



## Code of Conduct for Board Certified and Certifying PAs and PAs with the PA-C Emeritus Designation

### Preamble

The National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) endeavors to assure the public that board-certified physician assistants (PAs) meet professional standards of knowledge and skills. Additionally, NCCPA attempts to ensure that the PAs it certifies are upholding appropriate standards of professionalism and ethics in practice. The *NCCPA's Code of Conduct for Board Certified and Certifying PAs and PAs with the PA-C Emeritus Designation* (the "Code of Conduct") outlines principles that all board-certified or certifying PAs and PAs holding the PA-C Emeritus designation are expected to uphold. Breaches of these principles may be cause for disciplinary review. Disciplinary actions taken at the conclusion of that review may include a letter of concern, formal censure, revocation of board certification and/or eligibility for board certification, or revocation of PA-C Emeritus designation or eligibility for the designation, and/or other actions deemed appropriate by NCCPA, such as administrative suspension.

Disciplinary actions may be reported to the Federation of State Medical Boards, any state licensing authority, the federal government, the PA's employer, and other interested parties, including individuals seeking information about the PA's board certification or PA-C Emeritus designation, as solely determined by the NCCPA and in compliance with NCCPA's Information Disclosure policy. This *Code of Conduct* represents some, though not necessarily all, of the behaviors that may trigger review under NCCPA's [Policies and Procedures for PA Disciplinary Matters](#). NCCPA retains the right to impose discipline under its *Policies and Procedures for PA Disciplinary Matters* even if the PA's board certification expires or the PA retires from practice, provided that the violation triggering the disciplinary proceeding occurred when the PA was board certified, seeking board certification, or applying for or holding the PA-C Emeritus designation.

### Principles of Conduct

**Board Certified or certifying PAs shall protect the integrity of NCCPA-issued credentials and of the processes by which those credentials are earned and awarded. Board Certified or certifying PAs and PAs with the PA-C Emeritus designation:**

- shall not engage in cheating or other dishonest behavior that violates exam security (including unauthorized reproducing, distributing, displaying, discussing, sharing, posting, copying or uploading into generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms (e.g. entering or uploading PANRE-LA content including: intact test items, answer options, rationales, or substantial portions of the same other than discrete keywords into websites, search engines, or chatbots that may or may not incorporate generative AI or Large Language Models (LLM), or otherwise misusing test questions or any part of test questions before, during or after an NCCPA examination (including PANCE, PANRE, PANRE-LA, and CAQ and CAQ maintenance examinations).

- shall not engage in irregular behavior, as defined in NCCPA's *Policies and Procedures for PA Disciplinary Matters*.
- shall not employ deceptive means, including submitting to the NCCPA any document or testimony that contains a misstatement of fact or omits a fact to obtain, attempt to obtain or assist others in obtaining or maintaining an NCCPA credential.
- shall not modify an authorized NCCPA certificate, verification letter, or score letter, and shall not manufacture, reproduce, distribute, or use a fraudulent or otherwise unauthorized NCCPA certificate, verification letter, or score letter.
- shall not falsely represent themselves in any way to be a Physician Assistant-Certified (PA-C) designee, a Certificate of Added Qualification (CAQ) recipient, or a PA-C Emeritus or otherwise use or assist others in using fraudulent credentials, as set forth in the NCCPA's *Policies and Procedures for PA Disciplinary Matters*.
- shall not use the term "board certified" to convey or describe specialty certification or acquiesce in that use by others; however, it is consistent with NCCPA's Code of Conduct to use the term "board certified" to convey or describe board certification by NCCPA as a generalist qualification.
- shall promptly inform NCCPA when possessing knowledge or evidence that raises a substantial question of cheating on or misuse of questions from an NCCPA examination, fraudulent use of an NCCPA card, certificate or other document or misrepresentation of NCCPA board certification status by a physician assistant or any other individual.
- shall promptly inform NCCPA when possessing knowledge of irregular behavior, including in connection with PANRE-LA, as set forth in the NCCPA's *Policies and Procedures for PA Disciplinary Matters*.

**Board Certified or certifying PAs and PAs with the PA-C Emeritus designation shall comply with all applicable laws, regulations and standards related to their professional role, including but not limited to those governing clinical practice. Board Certified or certifying PAs and PAs with the PA-C Emeritus designation:**

- shall respect appropriate professional boundaries in their interactions with patients and others.
- shall avoid behavior that would pose a threat or potential threat to the health, well-being, or safety of others apart from reasonable risks taken in a patient's interest during the delivery of health care.
- shall not disclose patient confidential information, publicly disclose information about a patient that the PA learned as part of the PA's practice or professional role, nor disparage any patient in a public setting (including through social media) based on information observed or learned in the PA's practice or professional role.
- shall recognize and understand their professional and personal limitations.
- shall practice without impairment from substance abuse and shall practice without impairment from cognitive deficiency or mental illness that, even with appropriate

reasonable accommodation, adversely affects their practice.

- shall, unless no longer board certified or certifying, maintain and demonstrate the ability to engage in the practice of medicine within their chosen areas of practice safely and competently.
- shall behave in a manner that is lawful and ethical, during and outside the practice of medicine.
- shall behave in a manner that upholds accepted standards of professional practice and conduct, consistent with published evidence-based standards of care and practice guidelines.
- must report to the NCCPA any adverse regulatory or credentialing action within 30 days of issuance, including, but not limited to, revocation, suspension, surrender, loss or denial of, or any restrictions, conditions or fines imposed on any license, authorization, or credential to practice as a health care provider (including authorization to practice as an employee of the federal government or in a jurisdiction not requiring licensure), whether such adverse action is by decision, consent order, stipulation, or agreement.
- must report to NCCPA within 30 days of convictions, guilty pleas or no contest pleas to felonies and certain misdemeanors, as described more fully in the Policies and Procedures for PA Disciplinary Matters.
- must cooperate with and respond to inquiries from NCCPA related to their own or another's compliance with NCCPA's policies and this Code of Conduct, in connection with NCCPA board certification-related matters or disciplinary proceedings.
- must comply with conditions set forth by NCCPA, unless due to circumstances beyond the PA's control.

**PAs with the PA-C Emeritus designation shall not use the PA-C Emeritus designation in any clinical setting or in the context of any clinically-related interaction, including clinical volunteer service.**

Adopted: November 2005

Last Reviewed: November 2025