The Code of Ethics and Professional Code of Conduct for Registered Nurses and Midwives in Nepal

Nepal Nursing Council
Bansbari, Kathmandu, Nepal
GPO Box: 12541
Tel: 01-4372521
Fax No.: +01-4377214
Email: info@nncc.org.np
Webpage: http://www.nncc.org.np

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AND
PROFESSIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR REGISTERED NURSES AND MIDWIVES IN NEPAL

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Preface

Nurses and midwives are responsible to provide their clients/patients with the high-quality care. They are undoubtedly confronted with various ethical challenges in their professional practice, so they should be familiar with ethical codes of conduct and the essentials of ethical decision making. The ethical tradition of nursing/midwives is self-reflective, enduring, and distinctive. A code of ethics for the nursing/midwives profession makes explicit the primary obligations, values, and ideals of the profession that inform every aspect of the nurse’s life.

Although there are authentic international codes of ethics for nurses/midwives the national code would be the additional assistance provided for nurses/midwives in their complex roles in care of patients, education, research and management of some parts of health care system in the country and it also can provide them with culturally-adapted guidance and help them to make ethical decisions more closely to Nepalese background.

The Nepal nursing council (NNC) is the statutory body, which sets the standards for the education, registration and professional ethics and conduct of nurses and midwives in the country. It also guides on how nurses and midwives should provide care to health service consumers. NNC also sets standards of practice and provides support for registered nurses and midwives in the country in implementing standards of practice by developing, reviewing and publishing a code of ethics and professional conduct; and providing guidance on all aspects of professional conduct and on maintaining professional competencies. This code of ethics and professional code of conduct for registered nurses and midwives in Nepal is enacted in accordance to the power conferred by the clause (g) of subsection (1) of section 9 of the Nepal Nursing Council Act, 2052 (1996) and in Rule 5.1 nursing council rules 2065 on the year 2076 BS (2019 AD).
Development of the codes of conduct should be considered as an ongoing process. This is an overall responsibility to keep the codes current, updated with the new progresses of science and emerging challenges, and pertinent to the nursing/midwifery practice. The Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Registered Nurses and Midwives have undergone considerable changes through workshop and meetings. Therefore, we hope it would give a clear direction for nurses and midwives in their work and help them to be self conscious toward their professional conduct. We congratulate the team working who have conscientiously devoted the time in the finalization of the document.

We appreciate their sense of dedication and contribution in this document is highly commendable. Similarly we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to UNFPA Nepal for the support provided to develop The Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives in Nepal.

Assoc. Prof. Binda Ghimire
Registrar
Nepal Nursing Council

Prof. Goma Devi Niraula Shrestha
President
Nepal Nursing Council
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## Glossary of Terms

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<tr>
<td>Health service consumer</td>
<td>A person receiving healthcare services</td>
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<td>Registered Nurse</td>
<td>Proficiency Certificate or Bachelor of Nursing graduate who have registered in NNC register</td>
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<td>Registered Midwife</td>
<td>Proficiency Certificate or Bachelor of Midwifery graduate who have registered in NNC register</td>
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Introduction

According to the Nepal Nursing Council Act, 2052 (1995) Nepal Nursing Council (NNC) has two main objectives: to protect a public; and to ensure the integrity of nursing and midwifery practices. The council is the statutory body, which sets the standards for the education, registration and professional ethics and conduct of nurses and midwives in the country. It also guides on how nurses and midwives should provide care to health service consumers. The main function of the NNC is to protect and safeguard the public, by establishing and maintaining the register of nurses and midwives. The NNC also develops procedures and criteria for assessment and registration nursing and midwifery education and services. Additionally, the NNC approves education programmes for the purposes of registration and continued registration as well as keeps these programmes under review. It also sets standards of practice and provides support for registered nurses and midwives in the country in implementing standards of practice. This includes developing, reviewing and publishing a code of ethics and professional conduct; and providing guidance on all aspects of professional conduct and on maintaining professional competencies.

The Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives (the Code) is the overarching structure that informs the NNC’s framework of professional guidance to registered nurses and midwives. Professional accountability, competency and the quality of professional practice are based on this structure together with other supporting guidance and standards frameworks. The NNC publishes rules, standards, guidelines, and advice for nurses and midwives to help them comply with the Code, and to support them in their scope of practice and professional responsibilities. These publications include information on education standards and requirements, practice standards, guidelines, decision making frameworks, circulars and position statements. Nurses and midwives must be familiar with and understand the importance of the Council’s most current version of standards and guideline documents and should apply them in any professional setting.
The NNC makes sure that only those who meet its requirements are allowed to practise as a nurse or midwife in Nepal. It is illegal to practise as a nurse or midwife in Nepal if anyone is not on NNC register. The NNC takes action if concerns are raised about whether a nurse or midwife is fit to practise.

The Code of ethics and conduct contains the professional standards that registered nurses and midwives must uphold. Nepalese nurses and midwives must act in line with the Code of ethics and conduct, whether they are providing direct care to health service consumers or bringing their professional knowledge on nursing and midwifery practice in other roles, such as leadership, education or research. While an individual can interpret the values and principles set out in the Code, in a range of different practice settings, they are not negotiable.

The role of the NNC is to set the standards in the Code. These are not just mere standards but are also the standards that health service consumers expect from healthcare professionals. These standards guide professional nurses and midwives across Nepal.

During registration and renewal process, nurses and midwives should commit to uphold these standards. This commitment to professional standards is fundamental to being part of the profession. The NNC can take action if registered nurses or midwives fail to uphold the Code. In serious cases, this can include temporary suspension and/or removal from the NNC register.

The Code should be useful for everyone who cares about quality nursing and midwifery service: Health service consumers, and those who care for them, can use it to provide feedback to nurses and midwives about the care they receive. Nurses and midwives can use it to promote safe and quality service in their workplace. Employers and organisations can use this to support their staff in upholding the standards in their professional practice as a part of providing the quality service as expected by health service consumers and regulators. Educators can use the Code to help students understand what it means to be a registered professionals and how maintaining the Code helps to achieve that.
This Code should be seen as a way of reinforcing registered nurse and midwife in their professionalism. Through revalidation, a nurse and midwife will provide evidence of her/his continued ability to practise safely and effectively when renewing her/his registration. The Code will be central in the revalidation process as a focus for professional reflection. This process will give the Code significance in her/his professional life, and raise its status, and importance for employers. The Code puts the interests of health service consumers first; is safe and effective quality nursing and midwifery practice, and promotes trust through professionalism.

**The purpose and aims of the Code**

The purpose of the Code of ethics and conduct is to guide nurses and midwives in their day to day practice and help them to understand their professional responsibilities in caring for health service consumers in a safe, ethical and effective way. The aims of the Code are to:

- support and guide nurses and midwives in their ethical and clinical decision making, their on-going reflection and professional self-development;
- emphasise the importance of the obligations of nurses and midwives to recognise and respond to the needs of health service consumers;
- set standards for the regulation, monitoring and enforcement of professional conduct;
- inform the general public about the professional care they can expect from nurses and midwives.

All registered nurses and midwives in each area of practice (clinical, education, research, administration or management) should adhere to the Code’s principles, values and standards of conduct.

Every nurse and midwife has a responsibility to uphold the values of the profession to ensure their practice reflects high standards of professional practice and protects the public. If a registered nurse or midwife does not follow the Code, and a complaint is made against them, the Board can
investigate that nurse or midwife. The NCC shall also initiate investigation proactively on a nurse or a midwife should there be any need to do so, for example, gross negligence reported in the media.

The NNC Act of 2052 (Revised 2066) requires the Council to provide guidelines to the approved colleges of nursing and midwifery on ethical standards and behaviours for students. Nursing and midwifery students should become familiar with the Code and its supporting documents as part of their education.

The NNC believes that employers have a responsibility to acknowledge the importance of the Code’s values and standards in their relationship with nurse and midwife employees. This Code refers to relevant national legislation, as it also directs and supports the promotion of the high standards expected from a nurse and midwife.

Specific issues concerning professional practice will be considered when they arise. The Council may produce professional practice guidelines to address those issues as required.

**The Code of Ethics**

The Code of Ethics includes four principles with criteria for registered nurses and midwives in Nepal. They are:

1. Prioritise and respect health service consumers
2. Practise competently
3. Preserve safety, security and quality of practice
4. Promote professionalism, accountability and trust

**1. Prioritise and respect health service consumers**

A nurse or a midwife should put the interests of health service consumers first. A nurse/midwife prepares their care and safety of main concern and makes sure that their dignity is preserved and their needs are recognised, assessed and responded. A nurse or a midwife makes sure that those receiving care are treated with respect, that their rights are maintained and that any discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards those receiving care are challenged.
1.1 **Treat health service consumers as individuals and maintain their dignity by**

1.1.1 treating health service consumers with kindness, respect and compassion,
1.1.2 making sure to deliver the fundamentals of care effectively,
1.1.3 avoiding assumptions and recognising diversity and individual choice,
1.1.4 demonstrating non-judgemental attitude towards health service consumers at all levels,
1.1.5 making sure that any treatment, assistance or responsible care is delivered without undue delay, and
1.1.6 respecting and supporting health service consumer's human rights.

1.2 **Listen to health service consumers and respond to their preferences and concerns by**

1.1.1 working in partnership with health service consumers to make sure to deliver care effectively,
1.1.2 recognising and respecting the contribution that health service consumers can make to their own health and wellbeing,
1.1.3 encouraging and empowering health service consumers to share decisions about their treatment and care,
1.1.4 respecting the level to which health service consumer receiving care want to be involved in decisions about their own health, wellbeing and care,
1.1.5 respecting, supporting and documenting an individual's right to accept or refuse care and treatment, and
1.1.6 recognising when health service consumers are anxious or in distress and responding compassionately and politely.

1.3 **Make sure that health service consumer’s physical, social and psychological needs are assessed and responded by**

1.1.1 paying special attention to promoting wellbeing, preventing ill health and meeting the changing health
and care needs of health service consumers during all life stages,

1.1.2 recognising and responding compassionately to the needs of those who are in the last few days and hours of life,

1.1.3 acting in partnership with those receiving care, helping them to access relevant health and social care, information and support when they need it, and

1.1.4 acting as an advocate for the vulnerable, challenging discriminatory attitudes, behaviour and practice relating to their care.

1.3 **Act in the best interests of health service consumers at all times by**

1.3.3 balancing the needs to act in the best interests of health service consumers at all times with the requirement to respect an individual’s right to accept or refuse care and/or treatment,

1.3.4 making sure to obtain informed consent and document it before carrying out any action/procedure,

1.3.5 keeping to all relevant laws about mental capacity, to make sure that the rights and best interests of those who lack capacity to provide informed consent are still at the centre of the decision-making process, and

1.3.6 informing colleagues, manager and the individual receiving care if there is a conscientious objection to a particular procedure by a health service consumer or her/his care givers. In such case, alternative arrangement (for example, getting support from a suitably qualified nurse or midwife colleague) to take over responsibility for that individual’s care may be required.

1.4 **Respect health service consumer’s right to privacy and confidentiality by**

1.4.1 respecting a client’s right to privacy in all aspects of her/his care,
1.4.2 making sure that health service consumers are informed about why and how their information is used and shared by those who are providing care,

1.4.3 sharing relevant information with other healthcare professionals and organisations if necessary and only when the interests of client safety and public protection override the need for confidentiality,

1.4.4 sharing with health service consumers, their families and carers, as far as the law allows, the information they want or need to know about their health, care and ongoing treatment sensitively and in a way they can understand, and

1.4.5 respecting that health service consumers' right to privacy and confidentiality even after he/she died.

2. Practise competently

A nurse or a midwife assesses health service consumers' needs and provides or advises on treatment, or supports in preventative, promotive and rehabilitative care, including referral services on time to the best of her/his abilities. She/he brings this practice on the basis of the best evidence available. A nurse or a midwife communicates effectively, keeps records clearly and accurately, and shares knowledge, skills and experience with health team members where appropriate. A nurse or a midwife always reflects and acts on any feedback that she/he receives to improve the practice.

1.1 Always practise with the best available evidence by

1.1.1 making sure that any information or advice given is evidence-based, and relating to use of any healthcare products or services, and

1.1.2 enhancing and updating the knowledge and skills as appropriate to the advancement in health and technology that is needed for safe and effective practice.
1.2 Communicate clearly and effectively by
1.2.1 using terms that health service consumers, their care takers and the public can understand,
1.2.2 taking appropriate measures to meet health service consumer’s language and communication needs,
1.2.3 utilising a range of verbal and non-verbal communication methods, and considering cultural and linguistic sensitivities, to better understand and respond to health service consumer’s personal and health need,
1.2.4 checking health service consumer’s understanding time to time to minimize mistakes and misunderstanding, and
1.2.5 allowing sufficient time to health service consumers and care takers to ask questions, and responding them appropriately.

1.3 Work cooperatively by
1.3.1 respecting the skills, expertise and contributions of colleagues and referring matters to them when appropriate,
1.3.2 maintaining effective communication with colleagues,
1.3.3 keeping colleagues informed while sharing the care of health service consumers with other healthcare professionals and the relevant support staff,
1.3.4 working with colleagues to evaluate the quality of an individual’s work and that of the team,
1.3.5 working with colleagues to preserve the safety, and provide continuum of care to the health service consumers,
1.3.6 sharing information to identify and reduce risk to the health consumers and colleagues,
1.3.7 being supportive to colleagues who are encountering health problems or performance related issues. However, this support must not compromise health service consumers or public safety, and
1.3.8 seeking feedback proactively on her/his performance from colleagues and other health care professional.
2.4 Share knowledge, skills and experience for the benefit of health service consumers and colleagues by

1.1.1 providing honest, accurate and constructive feedback to colleagues,
1.1.2 gathering and reflecting on feedback from a variety of sources to improve an individual practice and performance,
1.1.3 dealing with differences of professional opinion with colleagues by discussion and informed debate, respecting their views and opinions and behaving in a professional way at all times, and
1.1.4 supporting students and colleagues learning to help them develop their professional competence and confidence.

1.4 Keep clear and accurate records relevant to the practice by

1.4.4 completing all records of daily routine care at the time or as soon as possible after an event,
1.4.5 keeping records of critical incidents identifying any risks or problems that have arisen, the steps taken to deal with them without any falsification,
1.4.6 keeping witness while recording critical incidents,
1.4.7 ensuring any entries that have been made in any paper or electronic records are clearly written, dated and timed, and avoiding unnecessary abbreviations, jargon or speculation,
1.4.8 processing and managing data (including collection and storage) and research findings safely and securely.

1.5 Be accountable for decisions and delegation of tasks and duties by

1.5.1 delegating tasks and duties that are within the other professional's scope of competence, making sure that they fully understand given instructions
1.5.2 making sure that everyone delegated tasks to is adequately supervised and supported so they can provide safe and compassionate care, and
1.5.3 confirming that the outcome of any task that have delegated to someone else meets the required standard.

1.7 **Have in place an arrangement of protection by**

1.7.1 making sure that there is an appropriate arrangement of an insurance in the organization/institution relevant to the scope of professional practice.

### 3. Preserve safety, security and quality of practice

A nurse or a midwife should make sure that health service consumers and public safety is preserved and protected. A nurse/midwife works within the limits of her/his competence, exercising her/his professional duty of candour and rising concerns immediately whenever she/he comes across situations that put health service consumers or public safety at risk. A nurse or a midwife takes necessary action to deal with any concerns where appropriate.

**1.1 Recognise and work within a scope of her/his competence by**

1.1.1 accurately assessing physical, social, spiritual and mental health conditions in the health consumers receiving care,

1.1.2 making an appropriate diagnosis related to physical and mental health of health service consumer, and providing relevant care,

1.1.3 making a timely and appropriate referral after providing lifesaving procedure,

1.1.4 seeking help from a suitably qualified and experienced healthcare professional to carry out any action or procedure that is beyond the limits of her/his competence,

1.1.5 taking account of own personal safety as well as the safety of health service consumers while caring individuals,

1.1.6 obtaining the necessary training before carrying out a new role, and

1.1.7 maintaining the standard of practice at all times, and at all levels.

**1.2 Be open and honest in all aspects of care and treatment by**

1.2.1 acting immediately to correct the situation if someone has suffered actual harm for any reason or an incident has happened which had the potential for harm,
1.2.2 explaining fully and promptly what has happened, including the likely effects, and apologise to the health service consumer/s affected and, where appropriate, family or care takers, and

1.2.3 documenting all these events authentically and take further action (escalate) if appropriate so they can be dealt quickly, and

1.2.4 reviewing and reflecting the incident and taking measures to avoid similar incidents in future.

1.3 **Always offer help if an emergency arises by**

1.3.1 acting in an emergency within the limits of her/his knowledge and competence,

1.3.2 arranging, for emergency care to be accessed and provided promptly, and wherever possible,

1.3.3 taking account of her/his own safety and safety of other concerned while providing care, and

1.3.4 collaborating with others professionals and support staff for providing emergency care.

1.4 **Act promptly for health service consumer’s safety and public protection by**

1.4.1 practicing based on NNC guidelines and scope of practice,

1.4.2 raising concerns immediately if asked to practise beyond scope of practice,

1.4.3 informing someone in authority at the first reasonable opportunity if she/he experiences problems that may prevent working within scope of practice, and taking prompt action to tackle the causes of concern,

1.4.4 acknowledging and acting on all concerns raised to her/him,

1.4.5 taking care for those who wants to raise a concern, and

1.4.6 protecting anyone holding management responsibility from any harm, detriment, victimisation or unwarranted treatment after a concern is raised.
1.5 Raising concerns immediately for those who are vulnerable or at risk by

1.5.1 taking all reasonable steps to protect health service consumers who are vulnerable or at risk from harm, neglect or abuse,

1.5.2 sharing information if she/he believes someone may be at risk of harm, in line with the laws relating to the disclosure of information, and

1.5.3 having knowledge of and keeping to the relevant laws and policies about protecting and caring for vulnerable individuals.

3.6 Advice on, prescribe, supply, dispense or administer medicines within the scope of practice by

1.1.1 prescribing or advising on, or providing medicines or treatment within the scope of practice

1.1.2 keeping to appropriate guidelines when giving advice on controlled drugs, including appropriate recording of prescription, supply, dispensing and administration,

1.1.3 making sure that the care or treatment she/he advises on, prescribes, supplies, dispenses or administers for each health service consumer is compatible with any other care or treatment she/he is receiving,

1.1.4 taking all steps to keep medicines stored safely and securely, and

1.1.5 wherever possible, avoiding prescription for self or for anyone with a close personal relationship.

1.6 Be aware of and reduce any potential harm by

1.6.6 taking measures to reduce the likelihood of mistakes and harm within the scope of practice,

1.6.7 taking account of current evidences in reducing mistakes/errors and its effect,

1.6.8 identifying all relevant factors that influence behaviour at work which can affect health and safety (of all concerned),
1.6.9 maintaining a recommended practice in relation to controlling and preventing infection, and
1.6.10 taking all reasonable precautions, including privacy and confidentiality necessary to avoid any potential health risks to colleagues and health service consumers.

4. Promote professionalism, accountability and trust
A nurse or a midwife should uphold the reputation of her/his profession at all times. A nurse or a midwife should display a personal commitment to the standards of practice and behaviour set out in the Code. A nurse or midwife should be a model of integrity and leadership for others to aspire to. This should lead to trust and confidence in the profession from health service consumers receiving care, other healthcare professionals and the public.

1.1 4.1 Upholding the reputation of her/his profession at all times by
1.1.1 keeping to and upholding the standards and values set out in the Code,
1.1.2 acting with honesty and integrity at all times, treating everyone fairly and without discrimination, bullying or harassment,
1.1.3 being aware at all times of how her/his behaviour can affect and influence the behaviour of other people and professionals including health service consumers,
1.1.4 keeping respecting to the laws of the country in which she/he is practising,
1.1.5 treating everyone in a way that does not take advantage of their vulnerability or cause them upset or distress,
1.1.6 staying objective and having clear professional boundaries at all times with her/his health service consumers and families and carers,
1.1.7 making sure she/he does not express personal beliefs including political, religious or moral beliefs to health service consumers and their families.
1.1.8 acting as a role model of professional behaviour for students and newly qualified nurses and midwives to aspire to,

1.1.9 maintaining the level of health she/he needs to carry out professional role, and

1.1.10 utilising all forms of verbal, written and digital communication, including social media and networking sites responsibly by respecting the right to privacy of others at all times.

1.2 **Uphold her/his position as a registered nurse or midwife by**

1.2.1 maintaining honesty and integrity, refuse all trivial gifts, favours or hospitality of any form,

1.2.2 never asking for or accepting loans from health service consumers,

1.2.3 making sure that any advertisements, publications or published material she/he produces for professional services are accurate and ethical, and

1.2.4 co-operating with the media when it is appropriate for professionalism.

1.3 **Ffulfil all registration requirements by**

1.3.1 timely responding to any reasonable notice regarding registration requirement revised or updated by NNC, and

1.3.2 keeping her/his knowledge and skills up to date by taking part in appropriate and regular professional learning and development activities.

1.4 **Cooperate with all investigations and audits by**

1.4.1 providing any records of registration or other relevant records to NNC or other relevant authorities if requested to make sure she/he is fit to practise,

1.4.2 communicating to concerned bodies for any caution or charge against her/him, and result/outcome of any investigations when available, and
1.4.3 communicating to employer if she/he has had any practice restriction or had any other conditions imposed on her/him by the NNC or any other relevant body.

1.5 Respond to any complaints made against her/him professionally by

1.5.1 never allowing someone's complaint to affect the care that is provided to them,

1.5.2 using all complaints as a form of feedback and an opportunity for reflection and learning to improve practice, and

1.5.3 cooperating in any form of investigation if any complaint is made against her/him.

1.6 Provide leadership for improving health service consumers’ wellbeing and health care system by

1.6.1 providing leadership skills to prioritise and manage resources effectively in order to maintain and improve quality of care or service, and

1.6.2 supervising and supporting team members she/he is responsible for to follow the Code at all times, and

1.6.3 ensuring relevant knowledge, skills and behaviour for safe practice and appropriate decision making.

Professional code of conducts for nurse or midwife

A registered nursing or midwifery professional registered pursuant to the Act and the Regulation must comply with the following code of conducts:

(a) **Punctuality and regularity:** The registered nursing or midwifery professional must be regularly engaged full time in the care and management of health consumer as determined by the institution where s/he is working.

(b) **Discipline:** The registered nursing or midwifery professional must pay due respect to the manager or health workers superior to him/
her and treat all the health consumer and subordinate health workers and other employees properly.

(c) **Observance of order and instructions:** The registered nursing or midwifery professional must carry out honestly and with high priority on the matter of care and management of health consumers on the basis of nursing or midwifery process.

(d) **Decent behaviour:** Every registered nursing or midwifery professional must show decent and civilized behavior that may have positive impact on the psychological status of the health consumer and his/her family.

(e) **Use high conscience to save life of health consumers:** Every registered nursing or midwifery professional must use high conscience to improve the health condition of health consumer and to relieve pain and suffering, and save the life of health consumer.

(f) **Respect the rights and dignity of the health consumer:** Any registered nursing or midwifery professional shall not discriminate any health consumer on the ground of religion, race, gender or ideological conviction or on any other similar ground. She/he should be compassionate and cultural sensitive towards health consumers ensuring their dignity and rights.

(g) **Maintain privacy and confidentiality:** The registered nursing or midwifery professional should maintain privacy of the health consumer and shall not disclose any matter of pure personal life of the health consumer which s/he came to know unless s/he is required to disclose pursuant to the law.

(h) **Professional conscience to be employed in the emergency:** The registered nursing or midwifery professional must employ the measures which are not under his/her responsibility but under his/her scope of work in term of profession upon giving information to a healthcare team member promptly to the extent possible in the emergency or in the situation where something needs to be done forthwith to save the life of the health consumers.
(i) **Free from Fradulant Activities:** The registered nursing or midwifery professional must not take nancial or in-kind advantage other than the remuneration, allowance and other facilities pursuant to the law upon propagating nursing or midwifery profession.

(j) **Maintain professional dignity and respect:** The registered nursing or midwifery professional should avoid any activity that may have adverse impact on the nursing or midwifery profession.

(k) **Be active towards professional development:** Every registered nursing or midwifery professional must always remain active for progress and development of nursing or midwifery profession and progress and improvement of health of the mankind upon generating positive spirit towards this service at the local, national and international levels.

(l) **Be responsible and accountable:** Every registered nursing or midwifery professional must be personally responsible and accountable towards his/her action and duty within her scope of practice.

It is the duty and responsibility of the concerned all to comply with, and should be complied with, the code of conducts as referred to in sub-rule (m).

(m) **Professional code of conducts to be deemed to be breached:** If the registered nursing or midwifery professional fails to comply with the professional code of conducts set out in Rule 5.1, s/he shall be deemed to have breached the professional code of conducts.
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