

CODE OF PRACTICE

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Introduction

The Executive of ARPA is committed to high standards of ethical conduct and accordingly has developed this policy to provide an ethical framework for all Association Members. It applies to the Executive Committee, Association Members and casual, permanent and contract staff.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to identify ARPA's (hereinafter referred to as the "Association") position on ethics and proper practice and to document the standards expected of Association Members.

Authorisation

President
ARPA

CODE OF PRACTICE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Code is intended to be primarily a self-regulatory document, which promotes the highest ethical and professional standards of conduct for members of ARPA and for the Australian Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation Industry in general.

2.0 PURPOSE

The Code of Practice (Code) provides guidance to Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation Provider organisations (including companies and incorporated bodies), partnerships, and sole traders, which comprise the membership of the Australian Rehabilitation Providers Association (ARPA). The code also provides guidance to individual employees and contractors of the ARPA membership.

3.0 STATEMENT OF POLICY

This policy (hereinafter referred to as "The Code") shall apply to all Association Members including Executive Members (hereinafter referred to as "Association Member(s)").

It is intended to serve as a point of reference for members, to ensure that they are complying with all applicable State and Commonwealth laws. The Code prescribes specific standards of practice for members of ARPA in relation to:

- Service delivery
- Professional conduct
- Industry conduct.

3.1 Objectives

The objectives of the Code are to:

- Promote a culture among ARPA members of managing their businesses ethically and in accordance with best business practice.
- Promote a consistently high quality of service delivery to members' clients and customers.
- Increase customer and client confidence when dealing with ARPA members.
- To raise members' awareness of external frameworks, including state and federal legislation that affects Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation services.

3.2 Scope of the Code

The Code binds all ARPA members (including Member employees), and prescribes minimum standards of ethical and professional conduct. Any alleged breach of the Code by a member of ARPA will be dealt with in accordance with the enforcement provisions as outlined in the ARPA Constitution.

From time to time, ARPA will issue further guidelines in accordance with the Code, to reflect developments and changes within the Australian Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation Industry.

3.3 Citation

This Code may be cited as the ARPA Code of Practice.

4.0 PRINCIPLES OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE

4.1 Organisation Philosophy

ARPA, its members, and the rehabilitation consultants they employ are committed to facilitating the personal, social, occupational and economic independence of individuals with injuries or disabilities. In fulfilling this commitment, rehabilitation consultants work with individuals, employers, insurers, and other medical and health professionals, in a variety of service delivery systems, in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for their clients.

The underlying principles of the Code of Practice are as follows:

- To provide Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation services to injured individuals, their employers and other relevant stakeholders with integrity, professionalism and objectivity.
- To respect individuals and their needs.
- To focus on best practical levels of physical and psychological recovery as well as a return wherever possible back into the workforce.
- To deliver professional services within a best practice framework, thereby effectively reducing the social and financial cost of work related and other injuries.

5.0 CODE OF PRACTICE

ARPA members, being bound by this Code of Practice, undertake to:

- Comply with the spirit as well as the letter of the law, including the principles of this Code.
- Maintain professional relationships with injured clients, employers, medical/health professionals, compensation agencies and other relevant stakeholders.
- Fully inform clients and other relevant parties of their rights and responsibilities in relation to Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation, with the disclosure of any potential conflict of interest in writing.
- Protect the privacy of their clients and other relevant parties, as prescribed by the relevant privacy legislation, to the extent that the law and service delivery allows.
- Conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner at all times.
- Ensure that their practices reflect well on the industry and that they fulfil all employer obligations with respect to conditions of employment, OH&S and ongoing training and development.
- Respect differences in individuals and their needs and provide equitable access to services.
- Ensure best practice service delivery which incorporates the following concepts whenever possible:
 - Early intervention
 - An appropriate multi-disciplinary approach
 - Collaboration and consultation with all stakeholders
 - Workplace based interventions.

6.0 SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDELINES TO CODE OF PRACTICE

6.1 Relationships

6.2 Relationships with Clients

Rehabilitation consultants need to maintain a professional relationship with their clients at all times. In the event that the rehabilitation consultant believes that they

are unable to maintain a professional relationship due to conflict of interest or personal reasons, this must be declared and the client referred to another rehabilitation consultant or if appropriate another Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation Provider.

6.3 Client Rights and Responsibilities

When Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation services are initiated, and throughout service delivery, rehabilitation consultants need to inform clients of the purpose, goals, techniques, procedures, limitations, potential risks, and benefits of the services. As part of this process, rehabilitation consultants must clearly advise clients of their rights and responsibilities as well as the possible consequences of not meeting these responsibilities. The client's informed consent to collect and release their personal information must be obtained and the client should be informed as to how the information, that they or their treater provides, will be used and to whom it can be provided.

6.4 Privacy/Confidentiality

Rehabilitation consultants need to gain the written and informed consent of their clients regarding the collection and release of their personal information as related to their injury or illness. This consent needs to be periodically reviewed to ensure that it remains correct and contemporaneous.

6.5 Confidentiality of Records

Rehabilitation consultants are responsible for securing the safety and confidentiality of any client record they create, maintain, transfer, or destroy, whether these records are written, taped, computerized, or stored in any other medium. Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation Providers must maintain original copies of this information for a minimum of seven (7) years or as otherwise advised.

6.6 Conflict of Interest

Potential conflicts of interest need to be discussed and recorded with clients and other relevant parties as soon as they become evident.

6.7 Client Access to their Own Records

Clients have a right to request access to their own client records. Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation Provider organisations should have formal procedures in place to provide this access when it is appropriate to do so. Providers should refer to relevant privacy legislation such as the Information Privacy Act 2000 and the Health Records Act 2001 when determining their privacy policy and client access to information.

6.8 Respecting Diversity

Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation Providers and individual rehabilitation consultants need to be sensitive to their clients' needs, irrespective of their age, colour, culture, disability, ethnic group, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, or socio economic status.

6.9 Relationships with Other Stakeholders

Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation Providers and individual rehabilitation consultants need to maintain professional and ethical relationships with all other stakeholders.

6.10 Professional Practice

6.11 Service Delivery

A co-ordinated and multi-disciplinary approach to service provision is essential. Service delivery should ideally incorporate early intervention, a multi-disciplinary approach, and be workplace based.

6.12 Documentation / Records

Rehabilitation consultants need to complete sufficient documentation in a timely manner (eg case notes, reports, plans). This documentation should include factual information necessary for rendering professional services to clients, as required by the relevant legislation and service standards.

6.13 Billing

Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation Providers need to establish and maintain billing records that accurately reflect the services provided, the time required, and the relevant hourly rate (where applicable). Billing records should also clearly identify who provided the service, and they should comply with the requirements of relevant statutory bodies.

6.14 Professional Competence/Development

Rehabilitation consultants need to engage in continuing education to maintain a high level of awareness of current professional information in their fields of activity and of relevant legislative requirements. Rehabilitation consultants need to take steps to maintain competence in their professional skills, be open to new techniques and develop and maintain competence for practice with the diverse clientele with whom they work. Occupational/Vocational Rehabilitation Providers need to ensure that their staff are adequately trained and that they receive ongoing professional development and on the job training.

6.15 Changes to the Code of Practice

ARPA will provide opportunities for its members through ARPA's professional development program, email (newsletters) and the web site, to be kept informed about any changes or additions to the code of practice.

6.16 Availability of the Code of Practice

A copy of the Code of Practice should be made available to clients and other stakeholders on request. The Code of Practice is also available on the ARPA website (www.arpa.org.au).

6.17 Associated Documentation

Other documentation including the Constitution of Australian Rehabilitation Providers Association Incorporated is available on the ARPA website.