrity, advertising, confidentiality and personal standards

This **Code of Ethical Practice** defines what is good practice for professionals in the fitness industry by reflecting on the core values of rights, relationships, responsibilities and standards.

The term 'professional' is used in a qualitative context in this Code and does not necessarily imply a paid position or person. Exercise professionals on REPs accept their responsibility to people who participate in exercise; to other exercise professionals and colleagues; to their respective fitness associations, professional bodies and institutes; to their employer; and to society.

Where required members must also hold adequate liability insurance.

There are four principles to the code

PRINCIPLE 1: RIGHTS

'Exercise professionals will be respectful of their customers and of their rights as individuals'

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to maintain a standard of professional conduct appropriate to their dealings with all client groups and to responsibly demonstrate:

- Respect for individual difference and diversity
- Good practice in challenging discrimination and unfairness
- Discretion in dealing with confidential client disclosure

PRINCIPLE 2: RELATIONSHIPS

'Exercise professionals will nurture healthy relationships with their customers and other health professionals'

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to develop and maintain a relationship with customers based on openness, honesty, mutual trust and respect and to responsibly demonstrate:

- Awareness of the requirement to place the customer's needs as a priority and promote their welfare and best interests first when planning an appropriate training programme
- Clarity in all forms of communication with customers, professional colleagues and medical practitioners, ensuring honesty, accuracy and cooperation when seeking agreements and avoiding misrepresentation or any conflict of interest arising between customers' and own professional obligations

- Integrity as an exercise professional and recognition of the position of trust dictated by that role, ensuring avoidance of any inappropriate behaviour in all customer relationships

PRINCIPLE 3: PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

'Exercise professionals will demonstrate and promote a clean and responsible lifestyle and conduct'

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to conduct proper personal behaviour at all times and to responsibly demonstrate:

- The high standards of professional conduct appropriate to their dealings with all their client groups and which reflect the particular image and expectations relevant to the role of the exercise professional working in the fitness industry
- An understanding of their legal responsibilities and accountability when dealing with the public and awareness of the need for honesty and accuracy in substantiating their claims of authenticity when promoting their services in the public domain
- A responsible attitude to the care and safety of client participants within the training environment and in planned activities ensuring that both are appropriate to the needs of the clients
- An absolute duty of care to be aware of their working environment and to be able to deal with all reasonably foreseeable accidents and emergencies – and to protect themselves, their colleagues and clients

PRINCIPLE 4: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

'Exercise professionals will seek to adopt the highest level of professional standards in their work and the development of their career'

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to commit to the attainment of appropriate qualifications and ongoing training to responsibly demonstrate:

- Engagement in actively seeking to update knowledge and improve their professional skills in order to maintain a quality standard of service, reflecting on their own practice, identifying development needs and undertaking relevant development activities
- Willingness to accept responsibility and be accountable for professional decisions or actions, welcome evaluation of their work and recognise the need when appropriate to refer to another professional specialist
- A personal responsibility to maintain their own effectiveness and confine themselves to practice those activities for which their training and competence is recognised by the Register

Any alleged professional mis-conduct or avoidance of compliance with the terms of membership of the Register will be referred to the Professional Practice Committee which will consider any need for sanctions against an individual instructor, coach, trainer or teacher.

The appropriate authority(ies) will deal with any criminal allegations.

For further details of the work of the Professional Practice Committee, to download versions of this Code, and details of our liability insurance information please go to:

www.exerciseregister.org

