



Code of Ethics

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Code of Ethics

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1. Introduction

This document describes the Code of Ethics of the Network of Associations for Harm Reduction (NAHR).

1.1 The Network of Associations for Harm Reduction (NAHR)

The Network of Associations for Harm Reduction (NAHR) project is a coalition of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and stakeholders committed to Harm Reduction (HR) in Egypt. It includes the National AIDS Program (NAP) in Egypt, International Organizations and CSOs that provide Harm Reduction (HR) services for Most at Risk Populations (MARPs) in Egypt.

The mission of the coalition is to promote a solid, sustainable network for all HR projects in Egypt by ensuring standardized, high quality, and stigma-free services for MARPs and related communities. The specific objectives of NAHR are 1) Establishing NAHR as a coordinating body for all HR projects in Egypt; 2) Strengthening the capacity of CSO service providers to provide quality services for MARPs and 3) Reducing stigma and discrimination toward MARPs and People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) through advocacy.

1.2 Defining NAHR Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics sets forth the principles and practices of professional conduct to be observed by NAHR members. The Code of Ethics underlines the ethical principles and behaviors that govern the internal and external relations of all members of NAHR regardless of their responsibilities.

The Code of Ethics is divided into two separate components that include 1) NAHR general code of conduct that sets rules for behavior among all members, and 2) CSO service providers' code of conduct, based on principles of biomedical ethics, that guides the behavior of the staff members who provide clients with services.

1) The NAHR General Code of Conduct is based on NAHR core values of professional conduct that include the following principles:

- A high standard of skill and knowledge
- Respect for all persons
- Objectivity, integrity and accountability
- Equality
- Equity
- Stigma and discrimination free environment
- Confidentiality
- Collaboration and coordination

2) The CSO Service Providers' Code of Conduct is based on biomedical ethics, which are rooted in the Helsinki Declaration and include respect for persons, beneficence and justice.

Respect for persons incorporates two main ethical convictions: 1) Individuals should be treated as autonomous agents, and 2) Those persons with diminished autonomy are subject to two separate moral requirements: The requirement to acknowledge the autonomy, and the requirement to protect those with diminished autonomy. Self-determination is an essential component of respect for persons. Subjects must be free to choose to participate in an activity and to end their participation for any reason, without consequences.

Beneficence requires that the service provider is responsible for the participant's physical, mental and social well-being as related to the activities (i.e., non-maleficence). The risks to a person participating in a research study or an activity must be weighed against the potential benefit to the participant. In any case, all risks should be kept to a minimum. Risk may include psychological or physical damage. It may also include economical or social challenges.

Justice requires that the benefits and burdens are equitably distributed—that is, no single individual or population are exposed to risks of harm while other individuals or populations receive the benefits.

1.3 Application of the NAHR Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics is seen as a living document that can be revised periodically based on comments and needs expressed by NAHR members.

All NAHR members will be trained on the principles of ethics, as well as on ethical decision making framework that enables network members to apply the NAHR Code of Ethics in everyday situations when confronted with an ethical dilemma. In addition, a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework will be developed for effective follow-up on the application of ethical principles.

Voluntary violation of the Code of Ethics by NAHR members can lead to penalties and sanctions imposed by the NAHR Ethics Committee. In an event of force or psychological pressure by external parties, NAHR members can be waived the obligation to follow the Code of Ethics.

2. Ethics Statements

2.1 NAHR General Code of Conduct

2.1.1 A high standard of skill and knowledge

- NAHR members shall sustain and advance the integrity of NAHR and its standard of skill and knowledge.
- NAHR members shall remain up-to-date on all technical and professional information related to Harm Reduction and participate in educational activities whenever possible.
- NAHR members shall understand the roles and responsibilities of each network member.
- NAHR members shall comply with laws and regulations governing the profession and the area of work.

2.1.2 Objectivity, integrity, transparency and accountability

- NAHR members are open, honest, sincere and trustworthy when dealing with each other, beneficiaries and other stakeholders.
- NAHR members will ensure the integrity and objectivity of their work and give information based only on evidence-based facts, accuracy and honesty.
- NAHR members will promote transparency at all times.
- NAHR is accountable, individually and collectively, for behaviors, actions and results provided to beneficiaries and those funding the project.

2.1.3 Mutual respect

- NAHR members shall demonstrate respect toward all parties.
- NAHR members shall protect the rights of all members and beneficiaries, especially in the acquisition and dissemination of

information, while facilitating informed decision making.

- NAHR members shall respect intellectual property rights and copyrights.
- NAHR will maintain its partnership with the NAP at all times to ensure mutual respect and understanding between the two partners.

2.1.4 Equality

- NAHR ensures equal access to Harm Reduction services in Egypt for all MARPs.
- NAHR clients are treated the same regardless of their affiliated group, religion, race, nationality or any other status. Services are provided to anyone coming in the CSOs asking for services.
- NAHR members shall only have strictly professional relationships with clients and beneficiaries; any romantic, commercial, financial or any other relationship where power difference can be abused is prohibited as long as the client or beneficiary remains one. In case of an existing romantic, commercial or financial relationship between NAHR members and clients or beneficiaries, these persons shouldn't be part of the member's clientele.

2.1.5 Equity

- NAHR promotes horizontal and vertical equity to ensure equal access and service provision of individuals and MARPs to Harm Reduction services.

2.1.6 Stigma and discrimination free environment

- NAHR members will deal with all parties without stigma and discrimination and will express compassion, empathy, understanding and tolerance toward clients and beneficiaries.
- NAHR members must not discriminate unlawfully against or

victimize other parties on the grounds of nationality, ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, disability, age, religion, belief or any other status.

- NAHR is committed to ensure that disseminated data does not result in the stigmatization of specific group of MARPs.

2.1.7 Confidentiality between members, clients and beneficiaries

- NAHR members recognize and commit to the confidential relationship that exists between professionals and do not disclose information to third parties (i.e., those outside the network) unless granted permission from the proprietors of that information.
- NAHR members shall maintain the confidentiality of clients and beneficiaries. Information that is released by NAHR protects the identity of beneficiaries.
- NAHR members, clients and beneficiaries will be made aware of circumstances under which data can be made available to authorities.
- NAHR members will follow the best interest of child with decisions related to breach of confidentiality of children and minors. In case of any form of child abuse including sexual exploitation and sex work, NAHR members are committed to report these offenses and protect the victims of these crimes.
- NAHR members will have further emphasis on child protection from sexual abuse in humanitarian settings and inter alia Harm Reduction all along a safety / security, psychosocial, medical and indeed legal / judiciary redress against the criminal perpetrator.

2.1.8 Collaboration and coordination

- NAHR members shall share information and collaborate effectively in order to work toward fulfilling the objectives set for NAHR.

- NAHR will promote collaboration with the Egyptian government and seek an open dialogue with NAP in order to ensure that goals and objectives of NAHR are in line with the National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS.

2.2 CSO Service Providers' Code of Conduct

2.2.1 Respect for persons

- NAHR service providers are committed to ensuring that the proper consenting process is applied to all clients.
- The consenting process includes explaining the purpose of data collection or an activity, how the confidentiality of data/ activity is maintained, voluntary participation, the right to withdraw from any activity at any time, possible hazards for those who participate and the benefits of activities for beneficiaries, CSOs and NAHR.
- Protection for those with diminished decision making capabilities is ensured.
- The consenting process for children and minors defined to be less than 18 years will follow the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which includes four core principles; non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child. The consent of children will be obtained from both their guardian and themselves. In case one of them refuses to participate, the refusal will be respected.
- To protect confidentiality of clients and beneficiaries, verbal consent rather than signed consent will be obtained whenever possible.
- Voluntary participation in activities is protected at all times.

2.2.2 Beneficence

- Privacy and confidentiality are maintained during all activities.
- All activities ensure anonymity of clients and beneficiaries.
- Service providers (NAHR and referral service providers) are committed to providing stigma-free services.
- NAHR is committed to protect its service providers' well being in case of abuse by authority and/or abusive clients.
- NAHR is committed to do their best to support clients, beneficiaries and service providers in an event of harm.
- NAHR service providers are aware of the type of personal data of clients and beneficiaries that can be communicated among service providers and how this data can be communicated.

2.2.3 Justice

- NAHR ensures that all client groups and beneficiaries share the same burden and benefits of the services and data collection procedures.