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# INTRODUCTION

The Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses and Midwives in Brunei Darussalam has been developed for the nursing and midwifery profession registered with the Nursing Board for Brunei, Ministry of Health. It is relevant to all levels of nurses and midwives and areas of practice including those encompassing clinical, management, education and research domains. This code outlines the ethical standards expected and required of nurses and midwives practicing in the unique multi cultural context of Brunei as well as the profession's intention to accept the rights of clients and to uphold these rights in practice.

The Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses and Midwives in Brunei Darussalam is supported by, and should be read in junction with other companion documents. These companion documents provide a framework for legally and professionally accountable and responsible nursing and midwifery practice.

Nursing and midwifery practice is undertaken in a variety of settings. The processes affecting nursing and midwifery practice can include resource constraints, organization policies, management decisions, and the practice of other health care professionals. Nurses and midwife also recognize the potential for conflict between one person's needs and those of another which may affect the degree to which nurses and midwives are able to fulfill their moral obligations.

Nurses and midwives are autonomous moral agents and sometimes may participate in certain procedure which is morally unacceptable to them. Nurses and midwives have a right to refuse to participate in procedures, which they judge on strongly held moral beliefs to be unacceptable. In exercising their conscientious objection nurses and midwives must take all reasonable steps to ensure that quality of care and client safety is not compromised.

The Code of Ethics is not intended to provide a formula for the resolution of ethical problems, nor can it adequately address the definitions and exploration of terms and concepts in the study of ethics. This Code contains seven (7) broad value statements. Nurses and midwives are encouraged to use these statements as a guide in reflecting on the degree to which their practice

demonstrates those values. As a means of assisting in interpretation of the seven (7) values, a number of explanatory statements are provided. These explanatory statements are not intended to cover all the aspects a nurse and midwives should consider, but can be used to assist further exploration and consideration of ethical concerns in nursing and midwifery practice.

There are some overlap and repetition in the concepts of the value statements, reflecting the reality that the issues are not distinct and discrete, nor are these concepts and the information static. It is a contemporary document, and therefore, comments and suggestions for enhancing the understanding and usefulness of this document are welcomed.

**Purpose :**

The purpose of this Code of Ethics is to:

- identify the fundamental ethical standards and values of the nursing and midwifery profession,
- provide a basis for professional and self reflection on ethical conduct,
- guide ethical decision making and practice, and
- indicate to the community the ethical values which nurses and midwives are expected to hold.

Chair & Registrar  
Nursing Board for Brunei  
Ministry of Health  
Brunei Darussalam

## SEVEN (7) VALUES ON CODE OF ETHICS FOR NURSES AND MIDWIVES

**As a nurse or midwife, you are personally accountable for your practice. In caring for clients, you must adhere to these primary values :**

1. *Respect client's needs, values, culture, religion, beliefs and vulnerability in the provision of care.*
2. *Provide safe, compassionate and ethical care to all.*
3. *Promote and respect informed decision-making in providing care.*
4. *Be accountable and responsible in the profession.*
5. *Maintain privacy and confidentiality of all clients.*
6. *Preserve client's dignity.*
7. *Promote justice through equality.*

## VALUE STATEMENT 1

*Respect client's needs, values, culture, religion, beliefs and vulnerability in the provision of care.*

### **Ethical responsibilities:**

1. Nurses and midwives should acknowledge the diversity in a contemporary Bruneian society. Care for any clients should not be compromised because of religion, ethnicity, culture, gender, beliefs, sexuality, disability, age, economic, social, health status or on any other ground.
2. Nurses and midwives should respect the client's needs, beliefs and values include culturally informed and appropriate care, and the provision of as much comfort, dignity, privacy and alleviation of pain and anxiety as possible.
3. Nurses and midwives should respect client's needs includes recognition of the client's place in a family and community. Nurses and Midwives should, therefore, facilitate the participation of significant others in the care of the client as if it is the client and the significant others wish.
4. Nurses and midwives should develop confidence and trust in the relationship between them and the people for whom they care.
5. Nurses and midwives should promote a trusting and professional relationship, and to prevent any exploitation of clients. They have an ethical responsibility to maintain appropriate professional boundaries between themselves and persons to whom they provide care.

## VALUE STATEMENT 2

*Provide safe, compassionate and ethical care to all*

### **Ethical responsibilities:**

1. Nurses and midwives have a responsibility to conduct themselves according to the ethical responsibilities in what they do and how they interact with clients and other health care teams.
2. Nurses and midwives should engage in compassionate care through their speech and body language in their efforts to understand and care about client's health-care needs.
3. Nurses and midwives must build trustworthy relationships as the foundation of meaningful communication.
4. Nurses and midwives should maintain appropriate professional boundaries and ensure their relationships are always for the benefit of the client.
5. Nurses and midwives must recognize the potential vulnerability of clients and do not exploit their trust and dependency in a way that might compromise the therapeutic relationship.
6. Nurses and midwives must not abuse their relationship for personal or financial gain, and do not enter into personal relationships with client.

### VALUE STATEMENT 3

*Promote and respect informed decision-making  
in providing care*

#### **Ethical responsibilities:**

1. Nurses and midwives must be satisfied that they have client's consent for any care or treatment they are providing. If they are not able to provide consent for themselves, nurses and midwives have a role in ensuring that valid consent is obtained from the appropriate substitute decision maker.
2. Nurses and midwives have a responsibility to inform clients and communities about the care that is available to them. Nurses and midwives must respect and support clients rights to accept or decline treatment and care, to uphold clients rights to be fully involved in the decisions about their care.
3. Nurses and midwives must be aware of the legislation / guideline regarding mental capacity, ensuring that incompetent client (who lack of capacity) remain at the centre of decision making and are fully safeguarded.

#### VALUE STATEMENT 4

*Be accountable and responsible in the profession.*

#### **Ethical responsibilities:**

1. Nurses and midwives as morally autonomous professionals, are accountable for their clinical decision making and have moral and legal obligations for the provision of safe and competent nursing care.
2. Nurses and midwives are accountable to their contribution with other health care members in the provision of comprehensive health care, recognizing and respecting the perspective and expertise of each team member.
3. Nurses and midwives have a right to refuse to participate in procedures, which would violate their reasoned moral conscience or conscientious objection. In doing so, they must take all reasonable steps to ensure that quality of care and patient safety is not compromised.
4. Nurses and midwives have an ethical responsibility to report instances of unsafe and unethical practice.
5. Nurses and midwives must be attentive to signs that a colleague is unable, for whatever reason, to perform his/her duties. In such a case, nurses and midwives must take necessary steps to protect the safety of their clients.



## VALUE STATEMENT 5

*Maintain privacy and confidentiality of all clients*

### **Ethical responsibilities:**

1. Nurses and midwives should respect client's rights to determine who will be provided with their personal information and in what detail. Exceptions may be necessary in circumstances where the life of the client is in danger or where disclosure is required by the relevant authority / law. When personal information is required for teaching, research or quality assurance purposes, care must be taken to protect the client's autonomy, anonymity and privacy. Consent must always be obtained from the client or their advocate.
2. Nurses and midwives must protect clients against breaches of privacy by confining their verbal communications to appropriate personnel and settings, and for professional purposes.
3. Nurses and midwives have an obligation to adhere to policies and guidelines regarding limiting access to personal / medical records (paper or electronic) of all clients.

## VALUE STATEMENT 6

*Preserve client's dignity*

### **Ethical responsibilities:**

1. Nurses and midwives in their professional capacity, support the client or community receiving care in maintaining their dignity and integrity.
2. Nurses and midwives should intervene, and report when necessary, when others fail to respect the dignity of a client, recognizing that to be silent and passive is to condone the behavior.
3. Nurses and midwives must respect the physical privacy of clients by providing care in a discreet manner and by minimizing intrusions.
4. Nurses and midwives should utilize highest standards and best practice guidelines and policies concerning restraint usage.

## VALUE STATEMENT 7

*Promoting justice through equality*

### **Ethical responsibilities:**

1. Nurses and midwives must refrain from judging, labeling, demeaning, and stigmatizing and humiliating behaviors toward clients, other health care professionals and each other.
2. Nurses and midwives must not engage in any form of lying, punishment or unusual treatment or action that is inhumane or degrading. They must intervene and report such behaviors to the relevant authority.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

## **Accountable**

The state of being answerable for one's decisions and actions. Accountability cannot be delegated.

## **Advocate**

A person who argues or defends the cause of another. Nurses or midwives may find they need to advocate for their clients.

## **Anonymity**

If you remain anonymous when you do something, you do not let people know that you were the person who did it.

## **Authority**

People who have the power to make decisions and to make sure that law are obeyed / enforce obedience.

## **Autonomy**

The ability to make your own decisions about what to do rather than being influenced by someone else or told what to do.

## **Client**

Patient or the person receiving care or treatment from the nurses or midwives and other health care professionals which could include families, carers and communities as a whole.

## **Comprehensive**

Something that is comprehensive includes everything that is needed or relevant.

## **Compromise**

Reach an agreement with them in which you both give up something that you originally wanted because they are considering the wishes of other people.

## **Condone**

If someone condones behaviour that is morally wrong, they accept it and allow it to happen.

## **Conscience**

Your conscience is the part of your mind that tells you whether what you are doing is right or wrong. If you have a guilty conscience, you feel guilty about something because you know it was wrong. If you have a clear conscience, you do not feel guilty because you know you have done nothing wrong.

**Contemporary**

Modern and relate to the present time.

**Degrading**

Something that degrades someone causes people to have less respect for him / her.

**Demean**

To demean someone means to make people have less respect for him / her.

**Dignity**

A feeling of self-esteem and self-respect and is a basic value of nursing and midwifery practice. The nurse or midwife aims to promote, protect and advocate the dignity of those clients who are vulnerable and incapable of protecting their own interest.

**Discreet**

Polite and careful in what you do or say, because you want to avoid embarrassing or offending others.

**Disclosure**

If you disclose new or secret information, you tell people about it.

**Ethics**

The moral practices, beliefs, and standards of an individual/s and/or a group.

**Ethical problem**

A situation that requires ethical consideration or ethical decision making, or a conflict of moral values.

**Humiliating**

Embarrassment and shame you feel when someone makes you appear stupid, or when you make a mistake in public.

**Incompetent client**

A client who does not has the mental capacity to consent to medical treatment. Someone who is not able to take a decision for him/herself, who cannot understand and retain the information relevant to the decision, not able to weigh that information as part of the decision making process and communicate that decision.

**Inhumane**

Extremely cruel.

**Integrity**

If you have integrity, you are honest and firm in your moral principles.

**Intrusions**

An intrusion is something that disturbs your mood or your life in a way you do not like.

**Legislation**

Legislation is law which has been enacted by a regulatory or governing body.

**Mental capacity**

Mental ability to do it, or the amount of it that you are able to do.

**Moral Agent**

A person who acts morally/ethically on his or her own authority.

**Obligation**

Duty to look after them or protect their interests.

**Professional Boundaries**

The limit of a relationship between a nurse and a client and any significant other, which facilitates safe and therapeutic practice and results in safe and effective care.

**Registered Midwife**

A person licensed to practice midwifery under the relevant state or country regulation and who has completed midwifery training in an institution accredited by the Nursing Board for Brunei.

**Registered Nurse**

A person licensed to practice nursing under the relevant state or country regulation and who has completed nursing training in a Nursing Institution accredited by the Nursing Board for Brunei.

**Responsibility**

The obligation that an individual assumes when undertaking to carry out planned/delegated functions. The individual who authorises the delegated function retains accountability.

**Restraint**

Limit or restrict someone or something.

**Stigmatizing**

If someone or something is stigmatized, they are unfairly regarded by many people as being bad or having something to be ashamed of.

**Therapeutic relationship**

A relationship between a nurse and a client which results in safe and effective caring practice to improve client's health.

**Violate**

If someone violates an agreement, law, or promise, they break it.

**Vulnerable**

Someone who is vulnerable is weak and without protection, with the result that they are easily hurt physically or emotionally.

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