

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR MEMBERS OF THE HARRY BENJAMIN INTERNATIONAL GENDER DYSPHORIA ASSOCIATION, INC.

1. The members shall perform professional service in accordance with the standards of care defined for their particular area of specialization. This is generally considered to be a requirement in legal settings, such as litigations, and will also apply within the organization.
2. Members shall recognize their limits of competence within their field of specialization and shall fully and honestly communicate their level of training, experience, credentialing, licensing, and limitations to their patients.
3. Members shall request consultation from professionals within their own field when appropriate, and make appropriate referrals only to licensed practitioners whose competence and training are known.
4. Members will obtain consultation with a practitioner outside of their fields of expertise when related or unrelated conditions become apparent that may require professional intervention in order to provide a high standard of care.
5. Members shall not engage in fee sharing or make payments to another practitioner for the purpose of obtaining patient referrals or practice enhancement.
6. Members engaging in advertising shall be forthright in making any claims as to training, credentials, certifications, and membership in organizations, experience, and specialization.
7. Members who become physically or emotionally impaired to the extent that it may interfere with care shall provide referral of the patient to a qualified professional to prevent abandonment of, or other harm to, the patient.
8. Members shall not enter into any relationship with the patient/consumer other than the professional relationship originally sought by that individual. This would include but not be limited to business relationships, romantic relationships, including sexual relationships. A patient/consumer shall be defined as any person who has been in an evaluation or treatment relationship with a health care provider. The status of patient/consumer and professional may end with termination of treatment or other professional relationship; and personal relationships between these consenting adults would then not necessarily be inappropriate. However, reestablishment of a professional relationship at a later time would be considered inappropriate.
9. Members shall make decisions regarding care based solely on sound professional practices, without regard to race, religion, sexual orientation (including non-stereotypical or non cultural gender role presentations), nationality, or age (unless related to medical conditions which preclude certain treatments). HIV status shall not be considered in the decision to evaluate or treat patients.
10. Members shall maintain strict confidentiality of communications with patients, of patient's diagnoses and prognosis unless permission is obtained in writing from the patient or is otherwise prescribed by law.
11. Members shall act in accordance with the Standards of Care as set forth by the HBIGDA. Deviations from the Standards of Care shall only be made based upon sound professional judgment and practice, as appropriate, and must be defensible to this Committee and the Board. Regard will be given by the Committee and the Board to the limitations of any national health care system within which the professional is working.

12. Members shall act in accordance with the ethical standards set by Boards or other professional organizations where they hold certification or membership. Any cause for sanction or expulsion from these Boards or organizations, if it becomes known to this committee, should be reason for investigation by this committee. Any action taken by other Boards or organizations shall not, in itself, be reason for this committee to take action.
13. Members shall provide forthright and honest information on the Membership Committee's application form, unless law protects the confidentiality of certain information.
14. Any grievance or claim made against any member of the organization to any member of this committee shall be promptly disseminated to all other members of the committee. The member who is the subject of such grievance or claim will be contacted by the Chairman of this committee and offered to respond to such grievance or claim, giving his or her interpretation of the incident or incidents. The subject member will not be given the name of the claimant. There may be circumstances wherein the nature of the claim is such that the claimant would prefer the member to know their name in order that the professional relationship can be renegotiated. In such cases the Committee shall contact all claimants and request their permission to make such disclosure. Similarly there might be circumstances wherein any investigation of a claim would automatically disclose the claimant's identity to the member. In these circumstances the Committee shall inform the claimant that any pursuance of their claim might lead to such disclosure and ask if they still wish their claim to be pursued.
15. The response of the subject member shall be made in a timely fashion and that response will be disseminated to the full committee. An evaluation will be made and a consensus as to the validity of claim will be arrived at by a majority of the members of the committee. These findings will be forwarded to the Board, and the Board will make a decision as to the need for any type of reprimand, censure, or expulsion from the organization. The Chairman of the Ethics Committee will notify the subject member only that an evaluation of the claim has been forwarded to the Board. It is imperative that confidentiality be preserved in all correspondence between claimant, subject member, and this committee.
16. Access to this committee shall be available to all members of the HBIGDA and to all consumers/patients of organization members. The consumers of care can access this committee through its chairman or any committee member by use of the roster, which lists all committees, their chairpersons, along with phone numbers, email addresses, and FAX numbers. The HBIGDA office should provide this information to those who request it. Members should provide patients/consumers, at the negotiation of a professional relationship, with information as to how they may obtain access to this Committee and, at their discretion, provide the patients/consumers with a notice of the Association's Ethical guidelines.
17. The Association Newsletter will publish the names of the members who have been disciplined by the Board for ethical violations, or who have resigned from membership within the context of an ongoing ethics investigation.