

Professionalism: A very important key to your success as a caregiver

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Professionalism for the CNA means how you conduct yourself – what you do and how you do it.

As an important key to success, professionalism promotes excellence as a caregiver by following well-established professional standards of care.

A caregiver who is professional gains the trust and respect of both their elders and their co-workers, and is a much more effective caregiver as the result.

Benefits your elders

Elders develop faith in a professional and respond better to the care they give.

Elders respond positively to the professional when they are treated with respect, dignity, concern and an acceptance of their uniqueness... all of which involve professional caregiving.

And research shows that this kind of professional caregiving can significantly improve outcomes for your elders.

A professional caregiver also affects other caregivers and other staff members by being a role model and following standards of care.

What does it take to be a professional and show professionalism in everything you do?

Basically, it's thinking about what you do, how you act and how you dress will help you know where you stand and if you need to make improvements.

Professionalism promotes excellence as a caregiver

“An important key to success, professionalism promotes excellence in caregiving”

Use the following guidelines to help you decide. A professional:

- Is dedicated and committed to serving others
- Believes in having a positive attitude – no matter what
- Takes responsibility for own actions and follows all rules.
- Arrives to work when schedules and on time
- Displays moral and ethical behavior at all times
- Continues to learn and stays up-to-date-with new ideas and new trends
- Completes all assignments and works well with others
- Shows concern for all elders and treats everyone well
- Communicates effectively
- Is trustworthy and a good listener
- Demonstrates positive behavior
- Uses excellent body language by standing tall, showing interest, smiling, acknowledging, being receptive, confident and approachable and using a normal tone of voice.

Professional caregiving can significantly improve outcomes for your elders.

- Dresses appropriately by wearing a clean and pressed uniform or scrubs or the uniform of the facility. Has clean, well-kept hair and clean fingernails.

Does not wear perfume or cologne as it may be disturbing to elders.

Shoes and shoelaces are clean and in good repair.

Knowing what is professional, and what is not, will help you build on your key to success.

Being unprofessional

You're not being professional if you

- Follow someone who is not professional and do what they do
- Bend the rules to suit you – using the facility phone when you want, use your cell phone when with an elder, arrive late or call in frequently
- Gossip and tell others, including elders, all your personal problems
- Demonstrate an attitude that tells others to stay away
- Don't keep confidences
- Don't have an interest in your elders, job or facility
- Cannot be relied upon to do your work and to do it well
- Have elders who would rather have someone else care for them
- Don't know what is new in the field of caregiving
- Can't perform new tasks because of lack of knowledge but won't ask for help
- Are not a good listener. You do not look directly at someone who is talking to you, you act in a hurry and show disinterest by doing something else at the same time
- Raise your voice to elders or staff members. You are rude, abrupt and non-caring in your approach.
- Frown, act bored, busy, angry, or upset much of the time.

Professional caregivers have a neat, clean appearance; happy, enthusiastic personality; and are good team members.



Ethics are a part of professionalism

As a caregiver, you are obligated to follow the standards of behavior and the rules that are guided by the professional ethics of your caregiving position.

The basic rule of thumb, no matter the situation, is to always be guided by your professional ethics and to do what you know to be right.

The professional ethics or standards that should guide you include:

- **Keep all caregiving information confidential.** This includes both oral and written. Each caregiver and elder has the right to expect that knowledge gained through the circumstance of illness or work will not be forwarded to others who do not need to know the information.
- **Don't Gossip.** What you see and hear on the job stays on the job.
- **Treat all elders equally.** Show respect for all your elders regardless of their gender, race, nationality religion, personal beliefs or social or economic status.
- **Take care of your elders with respect.** Be considerate of all their feelings and beliefs.

“You are obligated to follow the standards of behavior that are guided by professional ethics”

- **Provide care with kindness and patience.** Elders with behavioral issues may tax your composure and tempt you with the desire to be quick with your care and move on to someone else.

Remembering that all elders are to be treated equally will help you through any situation.

“Provide care with kindness and patience.”

- **Provide privacy and maintain dignity.** Put yourself in your elder's place.

Would you want the door or curtains open if you were using the bathroom or taking a bath?

Would you want your roommate or a visitor to see you as you receive personal care? Privacy is essential in all daily care activities.

- **Show loyalty.** To be loyal does not mean to blindly follow the direction of others without question or discussion.

Loyalty does mean being faithful to the administration, co-workers and elders of your facility.

Loyalty means not letting personal feelings interfere with the work environment or the cooperative spirit of the team.

It means confining grievances or negative opinions to within the facility itself and following the standard procedures of the facility for airing those grievances or opinions.

The importance of being a good team member

Getting along well with your co-workers, and being an effective member of your healthcare team, is also a key ingredient to being a professional member of your facility.

That's because much of the healthcare setting operates in a team environment.

Effective teamwork is at the very center of caregiving in most all healthcare facilities.

“Being an effective member of your healthcare team, is key to being a professional caregiver”

There are a few specific rules that can help you become a good team member, which are taught at Ohio State University's team building classes:

- Remember that each member of the team has something of value to contribute. To make the team more effective, get to know each other's strengths and weaknesses and special capabilities.
- As a member of a group, you have to be willing to share the “ownership” of your concepts with others of the group.
- The diversity of the team may be frustrating at first, but it is one of the greatest strength of working in a group.
- Be respectful of each member's feelings, thoughts and ideas.
- Be willing to compromise.
- Don't just complain about problems... no one likes a chronic complainer; instead, see what can be done about your problems.

A professional CNA Work well with others

Some positive attitudes in working well with others that will help you in getting along on the job are being:

- 1. Friendly.** Friendly people smile. A smile lightens the day and goes a long way in making a work load seem easier.
- 2. Cooperative.** A cooperative person is willing to help others and to change and grow. A particular task may not be very popular, but when tackled by two workers instead of one, it isn't very difficult at all.
- 3. Respectful.** The ability to understand the ideas and opinions of others is important. The ideas and opinions don't have to be shared by you, but your willingness to accept the other viewpoint creates an atmosphere of understanding, and makes the work environment much more relaxed.
- 4. A non-complainer.** Shortage of linen, too many elders to care for, absent staff, schedule changes and new policies are often reason for complaint.

But everyone has to work under difficult situations that arise on occasion. Complaining doesn't change anything or make it better.

Instead, take your suggestions to your supervisor so that progress can be made in making changes.

- 5. Non-critical.** Criticizing a co-worker does not belong on the job. “Did you see the way she made that bed?” or “He is so slow, he'll never finish by tomorrow” are criticisms that are not necessary. If a co-worker needs help, offer the help instead of the criticism.

You are being professional if you:

- Respect everyone in your workplace, regardless of position
- Use good manners and greet everyone with respect and a smile
- Are friendly and patient. (Often elders need extra time to accomplish tasks such as brushing teeth, combing hair, drying after a bath and using the bathroom.)
- Put yourself in the place of your elders and see things as they see them
- Are compassionate about what you do, and will not let anything stand in the way of giving good care
- Are a good listener, and can take the time to understand the needs of your elders.
- Organize your work, and are confident in your skills and ability to help others
- Are truly interested in the welfare of all those who are entrusted to your care
- Hold confidences unless what an elder tells you could cause them harm.
- Are discreet. You don't yell down the halls or from room to room.
- You hold the dignity of your elders dear to your heart and never embarrass them
- Are approachable and willing to do whatever necessary.
- Are honest and trustworthy... always.

Quiz

Characteristics of a professional caregiver

Caregiving objectives:

1. To understand why professional caregiving is a key factor in providing effective care.
2. To learn the basic rules of being a professional caregiver.
3. To understand the importance of ethics and teamwork in professional caregiving.

1. **True, False.** A caregiver who is professional gets the respect and trust of both elders and co-workers.
2. **True, False.** Research shows that professional caregiving delivers improved outcomes for elders.
3. **What are some of the characteristics of a professional caregiver?** (Check all that apply.)
 - a. Has a positive attitude.
 - b. Is dedicated to continuously learning more about caregiving.
 - c. Generally, operates without team involvement, in order to prevent being too dependent on co-workers.
 - d. Is a good communicator.
 - e. Is trustworthy.
4. **True, False.** Dressing appropriately with clean, pressed clothes is a part of being a professional caregiver.
5. **True, False.** Professional caregivers should not, normally, ask for help if they don't understand a task, since it's best to attempt to learn it yourself.
6. **True, False.** Being a good listener is another important factor in being a professional.
7. **True, False.** Professional caregivers should do a lot of complaining to anyone who will listen, since that's the best way to get positive change accomplished in the facility.
8. **Which are good rules to follow in being a good team member in your facility?** (Check all that apply.)
 - a. Respect each and every member of the team.
 - b. Be willing to listen to other team members.
 - c. Stick to your beliefs and never compromise.
9. **True, False.** You should keep confidences, and not gossip about your elders.
10. **True, False.** In the caregiving profession, you are obligated to follow its rules of ethical conduct.

Name _____

Date _____

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Questions for further thought and discussion:

1. After reading this article, do you believe you're doing all I can to be a professional caregiver?
2. Did anything in the article surprise you? What and why?
3. What areas do you think you need improvement in?
4. Are there areas where you could use more training, in order to become the best professional that you can be?
5. Was there anything about the article that confused you and needs further discussion?

Answers to Quiz: Professionalism

1. T 2. T
3. a, b, d, e
4. T
5. F
6. T 7. F
8. a, b
9. T
10. T