

NATIONAL BLINDNESS PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION BOARD

**Structured Discovery Professional
CODE OF CONDUCT**

Adopted April 2021
and
Revised July 2021

DEFINITIONS

Beneficence - To do good to others; to promote the well-being of consumers

Blind - any person who is totally blind or whose sight is sufficiently affected that alternative techniques are necessary to perform daily activities

Blindfolds - items designed and intended to preclude the use of sight

Board - the National Blindness Professional Certification Board, Inc.

Confidence-Building Activities - activities that are novel experiences which are appropriate, diverse, and challenging and designed to increase the confidence or self-efficacy of the consumer.

Consumer - any person receiving rehabilitation training by a Structured Discovery Professional.

Fidelity - to be faithful; to keep promises and honor the trust placed in Structured Discovery Professionals.

Justice - to be fair in the treatment of all consumers; to provide appropriate services to all

Long White Cane - a cane designed for the use of blind people which gives ample time to respond to received information and that is one singular piece and cannot be reduced in size

NBPCB - the National Blindness Professional Certification Board, Inc.

Nonmaleficence - to do no harm to others

Non-visual skills - those skills, techniques and technology that blind persons employ as alternatives to the use of sight

Potential consumer - any blind person that is currently not a consumer

Problem-Solving Strategies - plans of action used to find solutions

Professional impairment - deterioration of ability to function because of a physical or mental condition

Role Model - a person whose behavior, example, or success can be emulated by others,

SD Professional - any professional in work with the blind who has qualified for and received certification from the National Blindness Professional Certification Board in the areas of Structured Discovery rehabilitation training

Supervisees - any person participating in either an apprenticeship or internship

Veracity - to be honest

Vulnerable Populations - those under the age of 18, those with debilitating mental health conditions, or those with a cognitive impairment

PREAMBLE

The National Blindness Professional Certification Board's (NBPCB) CODE OF CONDUCT is a public statement of the common set of values and principles used to promote and maintain high standards of behavior among those specialists in work with

the blind who elect and are accepted to become Structured Discovery (SD) Professionals or those training facilities that are certified through this Board's certification processes. The Board is committed to furthering the ability of persons who are blind to function competently, independently and successfully--not only in their own environments--but also as fully integrated and participating citizens in the broader society. To this end, all SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities shall treat persons who are blind with dignity and respect and will provide the best possible training and related vocational rehabilitation services which can be offered based upon the most current techniques and training principles available at the time.

Attainment of NBPCB certification commits individuals and training facilities to adherence of the stated ethical principles. Any action in violation of either the spirit or purpose of this Code shall be considered to be unethical and shall be grounds for immediate suspension or permanent revocation of certification. An intentional Code violation by any SD PROFESSIONAL or any certified training facility shall serve as *prima facie* evidence of the desire and voluntary choice to relinquish NBPCB certification and to forfeit all rights or privileges which inure to a person or facility by reason of holding one of this Board's certifications.

It is the responsibility of each PROFESSIONAL individual who is bound by this Code of Conduct to review and to come fully to understand these ethical principles. Lack of knowledge or understanding of an ethical responsibility may not be used as a defense against a charge of unethical conduct. NBPCB reserves unto itself the sole power to suspend or revoke any certification and privileges upon a determination that a Code violation has occurred. If a violation is found, the SD PROFESSIONAL or facility will voluntarily relinquish the certification designation.

Individual Enforceable Standards are not meant to be interpreted in isolation. Instead, Enforceable Standards should be interpreted as a body, with each Enforceable Standard interpreted in conjunction with other, related standards, throughout the Code. Actions of SD Professionals and certified facilities should be consistent with the spirit, as well as the letter, of these Enforceable Standards.

NBPCB reserves the right to take action, up to and including, permanent revocation of certification, if any violation is offensive, serious, harmful, dangerous, negligent, repeated, intentional, pervasive, or criminal regardless if the conduct takes place outside of the context of the certificant's professional role.

The Enforceable Standards within the Code are the exacting, enforceable standards intended to provide guidance in specific circumstances and serve as the basis for processing complaints initiated against certified SD Professionals and/or certified facilities

A breach of the Enforceable Standards provided herein do not necessarily constitute legal liability or violation of the law; such action is established in legal and judicial proceedings.

Revocation can also be considered when any certificant engages in disqualifying conduct which takes place outside of the context of the professional role including but not limited to any of the following: commission of a criminal act, exploitative behavior, violence, abuse, sexual harassment, civil judgments, or civil fraud.

SD Professionals and certified facilities need to be aware of laws related to their practice. At times legal and ethical standards may conflict. In such situations we encourage consultation with NBPCB board members, supervisors, legal/ethical experts, and others as appropriate and to use an ethical decision-making model to inform decisions.

SD Professionals and certified facilities acknowledge that resolving ethical issues is a process. When faced with ethical dilemmas that are difficult to resolve, it is expected that individuals will engage in a carefully considered ethical decision-making process and consult with available resources as needed. Ethical reasoning includes consideration of professional values, professional ethical principles, and ethical standards.

SD Professionals and certified facilities are expected to use a credible model of ethical decision-making that can bear public scrutiny of its application. Through a chosen ethical decision-making process and evaluation of the context of the situation, SD Professionals and certified facilities work to resolve any ethical dilemmas that may arise.

CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS

SD Professionals and certified facilities are committed to facilitating the personal, economic, and social independence of individuals who are blind. In fulfilling this commitment, SD Professionals and certified facilities recognize diversity and embrace a cultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of all individuals within their social and cultural context. They look to professional values as an important way of living out an ethical commitment. The primary values that serve as a foundation for this Code include a commitment to the Tenants of Structured Discovery Methodology; Beneficence; Nonmaleficence; Privacy and Confidentiality; Duties; Justice; Veracity; and Fidelity.

SD Professionals and certified facilities are aware that all individuals exist in a variety of contexts and understand the influence of these contexts on an individual's behavior. Structured Discovery Professionals are aware of the continuing evolution of the field, changes in society at large, and the different needs of individuals in social, political, historical, environmental and economic contexts. The commitment involves providing respectful and timely communication, taking appropriate action when cultural diversity issues occur, and being accountable for the outcomes as they affect people of all races,

ethnicities, genders, national origins, religions, sexual orientations, or other cultural group identities.

SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities operate from an understanding that persons who are blind are normal people who cannot see and that blindness is a normal characteristic like the hundreds of others which, taken together, mold each person into a unique human being. Based upon this fundamental truth, SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities provide services with the high expectation that the blind consumer, or potential consumer, will be able to do what normal people do, upon completion of proper blindness training and services. Personal empowerment and complete integration into the broader society are the aspirational goals and objectives for consumers of SD PROFESSIONALS services. The SD PROFESSIONAL and certified facilities strive at all times to help the blind consumer, or potential consumer, achieve these objectives.

SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities understand that persons who are blind are members of a visible and identifiable minority and that, therefore, the primary problem faced by persons who are blind is attitudinal rather than physical—that is, there are widespread public misconceptions and misunderstandings about blindness which lead to beliefs and feelings of inferiority. While these public attitudes about blindness are socially constructed rather than factual, they are prominent in our society and in the emotions of consumers of services for the blind. Therefore, each of the blindness services which are provided by SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities must be designed and intended to teach consumers of services a new and constructive set of attitudes, based upon an understanding that the prevailing views about blindness are wrong and harmful.

SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities understand that the overarching objective of the services which are being provided is to enable blind consumers to come emotionally—not just intellectually—to understand that they are normal people who can be truly independent and self-sufficient.

SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities understand that quality training in the skills or alternative techniques of blindness is essential to freedom and independence for persons who are blind and that the skills should not merely be introduced—they should be mastered by the consumer. The SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities also understand, however, that the simple skills of blindness such as Braille or cane travel are not ends unto themselves but are merely small parts of a larger objective—helping the consumer adjust fully to blindness.

SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities understand that the blind consumer must learn to cope calmly and unemotionally with the unusual or demeaning things other people will do or say because of the public's misconceptions about blindness. Therefore, discussions concerning prevailing misunderstandings and misconceptions and the consumer's responses to them should appropriately and conscientiously be intertwined throughout class or training sessions.

SECTION ONE. TENANTS OF STRUCTURED DISCOVERY METHODOLOGY

1.1 SD Professionals and certified facilities actively and consistently demonstrate the importance and efficacy of non-visual Skills where ever sight is absent or faulty. SD Professionals and certified facilities believe that non-visual skills are equal to their sighted counterparts, and are transferable across all environmental situations.

1.2 SD Professionals and certified facilities actively and consistently use blindfolds in all instructional environments as an integral tool in the development of non-visual techniques

1.3 Although SD Professionals and certified facilities respect all consumer's preferences for mobility devices and the use of dog guides, it is expected that while receiving cane travel training from a SD Professional or a certified facility consumers will use long, non-folding or telescoping, white canes as their superiority has been demonstratively proven.

1.4 SD Professionals and certified facilities actively and consistently use confidence-building activities to provide novel experiences where consumers can apply developing non-visual skills. All efforts are made to provide appropriate, diverse, and challenging activities for all consumers with continual evaluation of stress levels so as not to cause undue stress outside of what is beneficial for growth.

1.5 SD Professionals and certified facilities actively and consistently promote role modeling as part of the rehabilitation process. Consumers are afforded the opportunity to engage with a wide variety of role models who demonstrate non-visual skills and positive attitudes regarding sight loss. These role models can be instructors, other students, and blind community members. Sighted instructors can also serve as role models by demonstrating non-visual skills with the use of teaching/sleep shades and by demonstrating expectations of how sighted individuals should interact with blind people.

1.6 SD Professionals and certified facilities actively and consistently promote problem-solving strategies. Consumers are taught to think critically, strategically, and derive answers to novel or unique problems. SD training provides the foundation necessary to engage in successful critical problem solving both throughout training and far beyond.

1.7 SD Professionals and certified facilities actively and consistently demonstrate the importance of positive Personal Attitudes regarding blindness. Every aspect of skill training is in support of fostering positive attitudes, self-esteem, and hope.

1.8 SD Professionals and certified facilities actively and consistently communicate that public misconceptions and low expectations are the largest environmental barrier facing blind people. All aspects of SD training include the development of robust problem solving, advocacy, and support networks to combat misconceptions and lowered expectations.

1.9 SD Professionals and certified facilities actively and consistently communicate the concept of giving back or contributing in a meaningful way to the general community. SD professionals and certified facilities understand that this concept is equally as important as skills training, and that blind persons must be given opportunities to give of their time, unique talents, and heart to help others.

Section Two. BENEFICENCE

2.1 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities shall demonstrate an ongoing concern for the welfare of consumers and potential consumers at all times.

2.2 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities shall always use their best professional judgement and accepted practices in assessing, training, and supervising consumers and those participating in apprenticeships or internships in all settings according to the principles of Structured Discovery methods.

2.3 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities shall always provide relevant, factual, and complete information about programs and services to enable consumers and potential consumers to make informed choices.

2.4 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities shall always advocate for the provision of appropriate services and/or referrals for consumers or potential consumers.

2.5 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities shall always collaborate with consumers in setting goals and priorities throughout training and ensure that goals are appropriate and commensurate to the consumer's goals, abilities, and potential capabilities.

2.6 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities shall make every effort to advocate for consumers or potential consumers to obtain needed high quality educational or adjustment to blindness services through all available means.

2.7 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities shall always be aware of and avoid imposing their own cultural values, personal preferences, beliefs, and behaviors on to consumers or potential consumers.

2.8 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities shall always communicate information in ways that are both developmentally and culturally appropriate to consumers or potential consumers.

2.9 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall understand the unique nature of working with minors and members of vulnerable populations and their responsibility to appropriately involve parents or guardians and other relevant decision makers in the process.

Section Three. NONMALEFICENCE

3.1 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities shall always take reasonable precautions to avoid imposing or inflicting physical, emotional, or psychological harm to any consumer or potential consumer.

3.2 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities shall always consider the consumers' needs when designing and implementing training lessons rather than considering personal comfort or convenience to either party.

3.3 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall maintain relationships that do not exploit or manipulate consumers or potential consumers sexually, physically, emotionally, financially, socially, or in any other manner.

3.4 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall not engage in personal virtual relationships with current consumers (e.g., through social media and other platforms).

3.5 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall not engage in electronic and/or in-person sexual or romantic interactions or relationships with current consumers, their romantic partners, or their immediate family members.

3.6 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall not engage in electronic and/or in-person sexual or romantic interactions or relationships with former consumers, their romantic partners, or their immediate family members for a period of one year following the last professional contact.

3.7 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall always avoid actual or the appearance of inappropriate or exploitive relationships with consumers, potential consumers, their romantic partners, or their immediate family members.

3.8 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall maintain relationships that do not exploit or manipulate blind or sighted colleagues, stakeholders, or members of the general public sexually, physically, emotionally, financially, socially, or in any other manner.

3.9 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall understand the elevated responsibility when working with minors and members of vulnerable populations and shall

appropriately involve parents or guardians, and any other relevant professionals in the decision-making process.

3.10 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall never condone or engage in the prejudicial treatment of an individual or group based on their actual or perceived membership in a particular group, class, or category including, but not limited to race, gender, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, or socioeconomic status.

3.11 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall report violations of this Code of Conduct pursuant to paragraphs 5.23 and 5.24 below.

Section Four. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

4.1 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall always respect the privacy rights of consumers or potential consumers, and only solicit private information when it is beneficial to the assessment or training process.

4.2 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall always protect and keep confidential all privileged forms of written, verbal, and electronic communication, including audio and visual information, concerning consumers or potential consumers, unless consent has been provided by the consumer or potential consumer, or unless otherwise authorized or mandated by local, state or federal laws or regulations.

4.3 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall always obtain permission from consumers or potential consumers prior to any recording or videotaping sessions through electronic or other means.

4.4 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall always obtain permission from consumers or potential consumers prior to observing or sharing sessions, reviewing session transcripts, and/or listening to or viewing recordings of sessions with others.

4.5 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall never engage in duplicitous behavior in either secretly recording, broadcasting, publishing, or posting information regarding consumers or potential consumers.

4.6 SD PROFESSIONALS conducting research shall always follow best practices in conducting research and obtain informed consent from consumers or potential consumers before using any personal information which might be published as a result of the research. Only statistical information may be used without consent.

4.7 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall obtain consent from parents or guardians prior to any interaction with minors or members of a vulnerable population and shall protect all privileged communications between these parties from public disclosure unless authorized by law.

Section Five. PROFESSIONAL DUTY

5.1 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities practice only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, professional credentials, and appropriate professional experience and do not misrepresent their competence to consumers or others.

5.2 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities act to avoid harming consumers, students, employees, supervisees, and research participants and to minimize or to remedy unavoidable or unanticipated harm.

5.3 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall refer to or consult with other qualified service providers whenever such a referral or consultation would be beneficial to consumers or potential consumers.

5.4 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall continuously monitor their effectiveness as professionals and, when necessary, take steps to improve performance through supervision, consultation, peer supervision, or input from other sources.

5.5 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall obtain specific training and continuing education in the area of age/stage appropriate instruction for minors and shall work collaboratively with parents and guardians on the development of training programs that are developmentally appropriate for vulnerable populations.

5.6 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities recognize the need for continuing education to acquire and maintain a reasonable level of awareness of current scientific and professional information in their fields of activity. They maintain their competence in the skills they use, are open to new procedures, and keep current with professional and community resources for diverse and specific populations with which they work.

5.7 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities recognize the importance and routinely participate in educating themselves to avoid sexual, physical, emotional, financial, social, or any other manner of exploitation.

5.8 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities actively develop and maintain current knowledge, personal awareness, sensitivity, and skills and demonstrate a disposition reflective of a culturally competent professional working with diverse consumer populations.

5.9 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall provide appropriate supervision to supervisees participating in either an apprenticeship or internship and ensure that responsibilities and goals are clearly defined, remediation opportunities are offered without penalty, and ensure, supervisees' violations of this code are reported to NBPCB.

5.10 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities are alert to the signs of professional impairment due to their own health issues or personal circumstances and refrain from offering or providing professional services when such impairment is likely to harm consumers or others. They seek assistance for problems that reach the level of professional impairment, and if necessary, they limit, suspend, or terminate their professional responsibilities until it is determined they may safely resume their work.

5.11 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities assist colleagues or supervisors in recognizing their own professional impairment, provide consultation and assistance when colleagues or supervisors show signs of impairment, and intervene to prevent harm to consumers.

5.12 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities accurately represent the accreditations of their academic programs and accurately describe their continuing education and specialized training.

5.13 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities do not condone or participate in any form of harassment, including sexual harassment.

5.14SD SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities shall report harassment, including sexual harassment, to their employer and refrain from retaliation against those who report harassment.

5.15 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities are accurate, honest, and objective in reporting their professional activities and judgments to authorized third parties (e.g., courts, health insurance companies, recipients of evaluation reports etc.).

5.16 When SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities provide advice or commentary by means of public lectures, demonstrations, radio or television programs, recordings, technology-based applications, printed articles, mailed material, or other media, they make reasonable efforts to ensure that: (1) the statements are based on appropriate professional literature and practice; (2) the statements are otherwise consistent with the Code; and (3) it is clear that a professional teaching relationship does not exist and that interactions are for demonstration purposes only and are not to be considered actual instruction.

5.17 When making professional statements in a public context, regardless of media or forum, SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities clearly identify whether the statements represent individual perspectives or the position of the profession or any professional organizations with which they may be affiliated.

5.18 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities do not exploit others in their professional relationships to seek or receive unjustified personal gains, sexual favors, unfair advantages, or unearned goods or services.

5.19 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities recognize their own personal or professional relationships may interfere with their ability to practice ethically and professionally. Under such circumstances, SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities are obligated to decline participation or to limit their assistance in a manner consistent with professional obligations.

5.20 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities identify, make known, and address real or apparent conflicts of interest in an attempt to maintain the public confidence and trust, discharge professional obligations, and maintain responsibility, impartiality, and accountability.

5.21 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities do not engage in any act or omission of a dishonest, deceitful, or fraudulent nature in the conduct of their professional activities.

5.22 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities do not disparage individuals or groups of individuals.

5.23 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities will be in violation of this Code of Conduct if they are aware of other certificant's unethical conduct and fail to report such conduct to NBPCB through NBPCB official procedures for processing complaints.

5.24 SD PROFESSIONALS and certified facilities will be in violation of this Code of Conduct if they are aware of other certificant's unlawful conduct and fail to report such conduct to NBPCB through NBPCB official procedures for processing complaints AND to law enforcement or protective services.

Section Six. JUSTICE

6.1 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws, ordinances, and policies.

6.2 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall comply with the principles, both explicit and implicit, of this Professional Code of Ethical Conduct.

6.3 SD Professionals shall require those professionals whom they supervise in SD internships or apprenticeships to adhere to this Professional Code of Ethical conduct.

6.4 SD Professionals shall take reasonable steps to ensure that employers are aware of the obligations set forth and promulgated in this Professional Code of Ethical Conduct.

6.5 SD Professionals understand that employers or potential employers will be notified by NBPCB of any violation of this code of conduct that results in either corrective action or revocation of their certification.

6.6 SD Professionals and certified facilities understand that NBPCB may notify other certification or license boards, other professional associations, protective services, and law enforcement of any violation of this code of conduct that results in either corrective action or revocation of their certification.

6.7 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall take reasonable steps to ensure that consumers and potential consumers are aware of the obligations set forth and promulgated in this Professional Code of Ethical Conduct.

Section Seven. VERACITY

7.1 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall claim or imply only professional qualifications actually completed and correct any known misrepresentations of their qualifications by others. They truthfully represent their qualifications and those of their professional colleagues.

7.2 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall disclose any professional, personal, financial, business or volunteer affiliations that potentially could pose a conflict of interest to those with whom they may establish a professional, contractual or other working relationship.

7.3 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall refrain from using or participating in the use of any form of communication that contains false, fraudulent, deceptive or unfair statements or claims concerning colleagues or service providers.

Section Eight. FIDELITY

8.1 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall treat colleagues and other blindness professionals with fairness, discretion, and integrity at all times.

8.2 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall preserve, respect and safeguard confidential information about colleagues and other professionals, unless otherwise authorized or mandated by national, state or local laws, or except as otherwise set forth in this Code of Conduct.

8.3 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall accurately represent the qualifications, views, contributions and recommendations of colleagues and other professionals.

8.4 SD Professionals will not accept a position of employment where ethical principles of Structured Discovery are compromised or abandoned, unless the position is accepted with the intention of amending or modifying the questionable practices. The SD Professional is prohibited from participating in behavior which violates this Code.

8.5 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall take adequate measures to discourage, prevent, expose, and correct any breaches of this Professional Code of Ethical Conduct and report any breaches to appropriate NBPCB officials for curative action.

8.6 SD Professionals and certified facilities shall become familiar with established NBPCB policies and procedures created for the purpose of handling and resolving complaints arising out of alleged violations of the standards set forth in this Professional Code of Ethical Conduct.

NBPCB reserves the right to modify this Code of Conduct at any time without prior notice.

As indicated above in the Preamble to this document, an intentional violation of any Section of this Code shall be *prima facie* evidence of an affirmative decision to voluntarily choose to relinquish NBPCB certification.

We would like to thank both the American Counseling Association and the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification for permission to adapt each organizations' code of ethics in developing our own code and grievance process.