

**OBJECTIVES:**

*Define Professionalism

*Concepts in Professionalism as an In-Home Aide

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2025 Newsletter
Topic List January-December:

- *Home Safety
- *Infection Control
- *Dementia
- *Stroke
- *Personal Care
- *Challenging Behaviors
- *Home Environment
- *Nutrition
- *Communication Concepts
- *End of Life Care
- *Emergency Preparedness
- *Mental health

PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalism means working in a professional way, or always doing your best work. As a professional, you show pride in yourself and your work. And you also show respect for the consumer. You show professionalism in the ways you look, talk, and act; and by being on time and ready to start work from the moment you arrive. In-home aides, like any other health care professional, must follow all agencies' legal and ethical policies and/or protocol. Professionalism in home care means consistently delivering high-quality care to clients by being reliable, punctual, compassionate, and respectful. Professionalism also means maintaining professional boundaries, adhering to ethical standards, and demonstrating competence through proper training and ongoing education. Prioritizing the client's needs and respecting their privacy and dignity is a way to be a professional in Home Care. In-Home Aides can become experts in their work. Some examples include:

- Notifying your supervisor when further education and training is needed for an assigned task- safe quality client care requires competent and confident staff.
- Requesting educational opportunities- as we go through our education and training in our field, we learn information related to our field of study, but we do not always have all the competencies required for all tasks assigned. As an example, you may have learned basic information about Hoyer lifts, but, if you do not use the lifts regularly, you may need a refresher in how to use them safely for client transfers. Hoyer lifts are different and are not alike, add that to the client's environment, (crowded space to use a lift, etc.,) their physical size (relative to the size of the lift), and other safety factors, and this is one example of how imperative it is that you are competent and confident in this skill. You can transfer this concept to other skills as well, especially related to client transfers or other tasks that could potentially be dangerous for the client or yourself. Other educational opportunities may be related to chronic diseases such as heart failure, COPD, Diabetes, Dementia (Alzheimer's), end of life care, falls prevention, mental health, caring for older or younger clients. Reach out to your supervisor and ask for more education as needed based on the type of client you are caring for in the home, especially if it is a new condition or an age of a client you are caring for that is not familiar to you with your previous training, such as pediatric care.
- Having open communication with your supervisor. Communication must be a two-way process between the supervisor and In-Home Aide. Be sure to ask questions and seek clarification on aspects of your clients care as needed.
- Following an ethical standard of conduct-Many agencies establish their own set of guidelines for ethical behavior. Often it will be outlined in a policy.
- Having respectful relationships with clients and families
- Following a standard of conduct regarding the agency dress code

PROFESSIONALISM

Examples of a Code of Ethics in a home care agency may include:

- The primary duty of the In-Home Aide is to assist in the care of patients and clients; to ease suffering; to promote health; to do no harm; and, to encourage the quality of In-Home Aide care.
- The In-Home Aide provides services with respect for human dignity no matter the nationality, race, creed, age, religion or status of patients/clients and provides person centered care.
- The In-Home Aide adheres to the Patient/Client Bill of Rights.
- The In-Home Aide adheres to standards of personal conduct and obeys all laws of the state and country.
- The In-Home Aide respects and holds in confidence all health care information obtained in the course of work.
- The In-Home aide maintains competence; is aware of personal learning needs; and will pursue needed education by alerting the agency supervisor.
- The In-Home Aide provides services in accordance with the client's plan of care and reports appropriate client findings to the supervisor, including ethical issues involving the client.
- The In-Home Aide refuses to participate in illegal/unethical actions and will expose such conduct of others through appropriate agency channels.
- The In-Home Aide assumes responsibility for his/her actions and upholds the laws that affect the licensed home care agency including providing care and recording the care as necessary for agency licensure, quality improvement and payment.
- The In-Home Aide works responsibly and in harmony with other members of the health care team being sensitive in all verbal, non-verbal and written communications with team members, clients and families.
- The In-Home Aide demonstrates caring behavior and yet *maintains appropriate boundaries*. The safety and well-being of the client is the main concern in all decisions and actions.
- The In-Home Aide supports, to the extent possible, client independence and assists clients in reaching their full potential of self-care.

As an In-Home Aide, you also have rights that would include but are not limited to:

- To be treated with respect and kindness
- To provide services in a safe work environment
- To receive training for tasks assigned
- To not be abused physically, verbally, emotionally, or sexually by the client/family

Appropriate Relationships with Home Care Clients include:

- Respectful relationships for the client and their home and belongings as well as respect for yourself as a home care provider in wanting to provide quality home care services
- Friendly relationships with your clients in which you can build a caring relationship and provide care that is appropriate and that involves the client's wishes and is part of the plan of care and your assignment
- Dependable relationships in which you arrive at the client's home when you are assigned to arrive, or you notify your supervisor or the client according to your agency policy.

Most agencies will have policies about maintaining professional relationships with clients. The policies will most likely address issues such as receiving gifts from clients, changing the assigned tasks at the client or family's request without checking with the supervisor, not reporting changes in the client's condition, discussing the client's care outside of the allowed discussions under privacy laws.

Aspects of Professionalism in Home Care include:

Competence- Being competent means properly or sufficiently qualified or capable or efficient. If you are competent, you have the necessary ability or skills to do something. (vocabulary.com dictionary). Being aware of your learning needs and communicating those to your agency supervisor is a professional responsibility. Being competent for all assigned tasks is part of professionalism. As an In-home aide, your education and training may not have covered every task you might encounter in your work.

Communication- Open communication with your supervisor is an important component of professionalism. Communication must be a two-way process between you and your supervisor. As an In-home aide, you should ask questions and seek clarification for any assigned tasks or other issues that you need to discuss with your supervisor (i.e. safety issues in the home, situations that make you uncomfortable in the home, etc.). You may also need help from your supervisor in maintaining boundaries. Please don't hesitate to reach out for help. Good communication skills and using professional language are important and go a long way in helping to avoid "boundary" problems with clients and families. Let your client know that you must follow your agency policies if you are asked to do anything outside of what you have been assigned to do. It is ok to let a client know that you must speak to your supervisor first. Notify your supervisor if you feel like the client or family member is asking you to do anything that is not allowed in agency policy or according to the plan of care, or if you are unclear about your agency policy.

Social media- Most people use some form of social media - Facebook, Instagram, snap chat, and others. Keep in mind that it is a Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) law violation to post any information or pictures about your clients (even if you don't use the client's name in a description, it can be figured out who the person is). Never post pictures of clients or pose with clients for pictures on social media. Know what your agency guidelines and policies are concerning social media. Sharing pictures or selfies from your client's homes, with identifiable information in the picture is another way to breach confidentiality (even if it's not a picture of the client or with the client, it is possible to see information in the background that can identify the client). Do not mix your personal and professional life with social media. Common myths with social media are that a post is private and accessible only to whom it was sent to (in reality, the content once posted can be sent to others). There is also a mistaken belief that content deleted from a site is no longer accessible (in reality, once posted it lives on a server). In NC and federally, the definition of abuse includes abuse facilitated or enabled through the use of technology (and abuse is a reportable allegation).

Overstep of responsibilities- Most people who are in the business of caring for others are by nature caring and compassionate people who want to make a difference in the lives of those to whom care is provided. As an In-home aide, providing caring, quality and competent care according to the client's plan of care is your responsibility. There may be times when your caring extends to areas outside of your responsibility and that is when professional boundaries may get crossed. As an In-home care provider, you will see needs of the clients you care for in other areas of their life such as social (relationships with friends, family, spouse), environmental (house repairs needed, pests in home, etc.), economic (if there is enough money for food, medications, housing, etc.). As an In-home caregiver, you may want to help your clients in these areas. As a professional, the way to help a client with issues you observe in the home are to report client needs to your supervisor. With the client's permission there are ways your agency can help by making referrals and coordinating other services to meet the client's needs. There are services that can help with home repairs, pest eradication, help with buying medications, food, counseling and other types of assistance programs.

Dress code- How you appear by the way you dress and speak sets the tone for a caring, professional relationship and first impressions are important. Professional attire sends the message that you are serious about your job. Your agency may have a certain dress code in place and require a name badge or other type of identification.