

Ethics Isn't Optional: Understanding and Applying the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Code of Ethics



A Complimentary Continuing Professional Education Program Self- Study Course

Written by Linda S. Eck Mills, MBA, RDN, LDN, FADA
and edited by Becky Dorner, RDN, LD, FAND



www.beckydorner.com

info@beckydorner.com

800-342-0285

546 Scotland Street Dunedin, FL 3469

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Continuing Professional Education Program Self-Study Course

Author and Item Writer

Linda S. Eck Mills, MBA, RDN, LDN, FADA
President/Owner, Dynamic Communication Services
Bernville, PA

Edited by Becky Dorner, RDN, LD, FAND
President, Becky Dorner & Associates, Inc.
Dunedin, FL

Thank you to the following expert reviewers for carefully reviewing this course:

Elizabeth K. Friedrich, MPH, RD, CSG, NWCC, LDN
Friedrich Nutrition Consulting
Salisbury, NC

Janet Skates MS, RD, LDN, FADA
Owner, Nutrition Consulting Services
Kingsport, TN

Lisa Dierks, MFCS, RDN, LD
Regional Director - University of MN Extension
Wanamingo, MN

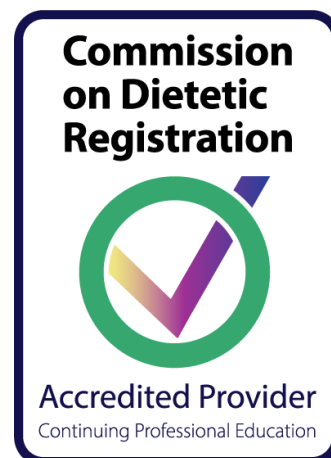
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Becky Dorner & Associates, Inc. has been a Continuing Professional Education (CPE) Accredited Provider (NU004) with the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) since 2002.

We maintain records of course completions for a period of 7 years.



Comments for CDR

If you wish, you may submit evaluations of the quality of this course activities/materials to CDR at www.cdrnet.org.

How to Complete this Course and Receive Your Certificate

For details on how to complete a continuing education course and obtain your certificate, please visit beckydorner.com/continuing-education/how-to-complete-cpe/.

This course and test must be completed prior to the expiration date. To obtain your continuing education certificate, you must review the material provided, take and pass an online test, and complete a simple evaluation. You may re-take the online test as many times as needed prior to the expiration date. If you are interrupted and cannot finish the test, you can save the test and come back later to finish it.

Carefully review the contents of this program. Keep in mind the practical applications it has for you in your individual setting. The focus is to increase your knowledge and application of the subject matter. For multiple choice questions select the one best answer from the choices given.

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Course Expiration Date Must be completed prior to this date	Continuing Education Hours	Profession for which CPE is Intended	CDR Level	CDR CPE Type	CDR Activity Number
April 22, 2022	1	RDN *CDE NDTR	2	720	148077

*If the CDE is a member of the Academy and/or credentialed by CDR

Course Goals:

CDR Essential Practice Competencies:

1. Sphere 1: Ethics and Professionalism
 - 1.1 Identified with and adheres to the code of ethics for the profession.

Course Description

This course is based on the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics *Code of Ethics*. This Code applies to nutrition and dietetics practitioners who act in a wide variety of capacities. The Code provides general principles and specific ethical standards for situations frequently encountered in daily practice. The primary goal is the protection of the individuals, groups, organizations, communities, or populations with whom the practitioner works and interacts. *This course meets the requirements for the Commission on Dietetic Registration's required 1 CPE credit on ethics in each 5 year cycle of their Professional Development Portfolio.*

To complete this CPE, read the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics *Code of Ethics* <https://www.eatrightpro.org/-/media/eatrightpro-files/career/code-of-ethics/codeofethicshandout.pdf?la=en&hash=1DEF8BAE3548732AC47E3827D9E6326DA5AED496>. Or access the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics publication at [https://jandonline.org/article/S2212-2672\(18\)30863-3/pdf](https://jandonline.org/article/S2212-2672(18)30863-3/pdf). Next, review the case study below, which provides practical examples of ethical issues. Lastly, complete the Continuing Professional Education Exam and follow the instructions on page 4 of this document to obtain your CPE certificate.

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Course Learning Objectives

After completing this continuing education course, the learner should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of situations that result in an ethical dilemma.
2. Apply logical steps in the approach to ethical decision-making.
3. Analyze work-place situations to determine whether there is a Code of Ethics violation.

CDR Learning Needs Codes and Performance Indicators

Suggested CDR Learning Needs Codes	Suggested CDR Performance Indicators
1. 1000 Professional skills	1. 1.1.1 Accepts own responsibility and accountability for actions and decisions related to customers.
2. 1010 Career planning, Standards of Practice, Standards of Professional Performance, Scope of Dietetics Practice Framework	2. 1.1.4 Practices with honesty, integrity, transparency, and fairness
3. 1050 Ethics	3. 1.1.6 Recognizes and manages situations with ethical implications.
4. 7020 Conflict management	4. 1.1.8 Adheres to the Standards of Professional Performance for RDNs (or NDTRs).

Note: Numerous Other Learning Needs Codes and Performance Indicators May Apply.

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Case Study

Three registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) who were in graduate school together meet monthly for lunch to provide professional support to each other. Sue works full time in a hospital and is responsible for a medical-surgical floor. John has a full time private practice focusing on cardiac care and also contracts with a nursing home and hospice agency. Maria works in a nursing home and has both food service management and clinical nutrition responsibilities. The issue of obtaining the required ethics CPE for the Commission on Dietetic Registration comes up during their conversation and they discuss ethics and dietetic practice.

Sue reports on a 55 year-old male post-surgery patient who is not eating well. On admission he was 5'10" and weighed 180 pounds. After one week, his weight dropped to 165 pounds, an 8.3% weight loss. His appetite has been poor since surgery, but he is drinking at least four 16 ounce glasses of water daily. Although he has no advance directives on file, he has told staff he does not want a tube feeding. Sue is concerned with the significant weight loss and poor intake that may be delaying his recovery. She asks if a short-term tube feeding is an option, even though the patient does not want it. John suggests using high calorie, high protein oral nutritional supplements (ONS) since the patient is drinking well.

Sue also mentioned that she discovered a co-worker has started to backdate nutrition notes to meet the regulatory time frames for initial assessments. The co-worker told Sue that her case load of high-risk patients had increased, making it difficult to complete required documentation on time, and she didn't want to get the department in trouble. Sue is very concerned and asks for advice on how to handle this situation.

John has a nursing home patient who is under hospice care. The patient is declining, and he has had poor food and fluid intake and a significant weight loss in the past month. John has followed the facility policy of weighing the patient weekly. He has also added ONS. The hospice RN case manager wants to discontinue the weekly weights, but John is concerned the facility might be cited for a nutrition care related deficiency during the upcoming state survey.

John shares that he is selling a new brand of nutritional supplements and is offering them as part of his recommendations for all of the cardiac patients in his private practice. The supplements are part of a multi-level marketing platform and have the potential to add significantly to his financial bottom line.

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The primary food service vendor at Maria's facility asked several dietitians to be part of a focus group to sample new product offerings. John and Maria have both been invited to participate. The vendor will be serving new products that will be available for purchase and to be added to the facilities' order guides. Each dietitian will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card for attending.

The group questions whether these situations pose ethical concerns. They decide to review the most recent Code of Ethics for the Nutrition and Dietetics Profession (date June 1, 2018) and evaluate each situation.

After reading the Code of Ethics, the RDNs conclude:

Tube Feeding vs. Supplement Use for Sue's Hospital Patient

Sue should educate the patient about the need for adequate nutrition post-surgery, share her concerns (from an evidence-based perspective) about his significant weight loss and malnutrition's impact on recovery, and outline options available including short-term tube feeding and/or use of ONS. However, Sue should remember that patients have the right to refuse treatment. The Code of Ethics requires practitioners to respect patient's autonomy and decision making about their personal health (Section 2.h.). If the patient refuses tube feeding, Sue must respect that decision. Sue should follow the facility's guidelines for offering patients the opportunity to document their advance directives. She should make note of his preferences in her dietary progress notes.

Sue's Hospital Co-Worker Back Dating Notes

The Code of Ethics requires practitioners to refrain from communicating false, deceptive, or misleading statements (3.d). Backdating notes is considered falsification of information and could be a legal issue. Sue needs to discuss the situation with the co-worker and discuss options on how to handle this situation with integrity. One way is to use a late entry. However, the regular use of late entries will raise questions that could lead to ethics being questioned. Further investigation is needed to work through the correct approach to ethical decision-making in this situation. The lack of adequate staffing to provide care within established time frames needs to be addressed with management.

John's Nursing Home/Hospice Patient's Weights

The Code of Ethics requires practitioners to act in a caring and respectful manner (1.g) and make evidence-based decisions, taking into account unique patient circumstances (1.e). Weighing patients at the end of life serves no useful purpose and can be uncomfortable. Therefore, with permission of the patient and/or family, weights can be discontinued to maintain the individual's comfort and dignity. John should document the

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decision to discontinue weights in the medical record and care plan. John should consult with the patient, family, and/or staff regarding foods and beverages the patient might consume, and direct the food service to provide a variety of those items as tolerated.

John's Supplement Sales

The Code of Ethics calls for practitioners to disclose any conflicts of interest, including any financial interests in products or services that are recommended (2.a). John is in violation of the Code because he is selling the supplements to all of his patients and not disclosing his financial arrangement with the multi-level marketing company. Supplement sales are not necessarily a Code of Ethics violation, according to the Academy's *Guidelines Regarding the Recommendation and Sale of Dietary Supplements*, (<https://www.eatrightpro.org/practice/code-of-ethics/ethics-education-resources/guidelines-regarding-the-recommendation-and-sale-of-dietary-supplements-full-text>). By making some changes to be transparent about the supplement sales, John may be able to ethically sell supplements in his private practice.

Gift Card

Vendors value their customers and want to meet their needs. The use of industry focus groups is a common practice. The quantity of the gift card is not a significant amount and may or may not raise ethical concerns. The Code of Ethics calls for refraining from accepting gifts or services which could potentially influence or which may give the appearance of influencing professional judgment (2.a), so it is important to be aware of the perceptions that accepting gifts may create. In addition, facility or company policy may prohibit accepting the gift card. In some cases, using the gift card to benefit the facility or department (rather than the individual) is expected. *Note: It is questionable whether accepting money for the department or facility is much different from accepting money for personal use. It may not necessarily be a more ethical decision.*

References:

1. Peregrin T. Revisions to the Code of Ethics for the Nutrition and Dietetics Profession. *J Acad Nutr Diet*. 2018;118;1764-1767. [https://jandonline.org/article/S2212-2672\(18\)30863-3/pdf](https://jandonline.org/article/S2212-2672(18)30863-3/pdf). Accessed April 10, 2019.
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3. Thomson C, Diekman C, Sarubin-Fragakis A, Meerschaert C, Holler H, Devlin C. Guidelines Regarding the Recommendation and Sale of Dietary Supplements. *J Acad Nutr Diet*. 2002;102;1158-1164. doi:10.1016/S0002-8223(02)90257-9.

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Continuing Professional Education Self-Assessment Test

1. John, Sue, and Maria studied the Academy/CDR's approach to ethical decision-making as they discussed their work place dilemmas. What should they do first as they consider if a situation is an ethical dilemma?
 - a. Determine which key principle of ethical theory may have been violated.
 - b. Apply the Academy/CDR Code to the issue and their ethical decision-making.
 - c. Read and become familiar with the Academy/CDR Code of Ethics and related resources.
 - d. Ask questions to determine if the situation is a legal, employment, or business issue.

2. As Sue considers recommending a short-term tube feeding for a patient with weight loss who has verbalized he did not want tube feeding, what is the primary reason why she should identify her perceptions and values related to the issue?
 - a. To ensure that the facility is not cited in a survey for untreated weight loss.
 - b. To ensure that her decision is consistent with and supports her personal values.
 - c. To ensure her actions are consistent with the facility's advance directives policies.
 - d. To ensure that her values do not interfere with the patient's right to self-determination.

3. The discovery that a co-worker is back-dating notes in the chart is best characterized as a(n)
 - a. legal matter.
 - b. ethical issue.
 - c. business dispute.
 - d. employment matter.

4. In deciding to discontinue weekly weights in a hospice patient, what steps should John take to support his decision?
 - a. Do not mention weights to avoid drawing a surveyor's attention to the issue.
 - b. Document in the medical record why weekly weights were discontinued.
 - c. Continue to reference the patient's most recent weight in reassessments.
 - d. Exclude the patient or family in discussions about weight.

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5. A hospital dietitian considers whether to accept a vendor's invitation to participate in a focus group dinner for which she will receive a small gift card. What issue would be important to consider in order to make the best decision ethically?
 - a. Her professional competence in food service
 - b. Cultural influences affecting her decision making
 - c. Strategies to avoid similar situations from recurring in the future
 - d. How alternative solutions track with her and her organization's values

6. Recommending a tube feeding for a patient with no advanced directives, but who has verbalized that he does not want a tube feeding may be best characterized as a(n)
 - a. legal matter.
 - b. ethical issue.
 - c. business dispute.
 - d. employment matter.

7. The best way to address the discovery that a co-worker is backdating notes in the chart is to
 - a. defer to the dietitian's business contract regarding provision of services.
 - b. report the unethical behavior to the Academy's Code of Ethics Committee.
 - c. refer the employee to the organization's legal department for legal action.
 - d. address core problems prompting the backdating through proper employer channels.

8. In the case study presented, which of the following scenarios presents a violation of the Code of Ethics?
 - a. Maria and John attending a focus group dinner.
 - b. John selling supplements to all of his cardiac patients.
 - c. John discontinuing weekly weights for hospice patient.
 - d. Sue recommending an oral supplement for patient with weight loss.