



Tanzania Nurses and Midwives Council

**CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR
NURSES AND MIDWIVES IN TANZANIA**

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Introduction

This Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses and Midwives in Tanzania sets out conventional principles and expectations that will be binding to all nurses and midwives in Tanzania. Its purpose is to inform the professionals, employers, other professionals and the public on the standard of professional expected from a nurse.

For a long time, the conduct of nurses and midwives in Tanzania was regulated by the Code of Ethics and Etiquettes, which was adapted from the International Council of Nurses (ICN). In 2002, the Ministry of Health produced the Professional Code of Ethics for Nurses and Midwives in Tanzania, which was also adapted by Tanzania Nurses and Midwives Council. This document is developed to accommodate new approaches in ethics.

It is expected that these standards, which licensed nurses are required to observe, should also be disseminated in schools of nursing and midwifery and emphasized to all practising nurses and midwives. This strategy is important in order to create a shared understanding across the profession regarding the expected standards of professional conduct.

Application

This Code of Professional Conduct shall apply to all registered and enrolled nurses and midwives in both public and private sectors.

It shall complement existing laws, regulations, guidelines and any other codes guiding and regulating the standards of behaviour in nursing and midwifery practice.

Purpose

The purpose of this Code is to:

- Guide the professionals so as to attain acceptable standards expected of them when discharging their responsibilities.
- Guide the professionals in the ever changing world of education, practice, research, leadership and management and the need for them to adopt and acquaint themselves with the change for the betterment of the delivery of health care.
- Enable nurses and midwives to make decisions on patient care approaches and values within the complex health care delivery system and environment in which the nurse/midwife practices.

Guiding Principles

As a nurse or midwife licensed to practice by TNMC, you are personally accountable for your practice, when caring for patients and clients you must adhere to the following guiding principles:

1. Respect for humankind and life
2. Obtain consent before you provide care
3. Maintain professional competence

4. Take responsibility and be accountable for your acts
5. Be trustworthy and exercise fairness
6. Collaborate with other and act as a part of the team
7. Protect confidential information

1. Respect for Humankind and the Patient/Client as an Individual

The nurse/midwife should strive at all times when providing services to:

value human life and honour the patients/clients wishes regarding their quality of life,

recognize and appreciate the uniqueness of each client regardless of his/her cultural and socio economic status,

promote an environment in which the human rights, values, cultural and spiritual beliefs of an individual are respected

respect the privacy of a patient/client in such away that during the procedure, privacy is provided and maintained throughout,

ensure that no action or omission on her part or within her sphere of responsibility is harmful to the interests, condition, safety and well being of a patient/client,

recognize and respect the roles of patients/ clients as partners in their care and their contribution they can make to it. In so doing the nurse and midwife shall have regard to the limits of professional practice, existing legislations, resources and goals of therapeutic relationship,

respect the patients'/clients' autonomy to undergo any health care intervention which is protected under the law.

2. Obtaining Consent

- 2.1. All patients and clients have a right to receive information about their condition. You must be sensitive to their needs and respect the wishes of those who refuse or are unable to receive information about their condition. Information should be accurate, truthful and presented in such a way as to make it easily understood. You may need to seek legal or professional advice or guidance from your employer, in relation to the giving or withholding of consent.
- 2.2 You must respect patients' and clients' autonomy – their right to decide whether or not to undergo any health care intervention – even where a refusal may result in harm, unless a court of law orders to the contrary.
- 2.3 When obtaining valid consent, you must be sure that it is:
 - given by a legally competent person
 - given voluntarily
 - informed
- 2.4 You should presume that every patient and client is legally competent unless otherwise assessed by a suitably qualified practitioner. A patient or client who is legally competent can understand and retain treatment information and can use it to make an informed choice.
- 2.5 Those who are legally competent may give consent in writing, orally or by co-operation. They may also refuse consent. You must ensure that all your discussions and associated decisions relating to obtaining consent are documented in the patient's or client's health care records.
- 2.6 When patients or clients are no longer legally competent and have lost the capacity to consent to or refuse treatment and care, you should try to find out whether they have previously indicated preferences in an advance statement. You must respect any refusal or treatment or care given when they were legally competent, provided that the decision is clearly applicable to the present circumstances and that there is no reason to believe that they have changed their minds. When such a statement is not available, the patients' or clients' wishes, if known, should be taken into account. If these wishes are not known, the criteria for treatment must be that it is in their best interests.
- 2.7 The principles of obtaining consent apply equally to those people who have a mental illness. Whilst you should be involved in their assessment, it will also be necessary to involve relevant people who have a mental illness. Whilst you should be involved in their assessment, it will also be necessary to involve relevant people close to them; this may include a psychiatrist
- 2.8 In emergencies where treatment is necessary to preserve life, you may provide care without consent, if a patient or client is unable to give it, provided you can demonstrate that you are acting in their best interests.
- 2.9 No-one has the right to give consent on behalf of another competent adult. In relation to obtaining consent for a child, the involvement of those with parental responsibility in the consent procedure is usually necessary, but will depend on the age and understanding of the child. Usually the

individual performing a procedure should be the person to obtain the patient's or client's consent.

3. Maintaining Professional Competence

Nurse and midwife must strive at all times to achieve and maintain high professional standards in providing quality care. In doing so she shall:

- 3.1 demonstrate high level of competence in her practice,
- 3.2 acknowledge the limits of professional competence and only practice those activities in which she is competent,
- 3.3 always consider safety of patients/clients in her professional practice,
- 3.4 acquire new knowledge and skills continuously and use them effectively,
- 3.5 provide care based on knowledge, skills and abilities expected from a person of her status even when faced with an emergency situation whatsoever, and
- 3.6 strive to deliver care based on current evidence, best practice and where applicable, validated research.

4. Responsibility and Accountability

The nurse and midwife is responsible for maintaining professional standards for quality care and be accountable for her actions. Therefore she shall observe the following:

- 4.1 has the responsibility of providing quality service in conscientious, diligent and efficient manner,
- 4.2 obliged and expected to handle nursing and midwifery matters without undue delay, risk or unnecessary expense to the employer, client/patient,
- 4.3 accountability for her actions or omissions through formal lines of authority and responsibility,
- 4.4 respecting and complying with rules and regulations in a manner that promote public confidence, the integrity of nursing and midwifery services and profession,
- 4.5 desist from conduct capable of drawing an impression of being involved in corruption,
- 4.6 in case of delegation, delegate the nursing work with close supervision,
- 4.7 as a manager, she has a duty towards patient, colleagues, community and her organization in which she works. And when facing professional dilemma, her first consideration in all circumstances must be the interest and safety of patients and clients,

- 4.8 maintain personal hygiene, good nutrition and dress in acceptable manner in accordance with acceptable nursing and midwifery practice,

5. Honest and Fairness

Every nurse and midwife has a duty to:

- behave in a way that uphold good reputation of the profession,
- avoid using your registration status in the promotion of commercial product or service.
- not solicit, force or accept bribes from client/patient or family and relatives for any reasons,
- Must refuse any gift, favour or hospitality that might be interpreted, now or in the future, as attempt to obtain preferential consideration.
- use official time in a honest way to fulfil professional responsibility,
- be fair in distributing resources
- at all times, to tell the truth and be loyal and avoid deception in whatever form,

6. Collaboration and Team Work

Every nurse and midwife, when discharging her duties of providing services has a duty to:

- work as a team which includes client/patient, client's family and other health professionals in the health care delivery system,
 - share her knowledge and skills and respect others views for the benefit of clients/patients,
 - give due weight and consideration to official views and respecting colleagues, including their right to privacy especially when handling personal information,
- 6.4 give credit to colleagues with outstanding performance and should not seek personal credit at their expenses,
- 6.5 should act appropriately to protect patient and client from risks if she believes that her colleague is not fit to practice for reasons of misconduct, ill-health or incompetence, and
- 6.6 at all times behave herself in such a manner that maintains the good reputation of the profession. She should not involve herself in drug or alcohol abuse.

7. Confidential Information

Information about patients and clients must be treated as confidential and be used only for the purposes for which it was given. As it is impractical to obtain consent every time you need to share information with others, you should ensure that patients and clients understand that some information may be made available to other members of the team involved in the delivery of care.

Every nurse and midwife, when discharging her duties of providing services has a duty to:

- 7.1 guard against breaches of confidentiality by protecting information from improper disclosure at all times.
- 7.2 seek patients' and clients' wishes regarding the sharing of information with their family and others.
- 7.3 If required to disclose information outside the team that will have personal consequences for patients or clients, must obtain their consent. If the patient or client withholds consent, or if consent cannot be obtained for whatever reason, disclosure may be made only where:
 - they can be justified in the public interest (usually where disclosure is essential to protect the patient or client or someone else from the risk of significant harm)
 - they are required by law or by order of a court
- 7.4 recognize that, the decision to provide or withhold information should be taken with the greatest caution and responsibility, and
- 7.5 cooperate, communicate effectively and respect each other's expertise and contributions.

The Nurses Pledge

All the Nurses and Midwives upon completion of their course and on any other occasion shall pledge as follows:

I solemnly pledge myself before God and in the presence of this assembly; to pass my life in purity and practice my profession faithfully.

I will abstain from whatever deleterious and mischievous and will not take or knowingly administer harmful drugs.

I will do all in my power to elevate the standard of my profession, and will hold in confidence all personal matters committed to my keeping and all family affairs coming to my knowledge in the practice of my profession.

With loyalty will endeavour to give professional care to my clients and devote myself to the welfare of those committed to my care.

NB: This Pledge may also be used during the national and international nurses commemorations.

Definition of terms

Code of ethics

A formal statement by a group that is established and prescribes moral standards and behaviours of the group

Code of conduct

Is a social instrument designed by members of the profession to guide and control the practice

Pledge

Is a public promise to adopt, a covenant between one person and another that sets an ideal by which the one who is promising will adhere to or abide by.

Principle

Statement of the relationship between two or more concept.