



PART I INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

ROLE AND SCOPE OF PRACTICE
FOR THE PERSONAL TRAINER

ROLE AND SCOPE OF PRACTICE FOR THE PERSONAL TRAINER

TODD GALATI

IN THIS CHAPTER:

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Summary



THE BENEFITS RESULTING FROM REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ARE well documented (Table 1-1). After a comprehensive review of the research linking physical activity to health, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (2008) released the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, the first comprehensive guidelines on physical activity to be issued by the U.S. government. These guidelines list the following major research findings regarding physical activity and its associated health benefits:

- Regular physical activity reduces the risk of many adverse health outcomes.
- Some physical activity is better than none.
- For most health outcomes, additional benefits occur as the amount of physical activity increases through higher intensity, greater frequency, and/or longer duration.
- Most health benefits occur with at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking. Additional benefits occur with more physical activity.



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- Both aerobic (endurance) and muscle-strengthening (resistance) physical activity are beneficial.
- Health benefits occur for children and adolescents, young and middle-aged adults, older adults, and those in every studied racial and ethnic group.
- The health benefits of physical activity occur for people with disabilities.
- The benefits of physical activity far outweigh the possibility of adverse outcomes.

Table 1-1**Health Benefits Associated With Regular Physical Activity****Children and Adolescents***Strong evidence*

- Improved cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness
- Improved bone health
- Improved cardiovascular and metabolic health biomarkers
- Favorable body composition

Moderate evidence

- Reduced symptoms of depression

Adults and Older Adults*Strong evidence*

- Lower risk of early death
- Lower risk of coronary heart disease
- Lower risk of stroke
- Lower risk of high blood pressure
- Lower risk of adverse blood lipid profile
- Lower risk of type 2 diabetes
- Lower risk of metabolic syndrome
- Lower risk of colon cancer
- Lower risk of breast cancer
- Prevention of weight gain
- Weight loss, particularly when combined with reduced calorie intake
- Improved cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness
- Prevention of falls
- Reduced symptoms of depression
- Better cognitive function (for older adults)

Moderate to strong evidence

- Better functional health (for older adults)
- Reduced abdominal obesity

Moderate evidence

- Lower risk of hip fracture
- Lower risk of lung cancer
- Lower risk of endometrial cancer
- Weight maintenance after weight loss
- Increased bone density
- Improved sleep quality

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (2008). *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans: Be Active, Healthy and Happy*. www.health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/paguide.pdf

Note: The Advisory Committee rated the evidence of health benefits of physical activity as strong, moderate, or weak. To do so, the Committee considered the type, number, and quality of studies available, as well as consistency of findings across studies that addressed each outcome. The Committee also considered evidence for causality and dose response in assigning the strength-of-evidence rating.





THE NEED FOR PERSONAL TRAINERS TO HELP COMBAT THE RISING OBESITY EPIDEMIC HAS LED TO A POSITIVE OUTLOOK FOR PERSONAL TRAINING AS A PROFESSION



These findings reinforce what fitness professionals have known for years: The human body was meant to move and, when it does so with regularity, it responds to the stress of physical movement with improved fitness and health. Guidelines with similar goals and recommendations have been published in the past by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and American Heart Association (AHA) (Haskell et al., 2007), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) (2010), International Association for the Study of Obesity (Saris et al., 2003), Institute of Medicine (2002), and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (1996). The 2008 guidelines from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services mark the the first time the U.S. government had enough available research to make the claim that “all Americans should engage in regular physical activity to improve overall health and to reduce the risk of many health problems.”

Even with well-established guidelines for physical activity, the majority of healthcare professionals have little or no formal education or practical experience in designing and leading exercise programs. Physicians often give patients recommendations to exercise, but they generally do not provide specific instructions for *how* to exercise. ACE Certified Personal Trainers, therefore, play a vital role in allied healthcare by providing services that help clients participate in effective exercise programs that result in positive health and fitness improvements.

In the past, personal trainers have primarily worked with fitness enthusiasts in traditional fitness facilities. This role is changing due to the increasing number of adults and children who are **overweight** or obese and have related health issues. Personal trainers must now be prepared to work with clients ranging in age from youth to older adults, and ranging in health and fitness status from **sedentary** to athletic. The need for personal trainers to help combat the rising **obesity** epidemic has led to a positive outlook for personal training as a profession.

THE ALLIED HEALTHCARE CONTINUUM

THE ALLIED HEALTHCARE CONTINUUM IS COMPOSED OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS who are credentialed through certifications, registrations, and/or licensure and provide services to identify, prevent, and treat diseases and disorders. Physicians are at the top of the healthcare pyramid, evaluating patients to diagnose ailments and implement treatment plans that can include medication, surgery, rehabilitation, or other actions. Physicians are assisted in their efforts by nurses, physician’s assistants, and a number of other credentialed technicians. When ailments or treatment plans fall outside their areas of expertise, physicians refer patients to specialists for specific medical evaluations, physical or occupational therapy, psychological counseling, dietary planning, and/or exercise programming.



EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

UNDERSTANDING THE EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND SCOPE OF PRACTICE FOR EACH POTENTIAL TEAM MEMBER

Acupuncturist

- L.Ac. (licensed acupuncturist): A license granted by individual state entities, typically to have confirmed national-level certification; able to perform acupuncture and may have complementary medical privileges (e.g., traditional Chinese medicine), and/or lab-ordering privileges depending upon the state licensing laws

Chiropractor

- D.C. (doctor of chiropractic): Post-baccalaureate degree program, typically four years in length; a variety of different chiropractic philosophies and practices exist; do not have prescription-writing or surgical privileges; however, depending upon the state, may prescribe and dispense nutritional and herbal supplements

Dietitians

- RD (registered dietitian): A baccalaureate-level degree with clinical practicum and national certification testing; in most states, licensure is required to practice as an RD

Naturopathic Physicians

- N.D. (naturopathic doctor): A four-year, graduate-level naturopathic medical school with all of the same basic sciences as a medical doctor (M.D.), but also studies holistic and nontoxic approaches to therapy with a strong emphasis on disease prevention and optimizing wellness; in addition, the naturopathic physician is required to complete four years of training in clinical nutrition, acupuncture, homeopathic medicine, botanical medicine, psychology, and counseling; licensure is by a state or jurisdiction as a primary care general practice physician; scope of practice varies by state law

Nurses

- L.P.N. (licensed practical nurse): Typically an associate-level degree with clinical practicum
- R.N. (registered nurse), B.S.N. (bachelor of science in nursing): A baccalaureate-level degree with clinical practicum and state license/testing
- M.S.N.: Master of science in nursing
- A.R.N.P. (advanced registered nurse practitioner): Graduate-level degree, typically requiring several years of practical clinical experience; able to prescribe some medications and practice somewhat independently
- Ph.D.: Doctorate in nursing studies; typically a title used in an academic setting

Physicians

- M.D. (doctor of medicine): Typically four years of post-baccalaureate medical school, at least three years of postgraduate training upon completion of the degree; able to prescribe medications and therapies; may have admitting privileges at hospitals
- D.O. (doctor of osteopathy): same academic and clinical training as M.D.s, but also have instruction and practicum in osteopathic manipulation

Behavioral Medicine Practitioners

- Counselor: Baccalaureate- or masters-level degree; some may have social work or other backgrounds with clinical practicum in psychological counseling
- D.Psy. (doctor of psychology): Doctorate level degree in psychology

Physical Therapists

- P.T.A. (physical therapy aide/assistant): Aides are frequently trained on the job, while assistants have an associate-level degree; in some states, the latter is required to have licensure in order to practice
- P.T. (physical therapist): A baccalaureate- or masters-level degree in a physical therapy course of study
- D.P.T. (doctor of physical therapy): A doctorate-level degree with a dissertation defense in physical therapy

Occupational Therapists

- C.O.T.A. (certified occupational therapy aide/assistant): Aides are frequently trained on the job, while assistants have an associate-level degree; in some states, the latter is required to have licensure in order to practice
- O.T. (occupational therapist): Baccalaureate- or masters-level degree in an occupational therapy course of study
- Dr.O.T. (doctor of occupational therapy): A doctorate-level degree with a dissertation defense in occupational therapy

Athletic Trainers

- A.T.C. (athletic trainer certified): A baccalaureate-level degree with national certification testing; typically state-regulated. Responsibilities include injury prevention, emergency care, and therapeutic intervention; working with the team physician; and rehabilitation of injured players after athletic injury or post-surgery



EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

THE FUTURE OF PERSONAL TRAINING The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), refers to the professionals in the fitness industry as Fitness Workers, with Personal Trainers classified as the primary profession within the industry. The DOL defines the nature of the job of personal trainers as “work with a single client or a small group. They may train in a gym or in the clients’ homes. Personal fitness trainers assess the clients’ level of physical fitness and help them set and reach their fitness goals. Trainers also demonstrate various exercises and help clients improve their exercise techniques. They may keep records of their clients’ exercise sessions to monitor clients’ progress toward physical fitness. They may also advise their clients on how to modify their lifestyles outside of the gym to improve their fitness.”

Expected Growth in Personal-training Jobs

According to the DOL, employment of fitness workers is projected to increase by 13% between 2012 and 2022. This expected increase is about as fast as the average for all occupations, and is attributed to a number of factors, including the following:

- Increasing numbers of baby boomers who want to stay healthy, physically fit, and independent
- Increases in businesses opening onsite fitness facilities and offering incentives for employees to join gyms
- Growing concerns about childhood obesity
- Increasing club memberships among young adults concerned about physical fitness
- An aging population seeking relief from arthritis and other ailments through individualized exercise, yoga, and Pilates
- A need to replace workers who leave fitness occupations each year

Personal-trainer Qualifications

See “Recognition From the Department of Labor” on page 20 for the DOL’s statement regarding the importance of obtaining a quality personal-training certification.

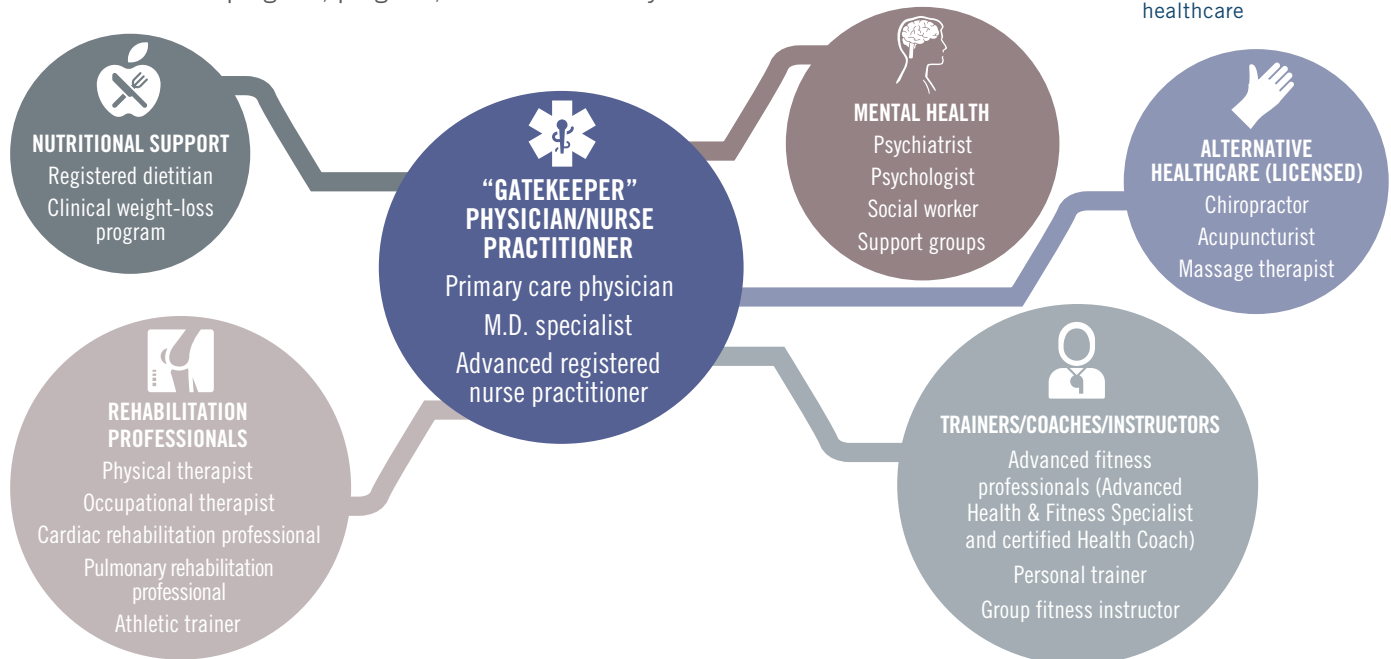
Physicians and nurses teach patients the importance of implementing their treatment plans. **Physical therapists** and **occupational therapists** lead patients through therapeutic exercise and teach them to perform additional exercises at home to facilitate rehabilitation. **Athletic trainers** teach athletes exercises to prevent injury and take them through therapeutic exercises following injury. **Registered dietitians** teach clients proper nutrition through recipes, meal plans, food-preparation methods, and implementation of specialized diets. While these professionals might also give patients or clients guidelines for general exercise (e.g., “try to walk up to 30 minutes per day, most days of the week”), few of them actually teach clients *how* to exercise effectively. This is where personal trainers hold a unique position in the allied healthcare continuum.

The majority of personal trainers will work with apparently healthy clients, helping them improve fitness and health. Experienced personal trainers with advanced education and training will generally have the skills necessary to work with clients who have special needs for exercise programming following medical treatment for an injury or disease. An advanced fitness professional providing post-rehabilitative exercise programs will need to have a solid position within the local healthcare community. In more clinical settings, the advanced fitness professional may work under the direction of a physician, physical therapist, or other rehabilitation professional, while in a club setting he or she may be more autonomous. In all situations, it is crucial for the fitness professional to stay within the boundaries of his or her education, certification, and legal **scope of practice**, and to work closely with each client’s referring physician and other healthcare providers to ensure that the exercise program is complementary to their treatments. Refer to Chapter 18 for tips on how to utilize these relationships to expand a personal-training business.

It is important that every personal trainer understands the role of fitness

professionals in relation to the other members of the healthcare team (Figure 1-1). Each client will generally have a primary care physician who is responsible for his or her general medical care. If the client is referred by his or her physician, the personal trainer should obtain written permission from the client to communicate with the referring physician to provide regular reports regarding the client's progress with the exercise program. Even when clients do not have a physician's referral, it is important for the personal trainer to maintain confidential records that include the client's program, progress, and health-history information.

Figure 1-1
Specialty areas
within allied
healthcare



THE ACE PERSONAL TRAINER CERTIFICATION

THE DECISION TO PURSUE CERTIFICATION AS A PERSONAL TRAINER IS AN important step in being recognized as a competent professional. The ACE® Personal Trainer Certification Program was developed to assess candidate competency in making safe and effective exercise program decisions for apparently healthy clients. Candidates who achieve a passing score on the ACE Personal Trainer Certification Exam meet or exceed the level of competency required to work as a professional personal trainer with minimum supervision. In the credentialing world, this threshold of professional competence is referred to as the “minimum competency” required for a person to work in the profession. The primary purpose of a certification is always to protect the public from harm by assessing if the professional meets established levels of competence in the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the job in a safe and effective manner. For the professional, a certification can separate him or her from others who have not proven themselves to be at the same level of competence.

Fitness professionals who earn the ACE Personal Trainer Certification are competent to work as professional personal trainers for apparently healthy individuals, clients with special needs who have a physician's clearance for exercise, and small groups with minimal supervision. This does not mean that an ACE Certified Personal Trainer knows everything there is to know about personal training, just as successfully passing one's medical board exams does not mean that the individual knows everything there is to know about medicine. Instead, by earning an ACE Personal Trainer Certification, the professional has proven his or her competence in applying knowledge to make safe and effective exercise-programming decisions in a variety of practical situations, while minimizing client risk and exposure to harm (e.g., physical, emotional, psychological, financial, or other harm).

DEFINING “SCOPE OF PRACTICE”

A scope of practice defines the legal range of services that professionals in a given field can provide, the settings in which those services can be provided, and the guidelines or parameters that must be followed. Many factors go into defining a scope of practice, including the education, training, and certifications or licenses required to work in a given field, the laws and organizations governing the specific profession, and the laws and organizations governing complementary professions within the same field. Most laws defining a profession are determined and regulated by state regulatory agencies, including licensure. As a result, the scope of practice for licensed practitioners can vary from state to state in a given profession. In addition, most professions have organizations that serve as governing bodies within the profession that set eligibility requirements to enter educational programs or sit for certification exams, and establish codes for professional conduct and disciplinary procedures for professionals who break these codes.

The laws, rules, and regulations that govern a profession are established for the protection of the public. The laws governing a personal trainer’s scope of practice and the ramifications faced by trainers who provide services that fall outside the defined scope are detailed in Chapter 17. The eligibility and certification requirements to work within this legal scope of practice are defined by the professional organizations that offer personal-trainer certifications. These organizations also establish codes of ethical conduct and mandate that they are upheld by certified professionals and applicants in all actions related to personal training. It is crucial for practitioners in every industry to be aware of the scope of practice for their given profession, to ensure that they practice within the realm of the specific education, experience, and demonstrated competency of their credential.



KEY CONCEPT

SCOPE OF PRACTICE FOR ACE CERTIFIED PERSONAL TRAINERS

Personal trainers as a collective group have a general scope of practice (Table 1-2). While this table provides general guidance, each professional must know what is within the specific scope of practice for his or her credential. The ACE Certified Personal Trainer scope of practice is presented in Figure 1-2. ACE Certified Personal Trainers must work within this defined scope of practice to provide effective services to their clients, gain and maintain support from the healthcare community, and avoid the legal ramifications of providing services outside their professional scope.

Personal trainers should never provide services that are outside their defined scope of practice. For example, a personal trainer may be asked nutrition questions by clients wanting to reduce weight and/or **body fat**. Personal trainers can help clients with their weight-loss goals by designing effective exercise programs that bring about positive **body composition** changes and helping them to adopt more healthful behaviors. This can include showing clients how to utilize the tools available at www.ChooseMyPlate.gov or educating them about the recommendations in the *Dietary Guidelines* to help them gain a better understanding of healthful foods and make better choices (USDA, 2010). Clients who are looking for more detailed nutritional programming, such as specific meal plans, recipes, or recommendations for nutritional supplements should be referred to a registered dietitian, as these services are beyond the scope of practice of personal trainers and are in the legal domain of services provided by registered dietitians in most states.

There is overlap among professions within the healthcare field that must be understood if fitness professionals are going to stay within the realm of their professional qualifications and training.

Table 1-2**IDEA Personal Fitness Trainers' Scope of Practice**

Personal Fitness Trainers DO NOT:	Personal Fitness Trainers DO:
Diagnose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive exercise, health, or nutrition guidelines from a physician, physical therapist, registered dietitian, etc. • Follow national consensus guidelines for exercise programming for medical disorders • Screen for exercise limitations • Identify potential risk factors through screening • Refer clients to an appropriate allied health professional or medical practitioner
Prescribe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design exercise programs • Refer clients to an appropriate allied health professional or medical practitioner for an exercise prescription
Prescribe diets or recommend specific supplements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide general information on healthy eating, according to the MyPlate Food Guidance System • Refer clients to a dietitian or nutritionist for a specific diet plan
Treat injury or disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer clients to an appropriate allied health professional or medical practitioner for treatment • Use exercise to help improve overall health • Help clients follow physician or therapist advice
Monitor progress for medically referred clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document progress • Report progress to an appropriate allied health professional or medical practitioner • Follow physician, therapist, or dietitian recommendations
Rehabilitate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design an exercise program once a client has been released from rehabilitation
Counsel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach • Provide general information • Refer clients to a qualified counselor or therapist
Work with patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with clients

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For example, the same registered dietitian who can create specific meal plans for clients can also provide general guidelines about exercise to help them understand the important role that physical activity plays in improving health and creating a negative energy balance. However, if a client working with a registered dietitian wants a thorough exercise plan, he or she should be referred to a qualified personal trainer.

A personal trainer should *not* make recommendations that contradict those of the client's healthcare team. For example, if a client's physician's release has specific guidelines for exercise intensities, modalities, or exercises, the trainer must follow these guidelines when designing the client's exercise program. While the physician generally will not have the same knowledge about specific exercises as a personal

Figure 1-2

The ACE Certified Personal Trainer Scope of Practice

ACE CERTIFIED PERSONAL TRAINER SCOPE OF PRACTICE

The ACE Certified Personal Trainer is a fitness professional who has met all requirements of the American Council on Exercise to develop and implement fitness programs for individuals who are apparently healthy or have a physician's release for exercise. The ACE Certified Personal Trainer realizes that personal training is a service industry focused on helping people enhance fitness and modify risk factors for disease to improve health. As members of the allied healthcare continuum with a primary focus on prevention, ACE Certified Personal Trainers have a scope of practice that includes:

- Developing and implementing exercise programs that are safe, effective, and appropriate for individuals who are apparently healthy or have medical clearance to exercise
- Conducting health-history interviews and stratifying risk for cardiovascular disease with clients in order to determine the need for referral and identify contraindications for exercise
- Administering appropriate fitness assessments based on the client's health history, current fitness, lifestyle factors, and goals utilizing research-proven and published protocols
- Assisting clients in setting and achieving realistic fitness goals
- Teaching correct exercise methods and progressions through demonstration, explanation, and proper cueing and spotting techniques
- Empowering individuals to begin and adhere to their exercise programs using guidance, support, motivation, lapse-prevention strategies, and effective feedback
- Designing structured exercise programs for one-on-one and small-group personal training
- Educating clients about fitness- and health-related topics to help them in adopting healthful behaviors that facilitate exercise program success
- Protecting client confidentiality according to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and related regional and national laws
- Always acting with professionalism, respect, and integrity
- Recognizing what is within the scope of practice and always referring clients to other healthcare professionals when appropriate
- Being prepared for emergency situations and responding appropriately when they occur

trainer, the physician's guidelines will be based on the knowledge of the client's health, medications, ailments, injuries, and diseases, and *must* be followed for the health and safety of the client. Each state, province, and country has specific laws about the responsibilities of different healthcare professions. It is the responsibility of the personal trainer to learn and adhere to the laws in his or her geographical area, as well as adhere to the ACE Certified Personal Trainer scope of practice.



KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES OF THE ACE CERTIFIED PERSONAL TRAINER

The ACE Personal Trainer Certification is designed for fitness professionals wanting to provide one-on-one and small-group exercise instruction to individuals who are apparently healthy or have a physician's release for exercise. The certification program is continually evaluated to ensure that it is up to date with the most current research and industry standards. In addition, every five years a group of industry experts analyzes the specific job requirements for personal trainers to update the outline of tasks, knowledge, and skills required to perform the job of personal training effectively. After being validated by several thousand ACE Certified Personal Trainers, this outline is published as the ACE Personal Trainer Exam Content Outline (Appendix B), which serves as the blueprint for the ACE Personal Trainer Certification Exam and provides a template for candidates preparing for the exam. It is also a written job description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to be an effective ACE Certified Personal Trainer.



EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

USING THE EXAM CONTENT OUTLINE AS A STUDY TOOL The ACE Personal Trainer exam content outline is a valuable tool for candidates preparing for the ACE Personal Trainer Certification Exam. It is the result of an in-depth job analysis conducted with a panel of personal-training subject matter experts that was then validated via an industry-wide survey. The final ACE Personal Trainer Exam Content Outline, presented as Appendix B of this manual, is the blueprint used in assembling each ACE Personal Trainer exam.

Candidates are encouraged to refer to this exam content outline as they prepare for the ACE Personal Trainer exam, as it details the key concepts and competencies assessed by the exam. It does not provide the exact questions on an ACE exam; however, it does provide the four main content “Domains” assessed by the exam and the percentage of questions that come from each Domain. The ACE Personal Trainer exam is broken into the following Domains:

- Client Interviews and Assessments – 31%
- Program Design and Implementation – 33%
- Progression and Modifications – 19%
- Professional Conduct, Safety, and Risk Management – 17%

Each Domain is comprised of three to four “Tasks” that are essential for a health and fitness professional to perform competently in order to meet the required level of competence to earn the ACE Personal Trainer certification. Domain percentages represent the criticality of the tasks in the Domain, and the frequency with which a personal trainer will perform them.

The following steps should help you use the exam content outline in preparing for the ACE Personal Trainer exam:

- Review the four exam content Domains and their associated percentages. This will help you determine the relative weight of each Domain on the total examination.
- Review and understand each Task Statement. Each question on the ACE Personal Trainer exam is associated with one of the 15 Task Statements, as these have been identified as the critical tasks a well-qualified personal trainer must perform consistently to provide safe and effective exercise programming.
- Review the Knowledge and Skill Statements associated with each Task. These describe the knowledge and skills in which a health and fitness professional must be competent to perform the essential tasks of an ACE Certified Personal Trainer.
- Refer back to the exam content outline as you study to ensure that you have learned the knowledge and skills necessary to perform the essential Tasks of a well-qualified personal trainer.
- Refer back to the exam content outline after completing the online sample tests to review the concepts and competencies covered in any Domains that have been identified as areas of focus as you continue your studies.

Education and Experience

There is no single course of study for individuals looking to enter the profession of personal training. To become an ACE Certified Personal Trainer, a candidate must show that he or she is able to apply the knowledge required to be a safe and effective personal trainer by passing the ACE Personal Trainer Certification Exam. There are many paths to reaching this goal, including self-study using preparatory materials from ACE or other sources that cover the ACE Personal Trainer Certification Exam Content Outline, preparatory courses or workshops delivered live or online, educational internships, professional experience, and college courses. Each candidate must select his or her own path based on time, financial resources, learning styles, and personal factors. As a general rule, ACE recommends that candidates allow approximately three to four months of study time on average to adequately prepare for the ACE Personal Trainer Certification Exam.

The growth in personal training has led numerous colleges and universities to offer programs to help students prepare to become qualified fitness professionals. These programs help students prepare for certification exams by offering courses that teach the specific knowledge and skills required to become personal trainers or group fitness instructors, or to work with clients who have special needs. ACE has an Educational Partnership Program that provides colleges, universities, and technical/professional schools with curricula, instructor materials, and discounts to students preparing for ACE certification programs. These programs are not required to earn an ACE certification, but they provide students with helpful instruction from people with advanced degrees and experience in the field.

Preparation and Testing

The knowledge, skills, and abilities tested include developing and enhancing **rapport** with clients, collecting adequate health-history information and determining the appropriateness of referral, conducting appropriate assessments, designing and modifying exercise programs to help clients progress toward their goals, motivating clients to exercise and adhere to their programs, and always acting in a professional manner within the personal trainer's scope of practice.

Fitness professionals interested in sitting for the ACE Personal Trainer Certification Exam should download the *ACE Certification Candidate Handbook* from the ACE website (www.ACEfitness.org/getcertified/pdfs/Certification-Exam-Candidate-Handbook.pdf). This complimentary handbook explains how ACE certification exams are developed, what the candidate should expect, and the procedures for earning and maintaining an ACE certification. The handbook also includes explanations about the multiple-choice and client-scenario questions found on the ACE certification exams, along with sample questions to help candidates understand the difference between questions that assess *recall* knowledge and those that assess *applied* or *analytical* knowledge. In addition, the handbook provides candidates with test-taking strategies and a list of available study resources.

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND ETHICS

The primary purpose of professional certification programs is to protect the public from harm (e.g., physical, emotional, psychological, or financial). Professionals who earn an ACE Personal Trainer Certification validate their capabilities and enhance their value to employers, clients, and other healthcare providers. This does not happen simply because the individual has a new title. This recognition is given because the ACE credential itself upholds rigorous standards established for assessing an individual's competence in making safe and effective exercise-programming decisions. ACE has established a professional ethical code of conduct and disciplinary procedures, and ACE's primary certifications have all received third-party accreditation from the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).

To help ACE Certified Professionals understand the conduct expected from them as healthcare professionals in protecting the public from harm, ACE has developed the ACE Code of Ethics (Appendix A). This code of conduct serves as a guide for ethical and professional practices for all ACE Certified Professionals. This code is enforced through the ACE Professional Practices and Disciplinary Procedures (www.ACEfitness.org/getcertified/certified-code.aspx). All ACE Certified Professionals and candidates for ACE certification must be familiar with, and comply with, the ACE Code of Ethics and ACE Professional Practices and Disciplinary Procedures.



EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

ACE CODE OF ETHICS The ACE Code of Ethics governs the ethical and professional conduct of ACE Certified Professionals when working with clients, the public, or other health and fitness professionals. Every individual who registers for an ACE certification exam must agree to uphold the ACE Code of Ethics throughout the exam process and as a professional, should he or she earn an ACE certification. Exam candidates and ACE Certified Personal Trainers must have a comprehensive understanding of the code and the consequences and potential public harm that can come from violating each of its principles.

ACE Professional Practices and Disciplinary Procedures

The ACE Professional Practices and Disciplinary Procedures are intended to assist and inform ACE Certified Professionals, candidates for ACE certification, and the public about the ACE application and certification standards relative to professional conduct and disciplinary procedures. ACE may revoke or otherwise take action with regard to the application or certification of an individual in the case of:

- Ineligibility for certification
- Irregularity in connection with any certification examination
- Unauthorized possession, use, access, or distribution of certification examinations, score reports, trademarks, logos, written materials, answer sheets, certificates, certificant or applicant files, or other confidential or proprietary ACE documents or materials (registered or otherwise)
- Material misrepresentation or fraud in any statement to ACE or to the public, including but not limited to statements made to assist the applicant, certificant, or another to apply for, obtain, or retain certification
- Any physical, mental, or emotional condition of either temporary or permanent nature, including, but not limited to, substance abuse, which impairs or has the potential to impair competent and objective professional performance
- Negligent and/or intentional misconduct in professional work, including, but not limited to, physical or emotional abuse, disregard for safety, or the unauthorized release of confidential information
- The timely conviction, plea of guilty, or plea of *nolo contendere* (“no contest”) in connection with a felony or misdemeanor that is directly related to public health and/or fitness instruction or education, and that impairs competent and objective professional performance. These include, but are not limited to, rape, sexual abuse, actual or threatened use of a weapon of violence, or the prohibited sale, distribution, or possession with intent to distribute of a controlled substance.
- Failure to meet the requirements for certification or recertification

ACE has developed a three-tiered disciplinary process of review, hearing, and appeals to ensure fair and unbiased examination of alleged violation(s) of the Application and Certification Standards in order to (1) determine the merit of allegations and (2) impose appropriate sanctions as necessary to protect the public and the integrity of the certification process.

Certification Period and Renewal

ACE certifications are valid for two years from the date earned, expiring on the last day of the month. To renew certification for a new two-year cycle, ACE Certified Professionals must complete a minimum of 20 hours of continuing education credits (2.0 CECs) and maintain a current certificate in **cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)** and, if living in North America, proper use of an **automated external defibrillator (AED)**.




THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS IS TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC FROM HARM



Continuing education is a standard requirement in healthcare to help ensure that professionals stay up-to-date with the latest research in their respective fields for the protection of the public. Given the dynamic nature of the fitness industry and the rapidly advancing research in exercise science, it is imperative for fitness professionals to complete continuing education on a regular basis. By completing continuing education, ACE Certified Professionals can stay current with the latest findings in exercise science and keep their services in line with the most recent guidelines for fitness and healthcare.

ACE encourages its certified professionals to complete additional continuing education as necessary to help advance their careers and enhance the services they provide. Each year, the ACE Academy approves thousands of continuing education courses, providing ACE Certified Professionals with many options for maintaining their credentials and advancing their careers. ACE Certified Professionals holding more than one ACE certification can apply the CECs they earn to each of their current certifications.

ACE Certified Professionals are encouraged to renew their certifications before they expire. ACE offers a six-month extension of the renewal period for professionals who go beyond the deadline, but it is merely a grace period for certification renewal, not an extension of the actual certification. During this grace period, the certification is expired and will only become current again once renewed. The ramifications for ACE Certified Professionals that allow their certifications to expire can include not being able to advertise the fact that they hold the ACE certification until it is renewed, discontinued professional liability insurance, and possible loss of employment.



ACE ENCOURAGES ITS CERTIFIED PROFESSIONALS TO COMPLETE ADDITIONAL CONTINUING EDUCATION AS NECESSARY TO HELP ADVANCE THEIR CAREERS

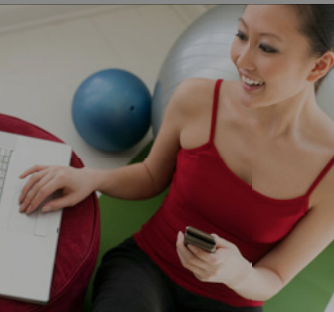
Client Privacy

Beginning with the initial health-history interview, clients will share confidential information with the personal trainer. Although the client–trainer relationship does not currently have the same legal requirements for confidentiality as client–physician or client–psychologist relationships, personal trainers should maintain that same level of security for each client’s personal information. Failure to do so could prove detrimental for the client and the client–trainer relationship, and may violate the ACE Code of Ethics and state or federal privacy laws.

To help prevent violations of client privacy, ACE Certified Professionals should become familiar with, and adhere to, the **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)**, which addresses the use and disclosure of individuals’ protected health information. By following HIPAA regulations, personal trainers can maintain the confidentiality of each client’s protected health information according to the same rules that govern most healthcare professions. More details about client privacy and keeping clients’ protected health information secure can be found in Chapter 17 and Appendix A.

Referral

It is important for healthcare professionals, including personal trainers, to understand their professional qualifications and boundaries, and to always refer clients who require services outside their scope of practice to the appropriate qualified healthcare professionals. Doing so ensures that clients are provided with appropriate care from qualified providers and prevents healthcare professionals from offering services that they do not have the education, training, credentials, and/or legal right to offer. Sometimes a personal trainer will need to investigate a bit further to determine if referral is warranted. For example, if a client wants to lose more weight than would be advisable based on his or her current body composition, the trainer can first explain healthy body-fat ranges, point out that the client’s body composition is within the normal range, and work with him or her to determine a safe and achievable weight-loss goal. If the client is comfortable with this new goal, the personal trainer can design a program to help the client achieve it. However, if the client feels that he or she still wants to aim for



the original weight-loss goal, the personal trainer should refer him or her to a registered dietitian who has experience with body image and related issues.

Referrals can also come to the personal trainer from other health professionals. For example, a physician may provide a patient with exercise guidelines and then refer him or her to an ACE Certified Personal Trainer. In a situation like this, the trainer should provide the physician with regular updates on the client's progress and program direction. It is always important for clients to be referred to the appropriate healthcare professional and for all health professionals involved to correspond regularly regarding each client's progress, provided they have the client's written permission to do so.



APPLY WHAT YOU KNOW

DEVELOPING A REFERRAL NETWORK It is important for a personal trainer to develop a network of referral sources to meet the varying needs of his or her clientele. Trainers should identify allied health professionals who are reputable and aspire to the same professional standards as an ACE Certified Personal Trainer. Potential referral sources include the following:

- Mind/body instructors (e.g., yoga, Pilates, tai chi, and qigong)
- Smoking-cessation programs
- Aquatic exercise programs
- Support groups (e.g., cardiac rehabilitation, cancer survivors, and Overeaters Anonymous)
- Massage therapists

As the personal trainer develops a referral network, it is important to research instructors, programs, or organizations before recommending any programs or services to a client. Do they have the proper license or certification? Can they provide a list of references? How many years of experience do they have? The personal trainer does not want to jeopardize his or her reputation by referring clients to professionals who fail to uphold accepted standards. With proper networking, the personal trainer may also gain referrals from the other professionals within the network.



THINK IT THROUGH

How comfortable are you with the notion, and actual process, of networking? Many people struggle when introducing themselves to strangers, actively promoting their services, and making those all-important professional connections. If this is an area of concern for you, how might you address this potential weakness?

Safety

All fitness professionals should do what they can to minimize risk for everyone in the fitness facility. This includes having equipment that is properly spaced and in good working order; having racks, shelves, hooks, or other storage spots for portable equipment, including stability balls, dumbbells, and kettlebells; and ensuring that floors and equipment are cleaned, maintained, and free from clutter and moisture. Trainers should also pay attention to the cleanliness of the facility, including the availability of wipes or other sterilizers for cleaning equipment following usage. An emergency plan, AED, and appropriate first-aid supplies are essential in case an injury or incident occurs.

A personal trainer has additional client-specific risk-management responsibilities, beginning with the first meeting, when the trainer should conduct a health-history assessment to determine whether the client requires a physician's referral prior to exercise or has limitations or **contraindications** for certain exercises. The trainer also

needs to determine appropriate levels of intensity for initial exercise program design. Then, by helping clients perform exercises in a safe and effective manner with proper progressions, the personal trainer can minimize the risk of injury and enhance the quality of service provided. Even with the best risk-management program, injuries and incidents can still occur. As such, ACE recommends that all ACE Certified Professionals carry professional liability insurance for protection in the event a client is injured during training (see Chapter 17).



KEY CONCEPT

Supplements and Other Nutrition-related Concerns

Supplements are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), so their strength, purity, safety, and effects are not guaranteed. Some supplements can cause adverse interactions and complications with other prescribed medications or congenital problems. Still, the supplement market constitutes a multimillion-dollar industry. The lure of this profitable revenue stream, coupled with consumer interest for a quick fix, leads some fitness facilities to sell nutritional supplements. It is not illegal for fitness facilities to sell commercial nutritional supplements, but it is irresponsible for them to provide supplement recommendations without staff that have the expertise and legal qualifications required to give such advice (e.g., registered dietitians or medical doctors). Facilities selling dietary supplements are assuming a huge liability risk in the event that a member has a negative reaction to a supplement recommended by a staff member who is not qualified (see Chapter 17).

Some personal trainers amass substantial knowledge about dietary supplements. However, they are no more qualified to recommend these supplements to clients than they are to recommend or prescribe medications. Unless a personal trainer is also a registered dietitian or a physician, he or she does not have the expertise or legal qualifications necessary to recommend supplements. The ACE Position Statement on Nutrition Scope of Practice for Fitness Professionals can be found in Appendix C.

Personal trainers should, however, educate themselves about supplements. Clients often ask personal trainers about supplements, thinking that supplements are necessary to achieve fitness, weight loss, or other goals. The personal trainer can help the client understand that fitness goals can be reached without supplements and that supplements can have negative and potentially harmful side effects. If a client insists on using dietary supplements, the personal trainer should refer the client to a qualified physician or registered dietitian for guidance.

Personal trainers not only can but *should* share general nonmedical nutrition information with their clients. Personal trainers provide an essential service to their clients, the industry, and the community at large when they are able to offer credible, practical, and relevant nutrition information to clients while staying within their professional scope of practice. It is within the scope of practice of all fitness professionals to share dietary advice endorsed or developed by the federal government, including the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (www.dietaryguidelines.gov) and the MyPlate recommendations (www.ChooseMyPlate.gov). It is essential that all ACE Certified Personal Trainers understand their nutrition-related scope of practice as defined in Appendix C.



Ramifications of Offering Services Outside the Scope of Practice

To achieve their fitness goals, clients must adopt healthful behaviors that can include a regular exercise program, eating a more healthful diet, and initiating lifestyle changes to decrease stress. An ACE Certified Personal Trainer is qualified to help

clients with comprehensive exercise programming needs, but the level of assistance the trainer can provide when it comes to nutrition, lifestyle, or post-rehabilitation programming can be confusing, especially to the newly certified trainer. The client scenarios in Table 1-3 are designed to provide personal trainers with a better understanding of services that are within and outside their scope of practice.

ACE Certified Professionals offering services that are within the legal realm of another healthcare profession are in violation of the ACE Code of Ethics and are at risk for potential legal prosecution. For example, if a client tells a trainer that he or she experiences muscle soreness following long training runs, the trainer can provide education about the benefits of massage, but cannot perform hands-on massage therapy for the client, as this would constitute the practice of massage without a license. All responses listed in Table 1-3 as “Inappropriate for an ACE Certified Personal Trainer” are examples of services that could result in an ACE Certified Personal Trainer facing legal ramifications, with possible prosecution for practicing other forms of medicine or healthcare without appropriate credentials.



KEY CONCEPT

Table 1-3

Appropriate Scope of Practice

Client Scenario	Inappropriate for an ACE Certified Personal Trainer	Appropriate for an ACE Certified Personal Trainer
Client stands with a lordotic posture	Diagnosing the cause of the client's lordosis	Implementing a core conditioning program to improve strength and flexibility imbalances in muscles acting on the hips and spine
Client wants to lose weight by trying the latest commercial diet	Helping the client to understand and implement the diet	Helping the client to make more healthful choices using the <i>Dietary Guidelines</i> and tools on www.ChooseMyPlate.gov
Client is cleared for exercise following physical therapy for rotator cuff impingement	Continuing the PNF shoulder mobilization exercises used during physical therapy	Implementing exercises to improve shoulder stability and building on the work done in physical therapy
Client has tight iliotibial (IT) bands	Providing deep tissue massage to relieve tightness in the IT bands	Teaching the client self-myofascial release techniques for the IT bands using a foam roller
Client has soreness following a weekend tennis tournament	Recommending use of over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medications	Discuss proper technique for performing light, dynamic stretching activities for the affected areas
Client tells you she is depressed due to problems with her spouse	Listening to the client and providing her with recommendations for improving the situation	Listening to the client with empathy and maintaining her confidentiality

Note: PNF = Proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation



ACCREDITATION OF ALLIED HEALTHCARE CREDENTIALS THROUGH THE NCCA

HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANT ROLE THAT physical activity plays in improving and maintaining good health. Unfortunately, the lack of professional credentials held by some individuals working in fitness has slowed the acceptance of fitness professionals as legitimate members of the allied healthcare team by some healthcare providers. As a result, ACE and other top professional fitness organizations have earned third-party accreditation from the NCCA for their fitness certification programs. For a complete list of NCCA-accredited fitness certifications organizations, visit www.credentialingexcellence.org.

The NCCA is the accreditation body of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE) [formerly known as the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA)] a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization. Formed in 1977, ICE originated as the National Commission for Health Certifying Agencies (NCHCA). Originally funded through the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, the NCHCA had a mission to develop standards for quality certification in allied health fields and to accredit organizations that met those standards. The NCHCA evolved into NOCA (in 1987) and then ICE (in 2009) to expand accreditation globally to certification programs outside healthcare that met the rigorous standards of the NCCA.

The NCCA has reviewed and accredited the certification programs for most professions within allied healthcare. This includes the credentials for registered dietitians, occupational therapists, athletic trainers, podiatrists, nurse practitioners, massage therapists, personal trainers, group fitness instructors, health coaches, and advanced fitness professionals. By earning NCCA accreditation for all four of its certification programs, the American Council on Exercise has taken the professional and responsible steps necessary to help position ACE Certified Professionals as legitimate members of the allied healthcare continuum.

RECOGNITION FROM THE FITNESS AND HEALTH INDUSTRY

In the fitness industry, NCCA accreditation has become recognized as the third-party standard for accreditation of certifications for personal trainers and other fitness professionals, demonstrated by the following professional standards, guidelines, and recommendations:

- The Medical Fitness Association (MFA), the professional membership organization for medically integrated health and fitness facilities, has made it a standard that medical fitness facilities hire only fitness professionals who hold NCCA-accredited certifications.
- *ACSM's Health/Fitness Facility Standards and Guidelines* recommends that clubs hire only fitness directors, group exercise directors, fitness instructors (including personal trainers), and group exercise instructors who hold a “certification from a nationally recognized and accredited certifying organization” [American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), 2012]. It then states that “the term accredited refers to certification programs that have received third-party approval of their certification procedures and practices from an appropriate agency, such as the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).”
- The International Health, Racquet, and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) recommends that club owners only hire personal trainers with certifications from agencies accredited by the NCCA or an equivalent accrediting organization.

There are other professional organizations currently in the process of developing voluntary fitness facility standards that will include requirements for hiring fitness



TO ACHIEVE THEIR FITNESS GOALS, CLIENTS MUST ADOPT HEALTHFUL BEHAVIORS THAT CAN INCLUDE A REGULAR EXERCISE PROGRAM, EATING A MORE HEALTHFUL DIET, AND INITIATING LIFESTYLE CHANGES



professionals that recognize the NCCA accreditation. In reference to the ACSM and IHRSA recommendations, the only other organization for possible consideration as a credible accreditation organization for certifying agencies presently is the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), which focuses primarily on third-party accreditation of industrial and workplace safety and quality standards.



EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

COALITION FOR THE REGISTRATION OF EXERCISE PROFESSIONALS The Coalition for the Registration of Exercise Professionals (CREP) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(6) corporation composed of organizations that offer NCCA-accredited fitness certifications. Coalition members are committed to advancing the exercise profession and earning recognition as health providers for practitioners who have passed a competency-based exercise certification exam that has been accredited by the NCCA. Primary to the mission of the coalition is to ensure that individuals of all ages and abilities have the resources and leadership to safely and effectively reach their goals of achieving more active, healthy lifestyles through movement, physical activity, or exercise for recreation or performance.

CREP fulfills its mission by maintaining the United States Registry of Exercise Professionals (USREPS), the internationally recognized registry of exercise professionals in the United States, and as a primary advocate for exercise professionals who hold NCCA-accredited fitness certification on issues that pertain to regulation, access, and scope of work.

ACE supports the CREP position that well-qualified health and fitness professionals should hold an NCCA-accredited fitness certification at a minimum before they should be able to practice. ACE believes that the U.S. Registry of Exercise Professionals will be broadly supported by employers, trade organizations, other health professions, and policy-makers that see the opportunity and benefits associated with establishing and enforcing standards for well-qualified health and fitness professionals that are on par with other similarly positioned professions.

Further, ACE and CREP recognize and support three educational pathways to prepare individuals for certification and careers in the fitness industry: vocational education programs (trade schools), Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)/Committee on the Accreditation for the Exercise Sciences (CoAES)-accredited academic programs for two-year, four-year, and graduate-level programs in exercise science, and a variety of distance-learning programs that allow an individual to prepare through a self-study program. At this point in time, employers to a large extent determine what, if any, degree requirements are appropriate given their setting and clientele. Regardless, the NCCA-accredited fitness certification exams, which are designed to assess competence, are the same for all candidates regardless of how they prepared from an educational prospective. It is not unreasonable to suggest that at some point in the future completion of a minimum curriculum could become an eligibility requirement that certification candidates must meet in order to be able to sit for an exam.

Maintaining a current NCCA-accredited fitness certification should be a requirement for every fitness professional to ensure ongoing competence and to develop an area of expertise and specialization that will allow an individual to build a viable career. Visit www.usreps.org to learn more about this organization.

RECOGNITION FROM THE EDUCATION COMMUNITY

The ACE Educational Partnership Program offers four separate college curricula that instructors can use to teach courses in personal training, group exercise, health coaching, and exercise for special populations, and to help students prepare for the corresponding ACE certification exam. The ACE Personal Trainer curriculum is the most widely utilized of the four, with more than 500 ACE Educational Partners using this curriculum in their regular course offerings. The ACE Personal Trainer curriculum helps instructors with course design, provides discounts for students, and helps exercise science departments meet one of the primary outcome assessments stated in the

Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs for Personal Fitness Training from the CAAHEP (2007).

The CAAHEP is the largest programmatic accreditor in the health sciences field. The CoAES was formed under the guidance and sponsorship of CAAHEP to establish standards that academic programs in kinesiology, physical education, and exercise science must meet to become accredited by CAAHEP (2007).

One of the primary outcomes assessed by the CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs for Personal Fitness Training* is the students' performance on a national credentialing examination accredited by the NCCA. This recognition of NCCA-accredited personal-trainer certifications as the standard for this outcome assessment is an important endorsement of the NCCA accreditation by the educational community. The ACE Personal Trainer Certification Program, with its NCCA accreditation, helps universities and colleges meet this outcome assessment standard for exercise science departments to earn accreditation from CAAHEP.

RECOGNITION FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

The DOL reports that most personal trainers *must* obtain certification in the fitness field to gain employment, explaining that there are many fitness organizations that offer certifications and that “becoming certified by one of the top certification organizations is increasingly important, especially for personal trainers.” The DOL then goes on to state that, “One way to ensure that a certifying organization is reputable is to see that it is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies.” The American Council on Exercise is one of the few organizations specifically identified by the DOL as offering quality certifications for personal trainers.

Other professions listed as fitness workers by the DOL include group exercise instructors, fitness directors, and those teaching specializations such as yoga and Pilates.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERY PERSONAL TRAINER TO HAVE A GENERAL IDEA OF the career path that he or she wants to follow. Career paths can include becoming a fitness director or general manager of a larger club, opening a personal-training studio, opening a home-based personal-training business, or simply working part-time as a personal trainer. Career goals are personal. They are based on the specific needs of the professional to meet his or her career objectives and are balanced with his or her other commitments.

Career paths should be viewed as guidelines to help the professional reach certain career goals, with the flexibility to be modified as needed based on new clientele, changes in the trainer's personal life, industry recessions, and other important events. A career plan can help a professional determine if a new opportunity or continuing education offering is in line with his or her goals. After setting a career plan that spans one, three, five, or more years, a personal trainer can use this plan as a template for researching and selecting continuing education to work toward his or her goals.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

ACE Certified Professionals are encouraged to select continuing education based on areas of interest, client needs, and desired career path. By completing continuing education in one or more areas of focus, a personal trainer can advance his or her career by becoming a specialist in areas such as weight management, youth fitness, sports conditioning, or senior fitness. This can help the trainer become recognized as an expert in a given field, attracting specific clientele and advancing his or her career.

Factors that should be considered when selecting continuing education courses include checking if the course will be at the appropriate level, seeing if the instructor has the appropriate qualifications to teach the course, learning if the course is ACE-approved or will have to be petitioned for CECs, and determining if the education provided is within the scope of practice.

Advanced Knowledge

ACE Certified Professionals should select continuing education that will help advance their current knowledge, skills, and abilities, without being too advanced. The continuing education needs for a newly certified trainer and a trainer with 10 years of experience will be different. If these two professionals attend the same conference together, it would be beneficial for them to independently select sessions that meet their individual career paths and needs, rather than going to the same sessions and having the new trainer be overwhelmed by the advanced subject matter, or the veteran not challenged by information that he or she already knows.

Continuing education should help the personal trainer work toward one or more career goals. For a management-focused personal trainer, this could include taking business-management courses, while a trainer who works with older adults and is looking for new programming ideas would have a different course of study entirely. It is also important for ACE Certified Professionals to stay current, as standards and guidelines are released based on new findings in exercise science and related healthcare research. A personal trainer can do this through continuing education courses or through his or her own research of the published scientific literature.

Specialization

Specialization is a great way for a personal trainer to become recognized as an “expert” for a particular type of training or client population. By gaining advanced knowledge and skills in a specialized area, a personal trainer can enhance the training services provided to clients with special needs—and hopefully attract more clients seeking these specialty services. For example, a personal trainer who is interested in working with athletes might go on to do extensive continuing education in sports performance, possibly earning a specialty certification in sports conditioning. Once the trainer is a recognized sports conditioning specialist, he or she should more readily attract athletic clients, and should be able to earn more per session when providing these advanced sessions.

Areas of specialization should be selected by the personal trainer based on his or her desired career path, interests, and client base. The area of specialization should also fall within the scope of practice, or provide the trainer with knowledge that is complementary to what he or she does within the scope of practice. For example, a course teaching techniques for manual manipulations of the shoulder would be educational, but would provide the trainer with techniques that he or she could not use within the defined scope of practice.



THINK IT THROUGH

Although being able to effectively work with various types of clients can be rewarding for personal trainers, focusing on a certain population (e.g., youth, seniors, athletes, or the obese) can help fitness professionals develop a niche, which gives them a competitive edge in the market. Which area of specialization would you most enjoy? Have you considered promoting your services to a unique population? If you decide to specialize, how would you approach getting the advanced continuing education required to become an expert in your area of specialization?



SPECIALIZATION IS A GREAT WAY FOR A PERSONAL TRAINER TO BECOME RECOGNIZED AS AN “EXPERT”



DEGREES

Having a degree in exercise science or a related field is not a requirement to earn an ACE Personal Trainer Certification or other NCCA-accredited personal-training certifications, but it can be helpful to the professional as he or she prepares for a certification exam. More than 70% of ACE Certified Professionals have four-year degrees, with many holding degrees in exercise science. Whether earned before or after becoming an ACE Certified Professional, a degree can prove helpful as trainers try to advance their careers into management or advanced positions within medical fitness or even teaching. For this reason, some personal trainers will decide years into their careers to earn a degree in exercise science, nutrition, business, or other subject areas. Upon earning the degree, the trainer can advance his or her career, fulfill a personal goal, and earn ACE continuing education credits for courses that provide education related to fitness and health.

ADDITIONAL FITNESS CERTIFICATIONS

Another way for a personal trainer to earn continuing education and advance his or her career is to earn additional certifications. ACE encourages professionals to earn certifications that provide them with new areas of expertise. ACE offers four certifications, each providing a different area of expertise for fitness professionals. For a personal trainer looking to become a better leader or motivator, or simply to pick up some group exercise classes to supplement his or her personal-training income, ACE offers its Group Fitness Instructor (GFI) certification. To meet the needs of the growing number of individuals who are trying to change health-related behaviors and lose weight, ACE offers an advanced credential titled the ACE Health Coach certification. And, for advanced fitness professionals who want to work with clients who have special needs or are post-rehabilitation for cardiovascular, respiratory, metabolic, or musculoskeletal diseases and disorders, ACE offers the Advanced Health & Fitness Specialist certification.

NEW AREAS OF EXPERTISE WITHIN ALLIED HEALTHCARE

A personal trainer who wants to expand the services that he or she provides into another area of allied healthcare must earn the appropriate credentials to ethically and legally provide those services. This could include becoming a licensed massage therapist, earning a nutrition degree and becoming a registered dietitian, earning a doctorate in physical therapy and becoming a licensed physical therapist, or going to medical school and becoming a medical doctor. In all of these situations, the trainer earning the new credential will advance his or her career and the services that he or she can provide, becoming an advocate for exercise and personal training in his or her new professional arena.

SUMMARY

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE INTERESTED IN BECOMING PERSONAL TRAINERS to realize that it is a service profession. The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), reports that people planning fitness careers should be:

- Outgoing
- Excellent communicators
- Good at motivating people
- Sensitive to the needs of others
- In excellent health and physical fitness, due to the physical nature of the job
- Good at sales if they want to work as personal trainers, particularly in large commercial fitness centers
- Personable and motivating to attract and retain clients

Understanding the ACE Certified Personal Trainer's scope of practice can be empowering, as it defines a unique profession dedicated to helping people improve their fitness, health, and quality of life through physical activity. Many of the professions in healthcare are devoted to *treating* disease, while a personal trainer primarily helps people *avoid* disease. In a society where almost two-thirds of the adult population is overweight and physically inactive, and youth are projected to possibly live shorter lives than their parents, the role that ACE Certified Personal Trainers play in the healthcare continuum has never been more important.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Coalition for the Registration of Exercise Professionals (CREP): www.usreps.org
- Ethics Resource Center: www.ethics.org
- Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE): www.credentialingexcellence.org
- International Health, Racquet, and Sportsclub Association: www.ihrsa.org
- Medical Fitness Association: www.medicalfitness.org
- Medline Plus Reference on Drugs and Supplements (A service of the National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health): www.medlineplus.gov

ACE CODE OF ETHICS



ACE CERTIFIED PROFESSIONALS ARE GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING principles of conduct as they interact with clients/participants, the public, and other health and fitness professionals.

ACE certified Professionals will endeavor to:

- Provide safe and effective instruction
- Provide equal and fair treatment to all clients/participants
- Stay up-to-date on the latest health and fitness research and understand its practical application
- Maintain current cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification and knowledge of first-aid services
- Comply with all applicable business, employment, and intellectual property laws
- Maintain the confidentiality of all client information
- Refer clients to more qualified health or medical professionals when appropriate
- Uphold and enhance public appreciation and trust for the health and fitness industry
- Establish and maintain clear professional boundaries

PROVIDE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

PROVIDING SAFE AND EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION INVOLVES A VARIETY OF responsibilities for ACE Certified Professionals. Safe means that the instruction will not result in physical, mental, or financial harm to the client/participant. Effective means that the instruction has a purposeful, intended, and desired effect toward the client's/participant's goal. Great effort and care must be taken in carrying out the responsibilities that are essential in creating a positive exercise experience for all clients/participants.

SCREENING

ACE Certified Professionals should have all potential clients/participants complete an industry-recognized health-screening tool to ensure safe exercise participation. If significant risk factors or signs and symptoms suggestive of chronic disease are identified, refer the client/participant to a physician or primary healthcare practitioner for medical clearance and guidance regarding which types of assessments, activities, or exercises are indicated, contraindicated, or deemed high risk. If an individual does not want to obtain medical clearance, have that individual sign a legally prepared document that releases you and the facility in which you work from any liability related to any injury that may result from exercise participation or assessment. Once the client has been cleared for exercise and you have a full understanding of the client's/participant's health status and medical history, including his or her current use of medications, a formal risk-management plan for potential emergencies must be prepared and reviewed periodically.

ASSESSMENT

The main objective of a health assessment is to establish the client's/participant's baseline fitness level in order to design an appropriate exercise program. Explain the risks and benefits of each assessment and provide the client/participant with any pertinent instructions. Prior to conducting any type of assessment, the client/participant must be given an opportunity to ask questions and read and sign an informed consent. The types and order of assessments are dictated by the client's/participant's health status, fitness level, symptoms, and/or use of medications. Remember that each assessment has specific protocols and only those within your scope of practice should be administered. Once the assessments are completed, evaluate and discuss the results objectively as they relate to the client's/participant's health condition and goals. Educate the client/participant and emphasize how an exercise program will benefit the client/participant.

PROGRAM DESIGN

You must not prescribe exercise, diet, or treatment, as doing so is outside your scope of practice and implies ordering or advising a medicine or treatment. Instead, it is appropriate for you to design exercise programs that improve components of physical fitness and wellness while adhering to the limitations of a previous injury or condition as determined by a certified, registered, or licensed allied health professional. Because nutritional laws and the practice of dietetics vary in each state, province, and country, understand what type of basic nutritional information is appropriate and legal for you to disseminate to your client/participant. The client's/participant's preferences, and short- and long-term goals as well as current industry standards and guidelines must be taken into consideration as you develop a formal yet realistic exercise and weight-management program. Provide as much detail for all exercise parameters such as mode, intensity, type of exercise, duration, progression, and termination points.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Do not underestimate your ability to influence the client/participant to become active for a lifetime. Be sure that each class or session is well-planned, sequential, and documented. Instruct the client/participant how to safely and properly perform the appropriate exercises and communicate this in a manner that the client/participant will understand and retain. Each client/participant has a different learning curve that will require different levels of attention, learning aids, and repetition. Supervise the client/participant closely, especially when spotting or cueing is needed. If supervising a group of two or more, ensure that you can supervise and provide the appropriate amount of attention to each individual at all times. Ideally, the group will have similar goals and will be performing similar exercises or activities. Position yourself so that you do not have to turn your back to any client/participant performing an exercise.

FACILITIES

Although the condition of a facility may not always be within your control, you are still obligated to ensure a hazard-free environment to maximize safety. If you notice potential hazards in the health club, communicate these hazards to the client and the facility management. For example, if you notice that the clamps that keep the weights on the barbells are getting rusty and loose, it would be prudent of you to remove them from the training area and alert the facility that immediate repair is required.

EQUIPMENT

Obtain equipment that meets or exceeds industry standards and utilize the equipment only for its intended use. Arrange exercise equipment and stations so that adequate space exists between equipment, participants, and foot traffic. Schedule regular maintenance and inspect equipment prior to use to ensure it is in proper working condition. Avoid the use of homemade equipment, as your liability is greater if it causes injury to a person exercising under your supervision.

PROVIDE EQUAL AND FAIR TREATMENT TO ALL CLIENTS/ PARTICIPANTS

ACE CERTIFIED PROFESSIONALS ARE OBLIGATED TO PROVIDE FAIR AND EQUAL treatment for each client/participant without bias, preference, or discrimination against gender, ethnic background, age, national origin, basis of religion, or physical disability.

The Americans with Disabilities Act protects individuals with disabilities against any type of unlawful discrimination. A disability can be either physical or mental, such as epilepsy, paralysis, HIV infection, AIDS, a significant hearing or visual impairment, mental retardation, or a specific learning disability. ACE Certified Professionals should, at a minimum, provide reasonable accommodations to each individual with a disability. Reasonable simply means that you are able to provide accommodations that do not cause you any undue hardship that requires additional or significant expense or difficulty. Making an existing facility accessible by modifying equipment or devices, assessments, or training materials are a few examples of providing reasonable accommodations. However, providing the use of personal items or providing items at your own expense may not be considered reasonable.

This ethical consideration of providing fair and equal treatment is not limited to behavioral interactions with clients, but also extends to exercise programming and other business-related services such as communication, scheduling, billing, cancellation policies, and dispute resolution.

STAY UP-TO-DATE ON THE LATEST HEALTH AND FITNESS RESEARCH AND UNDERSTAND ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION

OBTAINING AN ACE CERTIFICATION REQUIRED YOU TO HAVE BROAD-BASED

knowledge of many disciplines; however, this credential should not be viewed as the end of your professional development and education. Instead, it should be viewed as the beginning or foundation. The dynamic nature of the health and fitness industry requires you to maintain an understanding of the latest research and professional standards and guidelines and their impact on the design and implementation of exercise programming. To stay informed, make time to review a variety of industry resources such as professional journals, position statements, trade and lay periodicals, and correspondence courses, as well as to attend professional meetings, conferences, and educational workshops.

An additional benefit of staying up-to-date is that it also fulfills your certification renewal requirements for continuing education credit (CEC). To maintain your ACE Certified status, you must obtain an established amount of CECs every two years. CECs are granted for structured learning that takes place within the educational portion of a course related to the profession and presented by a qualified health and fitness professional.

MAINTAIN CURRENT CPR CERTIFICATION AND KNOWLEDGE OF FIRST-AID SERVICES

ACE CERTIFIED PROFESSIONALS MUST BE PREPARED TO RECOGNIZE AND

respond to heart attacks and other life-threatening emergencies. Emergency response is enhanced by training and maintaining skills in CPR, first aid, and using automated external defibrillators (AEDs), which have become more widely available. An AED is a portable electronic device used to restore normal heart rhythm in a person experiencing a cardiac arrest and can reduce the time to defibrillation before EMS personnel arrive. For each minute that defibrillation is delayed, the victim's chance of survival is reduced by 7 to 10%. Thus, survival from cardiac arrest is improved dramatically when CPR and defibrillation are started early.

COMPLY WITH ALL APPLICABLE BUSINESS, EMPLOYMENT, AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAWS

AS AN ACE CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL, YOU ARE EXPECTED TO MAINTAIN A

high level of integrity by complying with all applicable business, employment, and copyright laws. Be truthful and forthcoming with communication to clients/participants, coworkers, and other health and fitness professionals in advertising, marketing, and business practices. Do not create false or misleading impressions of credentials, claims, or sponsorships, or perform services outside of your scope of practice that are illegal, deceptive, or fraudulent.

All information regarding your business must be clear, accurate, and easy to understand for all potential clients/participants. Provide disclosure about the name of your business, physical address, and contact information, and maintain a working phone number and email address. So that clients/participants can make an informed choice about paying for your services, provide detailed information regarding schedules, prices, payment terms, time limits, and conditions. Cancellation, refund, and rescheduling information must also be clearly stated and easy to understand. Allow the client/participant an opportunity to ask questions and review this information before formally agreeing to your services and terms.

Because employment laws vary in each city, state, province, and country, familiarize yourself with the applicable employment regulations and standards to which your business must conform. Examples of this may include conforming to specific building codes and zoning ordinances or making sure that your place of business is accessible to individuals with a disability.

The understanding of intellectual property law and the proper use of copyrighted materials is an important legal issue for all ACE Certified Professionals. Intellectual property laws protect the creations of authors, artists, software programmers, and others with copyrighted materials. The most common infringement of intellectual property law in the fitness industry is the use of music in an exercise class. When commercial music is played in a for-profit exercise class, without a performance or blanket license, it is considered a public performance and a violation of intellectual property law. Therefore, make sure that any music, handouts, or educational materials are either exempt from intellectual property law or permissible under laws by reason of fair use, or obtain express written consent from the copyright holder for distribution, adaptation, or use. When in doubt, obtain permission first or consult with a qualified legal professional who has intellectual property law expertise.

MAINTAIN THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF ALL CLIENT/PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

EVERY CLIENT/PARTICIPANT HAS THE RIGHT TO EXPECT THAT ALL PERSONAL data and discussions with an ACE Certified Professional will be safeguarded and not disclosed without the client's/participant's express written consent or acknowledgement. Therefore, protect the confidentiality of all client/participant information such as contact data, medical records, health history, progress notes, and meeting details. Even when confidentiality is not required by law, continue to preserve the confidentiality of such information.

Any breach of confidentiality, intentional or unintentional, potentially harms the productivity and trust of your client/participant and undermines your effectiveness as a fitness professional. This also puts you at risk for potential litigation and puts your client/participant at risk for public embarrassment and fraudulent activity such as identity theft.

Most breaches of confidentiality are unintentional and occur because of carelessness and lack of awareness. The most common breach of confidentiality is exposing or storing a client's personal data in a location that is not secure. This occurs when a client's/participant's file or information is left on a desk, or filed in a cabinet that has no lock or is accessible to others. Breaches of confidentiality may also occur when you have conversations regarding a client's/participant's performance or medical/health history with staff or others and the client's/participant's first name or other identifying details are used.

Post and adhere to a privacy policy that communicates how client/participant information will be used and secured and how a client's/participant's preference regarding unsolicited mail and email will be respected. When a client/participant provides you with any personal data, new or updated, make it a habit to immediately secure this information and ensure that only you and/or the appropriate individuals have access to it. Also, the client's/participant's files must only be accessed and used for purposes related to health and fitness services. If client/participant information is stored on a personal computer, restrict access by using a protected password. Should you receive any inquiries from family members or other individuals regarding the progress of a client/participant or other personal information, state that you cannot provide any information without the client's/participant's permission. If and when a client/participant

permits you to release confidential information to an authorized individual or party, utilize secure methods of communication such as certified mail, sending and receiving information on a dedicated private fax line, or email with encryption.

REFER CLIENTS/PARTICIPANTS TO MORE QUALIFIED HEALTH OR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS WHEN APPROPRIATE

A FITNESS CERTIFICATION IS NOT A PROFESSIONAL LICENSE. THEREFORE, IT is vitally important that ACE Certified Professionals who do not also have a professional license (e.g., physician, physical therapist, registered dietitian, psychologist, or attorney) refer their clients/participants to a more qualified professional when warranted. Doing so not only benefits your clients/participants by making sure that they receive the appropriate attention and care, but also enhances your credibility and reduces liability by defining your scope of practice and clarifying what services you can and cannot reasonably provide.

Knowing when to refer a client/participant is, however, as important as choosing to which professional to refer. For instance, when a client/participant complains of symptoms of muscle soreness or discomfort or exhibits signs of fatigue or lack of energy, it is not an absolute indication to refer your client/participant to a physician. Because continual referrals such as this are not practical, familiarize and educate yourself on expected signs and symptoms, taking into consideration the client's/participant's fitness level, health status, chronic disease, disability, and/or background as he or she is screened and as he or she begins and progresses with an exercise program. This helps you better discern between emergent and non-emergent situations and know when to refuse to offer your services, continue to monitor, and/or make an immediate referral.

It is important that you know the scope of practice for various health professionals and which types of referrals are appropriate. For example, some states require that a referring physician first approve visits to a physical therapist, while other states allow individuals to see a physical therapist directly. Only registered or licensed dietitians or physicians may provide specific dietary recommendations or diet plans; however, a client/participant who is suspected of an eating disorder should be referred to an eating disorders specialist. Refer clients/participants to a clinical psychologist if they wish to discuss family or marital problems or exhibit addictive behaviors such as substance abuse.

Network and develop rapport with potential allied health professionals in your area before you refer clients/participants to them. This demonstrates good will and respect for their expertise and will most likely result in reciprocal referrals for your services and fitness expertise.

UPHOLD AND ENHANCE PUBLIC APPRECIATION AND TRUST FOR THE HEALTH AND FITNESS INDUSTRY

THE BEST WAY FOR ACE CERTIFIED PROFESSIONALS TO UPHOLD AND enhance public appreciation and trust for the health and fitness industry is to represent themselves in a dignified and professional manner. As the public is inundated with misinformation and false claims about fitness products and services, your expertise must be utilized to dispel myths and half-truths about current trends and fads that are potentially harmful to the public.

When appropriate, mentor and dispense knowledge and training to less-experienced fitness professionals. Novice fitness professionals can benefit from your experience and skill as you assist them in establishing a foundation based on exercise science, from both theoretical and practical standpoints. Therefore, it is a disservice if you fail

to provide helpful or corrective information—especially when an individual, the public, or other fitness professionals are at risk for injury or increased liability. For example, if you observe an individual using momentum to perform a strength-training exercise, the prudent course of action would be to suggest a modification. Likewise, if you observe a fitness professional in your workplace consistently failing to obtain informed consents before clients/participants undergo fitness testing or begin an exercise program, recommend that he or she consider implementing these forms to minimize liability.

Finally, do not represent yourself in an overly commercial or misleading manner. Consider the fitness professional who places an advertisement in a local newspaper stating: “Lose 10 pounds in 10 days or your money back!” It is inappropriate to lend credibility to or endorse a product, service, or program founded upon unsubstantiated or misleading claims; thus a solicitation such as this must be avoided, as it undermines the public’s trust of health and fitness professionals.

ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN CLEAR PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

WORKING IN THE FITNESS PROFESSION REQUIRES YOU TO COME IN CONTACT with many different people. It is imperative that a professional distance be maintained in relationships with all clients/participants. Fitness professionals are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with their clients/participants. To that end, ACE Certified Professionals should:

- Never initiate or encourage discussion of a sexual nature
- Avoid touching clients/participants unless it is essential to instruction
- Inform clients/participants about the purpose of touching and find an alternative if the client/participant objects
- Discontinue all touching if it appears to make the client/participant uncomfortable
 - ✓ Take all reasonable steps to ensure that any personal and social contacts between themselves and their clients/participant do not have an adverse impact on the trainer–client, coach–client, or instructor–participant relationship.

If you are unable to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with a client/participant (whether due to your attitudes and actions or those of the client/participant), the prudent course of action is to terminate the relationship and, perhaps, refer the client/participant to another professional. Keep in mind that charges of sexual harassment or assault, even if groundless, can have disastrous effects on your career.

ACE POSITION STATEMENT ON NUTRITION SCOPE OF PRACTICE FOR FITNESS PROFESSIONALS



IT IS THE POSITION OF THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE® (ACE®) that fitness professionals not only can but should share general nonmedical nutrition information with their clients.

In the current climate of an epidemic of obesity, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity paired with a multibillion dollar diet industry and a strong interest among the general public in improving eating habits and increasing physical activity, fitness professionals are on the front lines in helping the public to achieve healthier lifestyles. Fitness professionals provide an essential service to their clients, the industry, and the community at large when they are able to offer credible, practical, and relevant nutrition information to clients while staying within their professional scope of practice.

Ultimately, an individual fitness professional's scope of practice as it relates to nutrition is determined by state policies and regulations, education and experience, and competencies and skills. While this implies that the nutrition-related scope of practice may vary among fitness professionals, there are certain actions that are within the scope of practice of all fitness professionals.

For example, it is within the scope of practice of all fitness professionals to share dietary advice endorsed or developed by the federal government, especially the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (www.dietaryguidelines.gov) and the MyPlate recommendations (www.ChooseMyPlate.gov).

Fitness professionals who have passed National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)– or American National Standards Institute (ANSI)–accredited certification programs that provide basic nutrition information, such as those provided by ACE, and those who have undertaken nutrition continuing education, should also be prepared to discuss:

- Principles of healthy nutrition and food preparation
- Food to be included in the balanced daily diet
- Essential nutrients needed by the body
- Actions of nutrients on the body
- Effects of deficiencies or excesses of nutrients
- How nutrient requirements vary through the lifecycle
- Information about nutrients contained in foods or supplements

Fitness professionals may share this information through a variety of venues, including cooking demonstrations, recipe exchanges, development of handouts and informational packets, individual or group classes and seminars, or one-on-one encounters.

Fitness professionals who do not feel comfortable sharing this information are strongly encouraged to undergo continuing education to further develop nutrition competency and skills and to develop relationships with registered dietitians or other qualified health professionals who can provide this information. It is within the fitness professional's scope of practice to distribute and disseminate information or programs that have been developed by a registered dietitian or medical doctor.

The actions that are outside the scope of practice of fitness professionals include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Individualized nutrition recommendations or meal planning other than that which is available through government guidelines and recommendations, or has been developed and endorsed by a registered dietitian or physician
- Nutritional assessment to determine nutritional needs and nutritional status, and to recommend nutritional intake
- Specific recommendations or programming for nutrient or nutritional intake, caloric intake, or specialty diets
- Nutritional counseling, education, or advice aimed to prevent, treat, or cure a disease or condition, or other acts that may be perceived as medical nutrition therapy
- Development, administration, evaluation, and consultation regarding nutritional care standards or the nutrition care process
- Recommending, prescribing, selling, or supplying nutritional supplements to clients
- Promotion or identification of oneself as a “nutritionist” or “dietitian”

Engaging in these activities can place a client's health and safety at risk and possibly expose the fitness professional to disciplinary action and litigation. To ensure

maximal client safety and compliance with state policies and laws, it is essential that the fitness professional recognize when it is appropriate to refer to a registered dietitian or physician. ACE recognizes that some fitness and health clubs encourage or require their employees to sell nutritional supplements. If this is a condition of employment, ACE suggests that fitness professionals:

- Obtain complete scientific understanding regarding the safety and efficacy of the supplement from qualified healthcare professionals and/or credible resources. *Note:* Generally, the Office of Dietary Supplements (ods.od.nih.gov), the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (nccam.nih.gov), and the Food and Drug Administration ([FDA.gov](https://fda.gov)) are reliable places to go to examine the validity of the claims as well as risks and benefits associated with taking a particular supplement. Since the sites are from trusted resources and in the public domain, fitness professionals can freely distribute and share the information contained on these sites.
- Stay up-to-date on the legal and/or regulatory issues related to the use of the supplement and its individual ingredients
- Obtain adequate insurance coverage should a problem arise