



IJCAHPO Certification Standards of Ethics

Overview

The Standards of Ethics of the International Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (IJCAHPO) shall apply to persons holding certificates from IJCAHPO that are either currently certified and to persons applying for certification by IJCAHPO to become certificant holders (Candidates). Certification is a method of assuring the medical community and the public that an individual is qualified to practice within the profession. Because the public relies on certificates issued by IJCAHPO, it is essential that certificate holders and candidates act consistently with these Rules of Ethics. IJCAHPO does not guarantee the job performance of any credential holder or applicant. The IJCAHPO Board of Directors does not express an opinion regarding the competence of any certificant or applicant. Allied ophthalmic healthcare is a multi-specialty field comprised of Ophthalmic Assistants, Technicians and Technologists (with subspecialties in surgical, ultrasound biometry, and sonography).

The Standards of Ethics are intended to be consistent with the Mission Statement of IJCAHPO, and to promote the goals set forth in the Mission Statement.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the ethics requirements is to identify individuals who commit to a set of professional values that cause one to act in the best interest of the patients. These professional values and the resulting behavior is one element of IJCAHPO's definition to be certified. The Standards of Ethics provides guidance on what it means to be qualified and to motivate and promote a culture of ethical behavior within the profession. Behavior inconsistent with the Standards of Ethics shall have their IJCAHPO credential removed or restricted.

A. Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics shall serve as a guide by which certificate holders and candidates may evaluate their professional conduct as it relates to patients, healthcare consumers, employers, co-workers, and other members of the ophthalmic healthcare team. The purpose of the Code of Ethics is to aid certificate holders and candidates in maintaining a high level of ethical conduct and in providing for the protection, safety, and comfort of patients. Allied Ophthalmic Personnel (AOP) shall:

1. Act in a professional manner, respond to patient needs, and support co-workers and associates in providing quality patient care.
2. Deliver patient care and services unrestricted by the concerns of personal attributes or the nature of the disease or illness, and without discrimination on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion or socio-economic status.
3. Use theoretical knowledge and concepts, use equipment and accessories consistent with the purposes for which they were designed, and employ procedures techniques appropriately and perform services in accordance within the accepted standard of practice.
4. Assess situations; exercise care, discretion, and judgement; assume responsibility for professional decisions; and acts in the best interest of the patient.
5. Act as an agent through observation and communication to obtain pertinent information for the ophthalmologist to aid in the diagnosis and treatment of the patient and recognizes that interpretation and diagnosis are outside the scope of practice for the profession.
6. Practice ethical conduct appropriate to the profession and protect the patient's right to quality ophthalmologic care.
7. Respect the confidence entrusted in the course of professional practice, respect the patient's right to privacy, and reveal confidential information only as required by law or to protect the welfare of the individual or the community.
8. Continually strive to improve their knowledge and skills through the participation in continuing education and professional activities, sharing knowledge with colleagues, and investigating new aspects of professional practice.

B. Rules of Ethics

The Rules of Ethics form the second part of the Standards of Ethics. They are mandatory standards of minimally accepted professional conduct of all certificate holders and candidates. These Rules of Ethics are intended to promote the protection, safety, and comfort of patients. The Rules of Ethics are enforceable. IJCAHPO certificants are required to indicate any ethics violations, criminal charges, and convictions as required on initial and recertification applications.

Fraudulent or Deceptive Practices

1. Employing fraud or deceit in procuring or attempting to procure, maintain, renew, or obtain, reinstate or renew certifications as issued by IJCAHPO. This includes the altering in any respect any document issued by IJCAHPO or indicating in writing certification and registration with IJCAHPO when that is not the case.
2. Engaging in false, fraudulent, deceptive, or misleading communications to any person regarding the individual's education, training, credentials, experience or qualifications or the status of the individual's certification with IJCAHPO.
3. Knowingly engaging or assisting any person to engage in or otherwise participating in, abusive or fraudulent billing practices, including violations of federal laws or state/provincial medical assistance laws.
4. Subverting or attempting to subvert IJCAHPO's certification and registration processes by:
 - a. making a false statement or knowingly providing false information to IJCAHPO; or
 - b. failing to cooperate with any investigation by IJCAHPO.

Conduct and Scope of Practice - Failure to Conform to Minimally Acceptable Standards

5. Engaging in unprofessional conduct, including but not limited to:
 - a. departure from or failure to conform to applicable federal, state or local governmental rules regarding ophthalmic scope of practice.
 - b. any ophthalmic practice that may create unnecessary danger to a patient's life, health or safety.
6. Engaging in conduct with a patient that is sexual or may reasonably be interpreted by the patient as sexual, or in any verbal behavior that is seductive or sexually demeaning to a patient; or engaging in sexual exploitation of a patient or former patient. This also applies to unwanted sexual behavior, verbal or otherwise.
7. Engaging in any unethical conduct, including, but not limited to, conduct likely to deceive, defraud, or harm that public; or demonstrating a willful or careless disregard for the health, wealth, or safety of a patient. Actual injury need not be established for this clause to be effective.
8. Performing procedures which the individual is not competent to perform through appropriate training and/or education or experiences unless assisted or personally supervised by someone who is competent through training and/or education or experience.
9. Delegating or accepting the delegation of an ophthalmic function or any other prescribed healthcare function when the delegation or acceptance could reasonably be expected to create an unnecessary danger to a patient's life, health, or safety. Actual injury to a patient need not be established under this clause to be effective.
10. Actual or potential inability to practice allied ophthalmic patient care with reasonable skill and safety to patients by reason of illness; use of alcohol; drugs, chemicals, or any other material; or as a results of any mental or physical condition.
11. Adjudication as mentally incompetent, mentally ill, chemically dependent, or dangerous to the public by a court of competent jurisdiction.
12. Improper management of patient records, including failure to maintain adequate patient records or to furnish a patient record or report required by law; or making, causing, or permitting anyone to make false, deceptive, misleading entry in any patient record.
13. Revealing privileged communication, providing false or misleading information from or relating to a former or current patient, except when otherwise required or permitted by law, or viewing, using, releasing, or otherwise failing to adequately protect the security or privacy of confidential patient information.

Violation of Government Laws and Regulations

14. Violating a state or federal narcotics or controlled substance law, even if not charged or convicted of a violation.
15. Violating a ruled adopted by a state or federal regulatory authority or certification board resulting in the individual's certification/license being denied, revoke, suspended, place on probation, or a consent agreement or order, voluntarily surrendered, subject to any conditions, or failing to report to IJCAHPO any of the violations or actions in this rule.
16. Convictions, criminal proceedings, or military court martial as described:
 - a. conviction of a crime, including felony, a gross misdemeanor, or a misdemeanor. All alcohol and/or drug related violations must be reported: and/or
 - b. criminal proceeding where a finding or verdict of guilt is made or returned but the adjudication of guilt is either withheld; deferred, or not entered or the sentence is stayed; or a criminal proceeding where the individual does not admit to guilt to the criminal act and asserts innocence; a plea of guilty or no contest; or where the individual enters a pre-trial diversion activity; or military court martial related to any offense identified in these Rules of Ethics.
17. Failing to immediately report to the Certificate holder's or Candidate's supervisor information concerning an error made with the treatment or care for a patient. Errors include any departure from the standard of care that reasonably may be considered to be potentially harmful, unethical, or improper. Errors also include behavior that is negligent or should have occurred in connection with a patient's care, but did not by omission. The duty to report exists whether or not the patient suffered any injury.