



American Horticultural Therapy Association®

2025

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR CREDENTIALLED PROFESSIONALS

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**American Horticultural Therapy Association
www.ahta.org**

Code of Professional Ethics for Credentialed Professionals

The American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA) is dedicated to promoting all levels of interest in the development of horticulture and related activities as a therapeutic and rehabilitative medium. The AHTA strives to improve the performance of programs utilizing horticultural activities in human development through communications, coordination, knowledge dissemination, and promotion of education and training.

This Code is applicable to professionals holding the HTR-Horticultural Therapist-Registered, the HTM-Horticultural Therapist-Master, and the THP-Therapeutic Horticulture Practitioner. The AHTA is dedicated to enhancing the professionalism of these credentialed professionals. This service is predicated on a basic belief in the intrinsic worth, dignity, and potential of each human being. Respect for this belief shall guide the member's professional conduct. As an overriding principle “Do no harm” stands out at the forefront when one is in compliance with beneficence/non-maleficence, autonomy, justice, fidelity, veracity, confidentiality, competence, and compliance.

This Code of Ethics is congruent with the AHTA Standards of Practice and reflects the responsibility, professional competence, confidentiality, inter-professional relationships, publications, and consultation ethical code.

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Section A. The Client Relationship

1. Primary responsibility: Credentialed professionals have a primary responsibility to clients served.
2. Nondiscrimination: Credentialed professionals demonstrate respect for the client's cultural identity and do not discriminate based on race, color, religion (creed), gender identity, gender expression, national origin (ancestry), marital/partnership status, age, sex, sexual orientation, military status, or disability.
3. Professional Disclosure: Credentialed professionals inform clients regarding the exact nature of the horticultural therapy services or therapeutic horticulture services provided by informing them of the activity, process, and expectations.
4. Informed Consent: Credentialed professionals respect the right of clients to participate, or refuse to participate, in services. When providing services to persons who lack the capacity to give voluntary informed consent, the credentialed professional must coordinate with the client's representative and include the client in decision making as appropriate.
5. Dual relationships: Credentialed professionals make every effort to avoid dual relationships with current or former clients. They do not engage in electronic and/or in-person interactions or relationships that knowingly compromise the relationship. Credentialed professionals are prohibited from engaging in electronic and/or in-person sexual or romantic relationships with current or former clients, or their immediate family members.
6. Protecting clients: Credentialed professionals take steps to protect clients both physically and psychologically before, during and after the horticultural service. In a group setting, credentialed professionals take reasonable precautions to protect clients from harm.
7. Therapeutic intervention: Credentialed professionals will not knowingly place clients in situations that jeopardize the integrity of the therapeutic relationship such as unpaid labor or being without adequate supervision.
8. Inability to assist clients: Credentialed professionals avoid entering, or immediately terminate, the treatment of clients if it is determined that a conflict of interest exists and/or they are unable to provide effective treatment to clients. The appropriate action is to make a referral.
9. Termination: Credentialed professionals inform clients of the termination of a program, ending its services to the client, or leaving their position so that clients have time to process and be referred.

Section B. Responsibility

1. Responsibilities: Credentialed professionals have responsibilities to the client, profession, and the employer and to model expected behavior from colleagues.

2. Sexual harassment/unjustified gains: Credentialed professionals do not engage in sexual harassment nor use their position to seek or receive unjustified gains, favors, goods, or services.
3. Unsafe conditions: Credentialed professionals alert their employers of unsafe conditions of policy, procedure, or physical hazards which could disrupt a client's sense of well-being.
4. Clients served by others: Credentialed professionals take steps to inform the other health care professionals serving a client of the activities, expectations, and treatment of the client with informed consent. A Release of Information is standard best practice when coordinating services with others.
5. Client welfare: Credentialed professionals are Mandated Reporters and report credible knowledge or reports of abuse of vulnerable populations to appropriate authorities.

Section C. Responsibility to Professional Competence

1. Horticultural therapy competence: Horticultural therapist competence is achieved through the completion of an undergraduate degree in horticultural therapy or an undergraduate degree with additional coursework in human science, plant science, and horticultural therapy, the completion of an approved horticultural therapy internship under the supervision of a registered horticultural therapist, and through the granting of the credential of Horticultural Therapist-Registered (HTR) by the American Horticultural Therapy Association.
2. Therapeutic horticulture competence: Horticulture practitioner competence is achieved through the completion of horticultural therapy coursework, the completion of work experience delivering therapeutic horticulture services, and through the granting of the credential Therapeutic Horticulture Practitioner (THP) by the American Horticultural Therapy Association.
3. Boundaries of competence: Credentialed professionals practice within the boundaries of their competence gained by education, training, supervised experience, professional credentials, and professional experience. Credentialed professionals will use practices determined to be appropriate to a client's or group's age, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, national origin, marital/partnership status, immigration/citizenship status, ability, and/or religion.
4. Continuing education: Credentialed professionals are encouraged to seek continuing education through courses, conferences, and workshops to maintain/increase their professional competence. Credentialed professionals respect the diversity of clients and seek training in areas in which they are at risk of imposing their values onto clients.
5. Impairment of credentialed professionals: Credentialed professionals refrain from practicing when their personal problems or conflicts may cause harm.
6. Credentials claimed: Credentialed professionals may use the HTR, HTM, or THP designation only if they have the authority to do so through the AHTA. Credentialed

professionals must identify their credentials in an accurate manner that is not false, misleading, deceptive, or fraudulent in all aspects of professional presentation both electronic and in-person.

7. Exploitative relationships with subordinates and/or supervisees: Credentialed professionals do not engage in an electronic or in-person relationship that may be exploitative by nature or effect – demeaning, sexual, or punitive, with those they supervise, evaluate, or instruct.

Section D. Confidentiality

1. Confidentiality requirement: Credentialed professionals keep information related to the services provided confidential unless there is informed consent. Information sharing regarding the treatment team, in the best interest of client, or if required by law, should be only essential and the client needs to be aware of the disclosure.
2. Social media with clients: Credentialed professionals protect the confidentiality of clients by avoiding the posting of any personally identifiable information unless the client has provided written consent to do so.
3. Confidentiality of subordinates and/or supervisees: Credentialed professionals need to ensure that the confidentiality of clients is maintained by subordinates and/or supervisees.
4. Confidentiality in group work: Credentialed professionals communicate to group members that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in group work.
5. Confidentiality of Records: Credentialed professionals maintain confidentiality of records -- creating, storing, accessing, transferring, and disposing.
6. Permission to record or observe: Credentialed professionals obtain client's permission to record or have others observe. An Informed Consent is standard best practice for credentialed professionals to obtain client permission.
7. Data disguise requirement: Credentialed professionals protect the identity of a client in information used for teaching, publication, or research.
8. Social media: Credentialed professionals who maintain personal and/or professional social media sites clearly identify and state the purpose and use of the platform and must not operate the platform for both purposes. Credentialed professionals consider the ethics and conduct outlined in this Code. Credentialed professionals do not display or post confidential information on social media platforms.

Section E: Inter-professional Relationships

1. Personnel selection and assignment: Credentialed professionals select and train competent staff/volunteers and assign duties that are compatible to expertise.
2. Accepting fees: Credentialed professionals do not accept fees to enable clients to excel or reposition within the horticultural therapy program. In addition, fees for referrals or termination of clients are prohibited.

3. Sexual relationships with students or supervisees: Credentialed professionals do not engage in electronic or in-person sexual relationships with students and/or supervisees.
4. Supervision preparation: Credentialed professionals who offer supervision follow the guidelines and expectations of the AHTA horticultural therapy internship policy and procedures.
5. Students or supervisees evaluation information: Credentialed professionals objectively evaluate students and/or supervisees based on performance and not personality. Ensuring the rights of persons served is mandatory when assigning students or supervisees to provide horticultural services.
6. Standards for students or supervisees: Students and/or supervisees of horticultural therapy or therapeutic horticulture adhere to the AHTA Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.
7. Coworkers and peers: Credentialed professionals shall be cognizant of the relationship to other professionals involved in the service to clients and shall be aware that the welfare of clients receiving services depends on the capacity of all professional personnel to integrate their efforts.

Section F: Education (Teaching and Supervision)

1. Education program: Horticultural therapists involved in education as a horticultural therapy educator will establish a program combining academic, research, clinical, and ethical aspects of professional practice. The program will include opportunities for exposure to a wide range of methods and processes published in current literature.
2. Horticultural therapy educators: Horticultural therapists involved in education and/or supervision as a horticultural therapy educator will use their skill to help others acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to perform with high standards of professional competence.
3. Teaching: Horticultural therapists involved in education will instruct students in new techniques or areas of study based on evidenced-based research and practices. Horticultural therapy educators will first complete appropriate training, supervision, and/or consultations with professional competent in those areas or techniques.
4. Technology-assisted education. Horticultural therapy educators shall be competent in the use of technology and act appropriately to protect confidential student information transmitted through any electronic means.
5. Student participation: Horticultural therapy educators provide all students equal access to education programs and shall not discriminate based on race, color, religion (creed), gender identity, gender expression, national origin (ancestry), marital/partnership status, age, sex, sexual orientation, military status, or disability.
6. Student competence and evaluation: Horticultural therapists involved in education and/or internship supervision will evaluate student's performance and competency. Horticultural therapists are obligated to make recommendations based on a student's

competence and not to advance those students whose limits may interfere with the ability to perform as a horticultural therapist.

7. Ethical conduct: Horticultural therapists involved in the education of students and/or intern supervision will serve as a role model regarding ethical conduct and the enforcement of this Code of Ethics. The horticultural therapy educator will ensure that students and interns operate under the same ethical standards that govern professionals.
8. Supervision: Horticultural therapists involved in internship supervision will ensure that students are provided adequate supervision to perform horticultural therapy services.
9. Supervisor preparation: Horticultural therapists who offer students and/or intern's supervision are encouraged to pursue continuing education activities, including both supervision topics and skills.
10. Supervision boundaries: Horticultural therapy educators and internship supervisors shall avoid electronic or in-person nonprofessional relationships with current supervisees or trainees. They do not engage in any nonprofessional interaction that may compromise the supervisory relationship.

Section F. Publications/Research

1. Publication/seminars/workshop contributors: Credentialed professionals give appropriate credit to those who have contributed to their publication/seminar/workshop.
2. Precautions to avoid injury in research: Credentialed professionals avoid causing physical, social, or psychological harm to subjects in research. Credentialed professionals must obtain Institutional Board Approval and obtain informed consent from participants prior to initiating research.
3. Confidentiality of publication/seminar/workshop/research: Credentialed professionals keep confidential information regarding clients/participants in publication /seminar/workshop/research.
4. Accurate research results: Credentialed professionals do not distort or misrepresent research data, report all variables and conditions, nor fabricate or intentionally bias research results.

Section G. Consultation

1. Consultant standards: Credentialed professionals follow the AHTA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice when accepting consulting assignments.
2. Confidentiality in consultation: Credentialed professionals follow the standards for confidentiality as outlined in Section D. In addition, any information regarding the organization, its employees, or clients served shall be regarded as confidential and not used for any unethical purposes.
3. Documentation: Credentialed professionals create, protect, and maintain documentation necessary for rendering professional services as outlined in Section D.

4. Professional representation: When marketing or otherwise representing their services to the public in any form of media, credentialed professionals identify their credentials in an accurate manner as outlined in Section C.
5. Consultation competency: Credentialed professionals ensure and are able to document competency in all areas related to acceptance of consulting assignments.
6. Fees: A credentialed professional does not participate in setting fees that create undue hardship for the client. The credentialed professional shall not participate in fee splitting nor engage in giving or receiving commissions or any other form of remuneration when accepting referrals or referring clients for professional services.
7. Billing records: Credentialed professionals maintain confidential billing records that accurately reflect the services provided, fees charged, and identify who provided the services. Invoices accurately reflect the services provided.
8. Termination of service: Credentialed professionals in fee-for-service arrangements with clients may terminate services for unpaid fees. Credentialed professionals engaged in fee-for-service include this information in their contract for services and document all attempts made to correct the situation prior to termination.

Section H. Six Principles of Ethical Behavior

1. Beneficence: To do good for others.
2. Nonmaleficence: To do no harm to others.
3. Autonomy: To respect the rights of others to be self-governing.
4. Justice: To be fair and treat others equally.
5. Fidelity: To be faithful and fulfill obligations to others.
6. Veracity: To be honest and tell the truth.