



CODE OF ETHICS

FOR MICRO-CREDENTIAL PROFESSIONALS

PREAMBLE

This Code of Ethics is intended to provide standards to cover situations encountered by those professionals who have received a micro-credential from the Autism Partnership Foundation (referred to as a certified micro-credential professional hereafter). This code is meant to help ensure that clients are treated with dignity, integrity, and are free from harm.

Professionals who have received a micro-credential are committed to a progressive approach to Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) specifically with the procedure that they have received a micro-credential in. Professionals who are certified with a micro-credential are committed to providing intervention that develops meaningful and socially significant behaviors that will improve their clients' quality of life.

This Code of Ethics provides a common set of principles and standards upon which professionals who have received a micro-credential with Autism Partnership Foundation.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Progressive Approach to Applied Behavior Analysis

Progressive ABA is a philosophical approach in which interventionists, supervisors, and applied researchers employ a structured yet flexible approach to behavior change. All efforts are contingent upon and responsive to the individual's progress. To do this, the certified micro-credential professional uses the best available evidence in combination with advanced knowledge of basic principles and constant in-the-moment assessment to inform effective and caring intervention. This results in an approach that is grounded in science, socially-valid, and always progressing.

Client

A client is any recipient or person who benefits from the professional services provided by the certified micro-credential professional. The term includes, but is not limited to:

- a) those individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who directly receive the services;
- b) the caregivers, peer(s), relative(s), legal representative(s), or legal guardian(s) of the recipient of services;
- c) the employer, agency, institutional representative, or third-party contractor for services of the certified micro-credential professional; and
- d) any other individual or entity that is a known beneficiary of services or who would normally be construed as a client or client surrogate.

Multiple Relationships

A multiple relationship occurs when the certified micro-credential professional is in a professional role with an individual and simultaneously enters another non-professional role with that individual, enters a professional and/or non-professional relationship with a family member of that individual, or promises/implies to enter a non-professional relationship with that individual in the near future.

Exploitative Relationships

An exploitative relationship occurs when the certified micro-credential professional uses their status in relation to another individual to gain personal benefit. This includes, but is not limited to, engaging in sexual behavior with someone they supervise, a student, client, or employee, or when the certified micro-credential professional asks a supervisee, student, client, or employee to break an ethical code or the law.

Scientific Evidence / Evidence-Based Procedures

We acknowledge that there is no consensus on the criteria for a behavior analytic procedure or intervention to be considered an evidence-based practice, or if evidence-based practice in ABA-based interventions should consist of a list of procedures or be a clinical decision-making process. We encourage the certified micro-credential professional to take into consideration several of the standards that have been developed for use when examining the scientific evidence of a behavior analytic procedure. Critical features of these standards commonly include: (a) several publications in peer reviewed journals, (b) evaluation with several participants diagnosed with ASD and across several research facilities, and (c) clear demonstrations of effectiveness through sound research methodology.

Informed Consent

Obtaining informed consent includes a description (or demonstration, if requested) of the range of procedures that are going to be implemented, potential benefits and risks for the client, how confidentiality is going to be protected, how videos are going to be used, how Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) standards are going to be met, and how the client can withdraw or be terminated from services.

CODE OF ETHICS

1. RELATIONSHIPS

1.1 Do no Harm

- The certified micro-credential professional avoids all actions that may cause physical, emotional, or psychological harm to their clients, supervisees, supervisor, and/or organization.

1.2 Non-Discrimination

- Within their context of work, the certified micro-credential professional does not engage in discrimination based upon age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, disability, political orientation, or any other basis proscribed by the law.

1.3 Cultural Humility

- The certified micro-credential professional engages in learning opportunities to increase their knowledge and skill set as it relates to understanding and working with individuals from different cultures, races, and ethnicities. The certified micro-credential professional should consistently evaluate their own potential biases and make changes to guard against these biases.

1.4 Harassment

- The certified micro-credential professional does not engage in sexual harassment as defined by local, national, and international law.
- The certified micro-credential professional does not engage in other forms of harassments (e.g., emotional, physical) as defined by local, national, and international law.

1.5 Multiple Relationships

- The certified micro-credential professional does not engage in Multiple Relationships. If they find themselves in a multiple relationship they resolve it immediately.

1.6 Exploitative and Sexual Relationships

- The certified micro-credential professional does not engage in exploitative relationships
- The certified micro-credential professional does not engage in sexual relationships with their clients, clients family members, past and current.
- The certified micro-credential professional does not engage in sexual relationships with their supervisor or supervisee.

CODE OF ETHICS

1.7 Other Professionals

- The certified micro-credential professional works collaboratively with other professionals to serve their clients effectively within the context of providing only evidence-based procedures/interventions.

1.8 Conflicts of Interest

- The certified micro-credential professional avoids conflicts of interest that may impair professional judgment or negatively impact client outcomes.
- The certified micro-credential professional does not allow financial, personal, or organizational pressures to influence the selection, implementation, or continuation of intervention.

1.9 Reporting Ethical Violations

- The certified micro-credential professional is aware of their responsibility to address potential ethical violations.
- When appropriate, and when it can be done safely, the certified micro-credential professional reports observed or suspected unethical behavior to the appropriate authority, organization, or governing body.

2. COMPETENCY

2.1 Accurate Representation

- The certified micro-credential professional only represents the micro-credential and the level that they hold within that micro-credential.

2.2 Boundaries of Competence

- The certified micro-credential professional only implements interventions for which they have received proper education and training and have demonstrated competence in the related intervention.

2.3 Maintaining Competence

- The certified micro-credential professional maintains competency with the population and within the area that they are working by completing all recertification requirements.

2.4 Compliance

- The certified micro-credential professional obeys all professional codes of organizations for which they are members.
- The certified micro-credential professional follows all local, regional, state, national, and international law as pertains to the conduct of their profession.

CODE OF ETHICS

2.5 Scope of Practice and Role-Clarity

- The certified micro-credential professional practices only within the scope of the specific procedures for which they have received training and demonstrated competence. The micro-credential does not independently authorize comprehensive assessment, treatment design, or unsupervised clinical practice unless otherwise permitted by law or additional licensure/certification.
- The certified micro-credential professional accurately represents the limitations of their credential to clients, caregivers, and organizations and does not imply broader expertise than is warranted by their training.

2.6 Supervision and Escalation

- The certified micro-credential professional seeks supervision, consultation, or guidance when encountering situations that fall outside of their training, when ethical uncertainty arises, or when client progress is not evident.
- The certified micro-credential professional communicates concerns in a timely manner and defers to qualified supervisors or professionals when necessary to ensure effective and ethical service delivery.

3. DUTY TO CLIENTS

3.1 Client Rights

- The certified micro-credential professional, to the best of their ability, maximizes therapeutic benefits to the client.
- The certified micro-credential professional supports the legal rights of the client.
- The certified micro-credential professional provides any credentials, certifications, and previous experience to the client when requested.
- The certified micro-credential professional provides information to the client, third-party, parent, or legal guardian about the procedures to lodge complaints or ethical violations.

3.2 Informed Consent and Assent

- The certified micro-credential professional provides intervention only when informed consent has been obtained.
- When informed consent is not possible within clinical practice (e.g., when working with minors) the certified micro-credential professional strives to obtain assent when possible and continues to measure and assess on a frequent basis.
- When an emergency places the client in potential harm, the certified micro-credential professional provides intervention until the client is free from immediate harm. The certified micro-credential professional obtains consent to continue the intervention from that point forward if they are continuing with services.

CODE OF ETHICS

3.3 Confidentiality

- The certified micro-credential professional ensures confidentiality with any client.
- The certified micro-credential professional provides confidential information to law enforcement or social service agencies when the certified micro-credential professional sees a reasonable risk of harm to the client.
- When the certified micro-credential professional needs to consult with a colleague about a client, the certified micro-credential does not disclose information that would identify the client unless written or electronic consent to disclose that information is provided by the client or the clients legal guardian.

3.4 Data and Data Records

- The certified micro-credential professional creates and maintains records that document what occurred during their session. This information may include, but is not limited to, time of the sessions, interventionists present, interventions implemented, recommendations, and data on behavioral goals.
- The certified micro-credential professional maintains confidentiality of all records.
- The certified micro-credential professional provides maintained records to the client upon request.
- The certified micro-credential professional provides maintained records to third parties upon request with the approval of the client or when required to by law (e.g., subpoena).

3.5 Right to Effective Treatment

- A client has an absolute right to receive effective intervention based upon current scientific evidence.
- The certified micro-credential professional only provides interventions that are based on scientific evidence/are evidence-based procedures.
- Any intervention implemented by the certified micro-credential professional should be individualized to meet the needs of the client.
- The certified micro-credential professional includes client preference in determining the intervention when applicable and provides support in evaluating the merits of available options.

3.6 Client Safety and Risk Management

- The certified micro-credential professional continuously evaluates the potential risks and benefits of intervention. The certified micro-credential professional modifies or discontinues interventions when the risk of harm outweighs the potential benefits.
- In situations involving immediate risk (e.g., aggression, self-injury, or unsafe environments), the certified micro-credential professional prioritizes client safety and follows established emergency or organizational procedures.

CODE OF ETHICS

4. RIGHT TO A PROGRESSIVE APPROACH TO ABA

4.1 Conceptually Systematic

- The certified micro-credential professional implements procedures which are scientifically supported and evidence based.
- The certified micro-credential professional implements a Progressive Approach to ABA.

4.2 Socially Valid Outcomes

- The certified micro-credential professional targets only those behaviors which are meaningful to the client in the short-term or have long-term benefits.
- The certified micro-credential professional provides intervention that is culturally responsive.

4.3 Interventions

- The certified micro-credential professional only implements interventions that they have been trained.

4.4 Individualization

- The certified micro-credential professional individualizes intervention based upon the learner and the environment.
- The certified micro-credential professional is responsive to changes in the client's behavior and makes in-the-moment changes to protocols and procedures based upon client behavior as opposed to being solely responsive to a protocol.

4.5 Affirming Principles

- The certified micro-credential professional does not endorse, recommend, or implement procedures which are not behavior analytic in nature, non-evidence based, pseudoscientific, or anti-scientific.

4.6 Treatment Integrity and Fidelity

- The certified micro-credential professional implements procedures as trained and maintains adherence to the essential components of the intervention.
- The certified micro-credential professional monitors their own performance and seeks feedback or additional training when deviations from protocol or reductions in treatment integrity are identified.

CODE OF ETHICS

4.7 Data Based Decision Making

- The certified micro-credential professional collects and reviews data on client performance to guide decision-making.
- When data indicate a lack of progress, regression, or variability that limits effectiveness, the certified micro-credential professional modifies the intervention within their scope of competence or seeks supervision or consultation.

5. SOCIAL MEDIA

5.1 Avoidance of False and Deceptive Statements

- The certified micro-credential professional avoids making false or misleading statements, providing disinformation, and/or misinformation.
- If a false, deceptive, or misleading statement is made unintentionally, the certified micro-credential professional rectifies the statement in a timely manner that is likely to reach the audience who has viewed the original statement.
- The certified micro-credential professional only claims degrees, certifications, or licensures they have earned and for which they can show proof.

5.2 Intellectual Property

- The certified micro-credential professional gives appropriate credit to authors when disseminating materials (e.g., presentations, chapters, or peer reviewed papers).

5.3 Statement of Others

- If the certified micro-credential professional learns of deceptive statements about their work made by others, the certified micro-credential professional makes reasonable efforts to correct such statements (e.g., emailing them about the deception).
- If the certified micro-credential professional is in an administrator, moderator, or has a leadership role on a social media page or platform and they witness, or are made aware of, others making false or misleading statements, providing disinformation or misinformation on that page or platform, the certified micro-credential professional will take appropriate actions to immediately address the posting or alert the poster about the inaccuracy of their statement(s).

5.4 Media Presentations

- The certified micro-credential professional who provides public advice or comment via print, internet, or other means must take precautions to ensure the statements are based on their own professional knowledge, training, or experience and in accordance with appropriate research literature and practice.

CODE OF ETHICS

- The certified micro-credential professional ensures that confidential information is protected during all media presentations.
- If the certified micro-credential professional provides confidential information during a media presentation, the certified micro-credential professional obtains prior written or electronic consent to use such confidential information.

5.5 Technology and Confidentiality in Digital Environments

- The certified micro-credential professional takes appropriate precautions to protect confidentiality when using electronic communication, telehealth, or digital data storage systems.
- The certified micro-credential professional ensures that all digital records, communications, and recordings are secured in accordance with applicable laws and organizational policies.