

Professional Patient Navigator Code of Ethics



The Patient-Centered Education & Research Institute (PCERI) presents this Code of Ethics for Professional Patient Navigators. Adherence to this Code is a condition for all Certified Professional Patient Navigators (CPPN) and is a level of behavior expected of all persons serving in patient navigation roles.

PCERI is an organization of trained navigators and educators who share the goal of promoting safe, effective, and compassionate health navigation services. The Institute supports those who help people find their way through medical situations as healthcare advocates, patient advocates, patient navigators, community health workers, consumers, and family caregivers.

A patient navigator may work independently, in a medical setting, or on behalf of communities or disease-specific populations. He or she may have additional professional certifications and licensure in health and/or behavioral sciences or in specialty areas of patient navigation. “Professional” patient navigators practice ethically and demonstrate the competencies needed to help clients.

A professional patient navigator (PPN) assists clients with receiving appropriate care, education, and resources needed to improve health outcomes. They assist patients, use available options and resources, maximize patient access to relevant information in line with an individual’s personal and cultural values and preferences.

Healthcare navigation does not include directly imposing specific treatment choices, providing clinical second opinions; or direct, hands-on medical care of any type. The role of the PPN is to enable patients and their caregivers to actualize choices and access resources.

Guiding Principle 1: Transparency and Honest Disclosure

PPNs are committed to integrity and total transparency in the conduct of their practices. The PPN has an obligation to be transparent about fees, training, education, experience, and credentials. The PPN must disclose any contractual relationships that may exist between the PPN and other services they might use to assist their clients. PPNs have a special responsibility to ensure that clients are fully aware of all possible conflicts of interest influenced by the navigator’s conditions of employment. PPNs providing fee-for-service assistance are obligated to present a client or responsible family member with a formal “Agreement” that clearly defines their PPN scope of practice, fee schedule, and working arrangements.

Guiding Principle 2: Protecting Confidentiality and Privacy

PPNs respect each client’s right to privacy, and abide by all relevant laws and regulations relating to confidentiality of personal information. PPNs shall at all times safeguard and protect the confidentiality of all medical records and communications with clients.

Principle 3: Fostering Autonomy

PPNs treat all clients with compassion and respect. Foremost will be their clients’ personal values concerning care and the right to be involved in all decisions that affect their care. PPNs uphold and respect all patients’ rights by promoting recognition of existing statutory rights and supporting development of potential advancements of the rights of people and communities to receive fair treatment.

PPNs are dedicated to promoting the autonomy and empowerment of their clients to exercise meaningful informed consent. PPNs will provide clients with information that would facilitate informed decision-making. PPNs respect the dignity and freedom of each client to make his or her own decisions grounded in the cultural, spiritual, and ethical context of that individual.

The PPN's role is to ensure that the client's wishes, if known, are the guiding force behind decisions on medical care. While a PPN may not serve as a health care proxy or other such surrogate decision-maker for a current client, the PPN may continue to serve his/her client's interests by briefing the surrogate on any relevant statutory patients' rights and possible care options.

Guiding Principle 4: Provision of Competent Services

PPNs have a responsibility to inform clients of their specific areas of proficiency, and only to advise clients within that area where the PPN has demonstrated expertise. If a client needs assistance in an area where the PPN does not have sufficient knowledge or training, the PPN is obligated to refer the client to the appropriate system or resource for assistance.

PPNs are committed to continuing their education in order to keep their knowledge and skills current. PPNs ensure that they have adequate referral systems in place to assist clients who need services the PPN is unable to provide.

Guiding Principle 5: Avoidance of Impropriety and Maintenance of Professional Boundaries

PPNs may not accept remuneration for making referrals to other providers or services, nor steer clients to products or services from which the PPN will profit financially or earn a commission. PPNs may not accept paid advertising on their websites from outside product or service providers. PPNs do not participate in dual relationships with their clients. PPNs recognize and maintain boundaries that establish appropriate limits to professional relationships.

Guiding Principle 6: Avoidance of Discriminatory Practices

Essential to Professional Patient Navigation is the belief that equal access to appropriate healthcare and treatment is the right of each individual. PPNs are committed to strive for equal access without regard to age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. PPNs are committed to assisting clients of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds. PPNs are mindful of the cultural context of clients, respecting their individual perspectives, and employing effective cross-cultural communication techniques.

Guiding Principle 7: Continued Learning

PPNs are committed to continual learning to hone professional expertise and maintain knowledge of current conditions in a rapidly changing healthcare environment. PPNs seek and apply skills and techniques that improve patient-centered navigation.

Guiding Principle 8: Research

As a professional in a healthcare role, PPNs collect relevant data about patient treatment and outcomes and regularly formulate and conduct studies to improve outcomes for future patients. PPNs share and coordinate these studies with appropriate healthcare teams. When appropriate, PPN's share findings with the professional community of patient navigators to further develop evidence-based practice.