ACE Personal Trainer Manual, 4th edition

Chapter 1: Role and Scope of Practice for the Personal Trainer
Learning Objectives

- Based on Chapter 1 of the *ACE Personal Trainer Manual, 4th ed.*, this session introduces the role of the ACE-certified Personal Trainer within the healthcare community and provides guidelines for staying within the defined scope of practice.

- After completing this session, you will have a better understanding of:
  - The knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with being a successful personal trainer
  - The ACE Code of Ethics
  - ACE’s Professional Practices and Disciplinary Procedures
  - How the ACE certification has received recognition from the fitness and health industry, the education community, and the department of labor
  - The importance of a career-development plan
The human body responds to the stress of physical movement with improved fitness and health.

2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services)

- Regular physical activity reduces the risk of many adverse health outcomes.
- For most health outcomes, additional benefits occur as the amount of physical activity increases.
- Most health benefits occur with at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking.
- Both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity are beneficial.
- Health benefits occur across all population groups.
- The health benefits of physical activity occur for people with disabilities.
- The benefits of physical activity far outweigh the possibility of adverse outcomes.
Fitness Professionals Help Clients Improve Health

- Physicians generally do not provide specific instructions for how to exercise.

- ACE-certified Personal Trainers play a vital role in allied healthcare.
  - They help clients achieve positive health and fitness improvements.

- Combating rising levels of obesity and diseases related to lifestyle choices has led to a positive outlook for personal training as a profession.
The allied healthcare continuum is composed of health professionals who are credentialed through:

- Certifications
- Registrations
- Licensure

Physicians are at the top of the allied healthcare pyramid, evaluating patients to diagnose ailments and implement treatment plans, or referring patients to specialists as needed.
The Role of Fitness Professionals

- The role of fitness professionals in relation to the other members of the healthcare team is presented on the following slide.
- The personal trainer should obtain written permission from the client to communicate with the referring physician.
- 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
  - Health-history information
Specialty Areas Within Allied Healthcare

**Mental Health**
- Psychiatrist
- Psychologist
- Social worker
- Support groups

**Nutritional Support**
- Registered dietitian
- Clinical weight-loss program

**Rehab Professionals**
- Physical therapist
- Occupational therapist
- Cardiac rehabilitation professional
- Pulmonary rehabilitation professional
- Athletic trainer

**“Gatekeeper” Physician/nurse practitioner**
- Primary care physician
- M.D. specialist
- Advanced registered nurse practitioner

**Alternative Healthcare (Licensed)**
- Chiropractor
- Acupuncturist
- Massage therapist

**Trainers/Instructors**
- Athletic trainer
- Advanced fitness professionals (AHFS, LWMC)
- Personal trainers
- Group fitness instructors (e.g., yoga, Pilates, aquatic exercise)

*Note: AHFS = Advanced Health & Fitness Specialist; LWMC = Lifestyle & Weight Management Consultant*
The ACE Personal Trainer Certification

- Candidates must meet or surpass a level of “minimum competency” as assessed by a competency-based evaluation (exam) to show that they are adequately qualified to work in the profession.

- The primary purpose of a certification is to protect the public from harm.

- An ACE-certified Personal Trainer has proven competence in:
  - Making safe and effective exercise-programming in a variety of practical situations
  - Minimizing client risk and exposure to harm
A scope of practice defines the:

- Legal range of services that professionals in a given field can provide
- Settings in which those services can be provided
- Guidelines or parameters that must be followed

The laws, rules, and regulations that govern a profession are established for the protection of the public.

Fitness professionals as a collective group have a general scope of practice, as presented on the following slide.
# General Scope of Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fitness Professionals DO NOT:</th>
<th>Fitness Professionals DO:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Diagnose                      | - Receive exercise, health, or nutrition guidelines from a physician, physical therapist, registered dietician, etc.  
|                               | - Follow national consensus guidelines for exercise programs 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                     | - Design exercise programs  
|                               | - Refer clients to an appropriate allied health professional or medical practitioner for an exercise prescription |
| Prescribe diets or recommend specific supplements | - Provide general information on healthy eating, according to the MyPyramid Food Guidance System  
|                               | - Refer clients to a dietician or nutritionist for a specific diet plan |
| Treat injury or disease       | - 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 | - Document progress  
|                               | - Report progress to an appropriate allied health professional or medical practitioner  
|                               | - Follow physician, therapist, or dietician recommendations |
| Rehabilitate                  | - Design an exercise program once a client has been released from rehabilitation |
| Counsel                       | - Coach  
|                               | - Provide general information  
|                               | - Refer patients to a qualified counselor or therapist |
| Work with patients            | - Work with clients |
ACE-certified Personal Trainers must work within their defined scope of practice (as presented on the following slide) to:

- Provide effective services to their clients
- Gain and maintain support from the healthcare community
- Avoid the legal ramifications of providing services outside their professional scope
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 have no apparent physical limitations or special medical needs. 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 using 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
Working Within the Scope of Practice

- Personal trainers should never provide services that are outside their defined scope of practice.
- Overlap exists among professions within the healthcare field.
Working With Other Healthcare Professionals

- A personal trainer should *not* make recommendations that contradict those of the client’s healthcare team.

- 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
  - Work within the ACE-certified Personal Trainer scope of practice and adhere to the ACE Code of Ethics
Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- The ACE Personal Trainer Certification is designed for fitness professionals wanting to provide one-on-one and small-group exercise instruction to apparently healthy individuals.

- The certification program is continually evaluated.

- The outline of tasks, knowledge, and skills is published as the ACE Personal Trainer Exam Content Outline
  - Published as Appendix B in the ACE Personal Trainer Manual, 4th ed.
  - Found on the ACE website at: www.acefitness.org/getcertified/aboutexam_pt.aspx
Education and Experience

- To prepare for the ACE Personal Trainer Certification Exam, candidates may choose from:
  - Preparatory courses or workshops delivered live or online
  - Educational internships
  - Professional experience
  - College courses
- Each candidate must select his or her own path based on time, financial resources, learning styles, and personal factors.
- ACE recommends three to six months of study time to adequately prepare.
Preparation and Testing


- This complimentary handbook explains:
  - How ACE certification exams are developed
  - What the candidate should expect
  - The procedures for earning and maintaining an ACE certification
  - Multiple-choice and client-scenario questions found on the ACE certification exams
  - Test-taking strategies and available study resources
Professional Responsibilities and Ethics

- ACE has established a professional ethical code of conduct and disciplinary procedures.

- ACE certifications have all received third-party accreditation from the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the accrediting body for the majority of professions in allied healthcare and a number of other professions.

- ACE has developed the ACE Code of Ethics to serve as a guide for ethical and professional practices for all ACE-certified Professionals.


- All ACE-certified Professionals must comply with the ACE Code of Ethics.
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
  - Stay up-to-date on the latest health and fitness research and understand its practical application
  - Maintain current 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
Professional Practices 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 confidential or proprietary ACE documents or materials
  - Material misrepresentation or fraud in any statement to ACE or to the public
  - Any physical, mental, or emotional condition that impairs competent and objective professional performance
  - Negligent and/or intentional misconduct in professional work
  - 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
  - Failure to meet the requirements for certification or recertification
Disciplinary Process

- ACE has developed a three-tiered disciplinary process.
- The process consists of review, hearing, and appeals to ensure fair and unbiased examination of alleged violation(s) of the Application and Certification Standards in order to:
  - Determine the merit of allegations
  - 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.
- To renew, ACE-certified Professionals must:
  - Complete a minimum of 20 hours of continuing education credits (2.0 CECs)
  - Maintain a current certificate in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and, if living in North America, automated external defibrillation (AED)
- Certified professionals should complete additional continuing education to help advance their careers and enhance the services they provide.
- The ramifications for allowing an ACE certification to expire include:
  - Not being able to advertise the fact that they hold the ACE certification until it is renewed
  - Discontinued professional liability insurance
  - Loss of employment
Client Privacy

- Clients will share confidential information with the personal trainer.

- To help prevent violations of client privacy, ACE-certified Professionals should adhere to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).
  - Following HIPAA regulations can help maintain the confidentiality of each client’s protected health information.
Referral

- Personal trainers must refer clients who require services outside their scope of practice.
- Proper referral ensures that clients are provided with appropriate care from qualified providers.
- Referrals can also come to the personal trainer from other health professionals.
Developing a Referral Network

- Trainers should identify allied health professionals who are reputable.

- Potential referral sources include:
  - Mind/body instructors
  - Smoking cessation programs
  - Aquatic exercise programs
  - Support groups
  - Massage therapists

- Research instructors, programs, or organizations before recommending any programs or services to a client.

- With proper networking, the personal trainer may also gain referrals from the other health and fitness professionals within the network.
Safety

- All fitness professionals should do what they can to minimize risk for everyone in the fitness facility, including:
  - Proper equipment maintenance and storage
  - Ensuring appropriate cleanliness of the facility
  - Understanding emergency procedures
  - Conducting a health-history assessment
  - Determining appropriate levels of intensity for initial exercise program design
  - Helping clients perform exercises in a safe and effective manner with proper progressions

- 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.
Supplements

- Supplements are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

- It is not illegal for fitness facilities to sell commercial nutritional supplements.
  - However, it is irresponsible for them to provide supplement recommendations without the appropriate staff to give such advice.

- Personal trainers are not qualified to recommend supplements to clients.
  - 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.
Educating Clients About Supplements

- Personal trainers should educate themselves about supplements.

- The personal trainer should help the client understand that:
  - Fitness goals can be reached without supplements
  - Supplements can have negative and potentially harmful side effects

- Some clients insist on using dietary supplements.
  - The personal trainer should refer the client to a qualified physician or registered dietitian for guidance.
Ramifications of Offering Inappropriate Services

- Offering services that are within the legal realm of other healthcare professions are in violation of the ACE Code of Ethics.

- The client scenarios on the following slide provide examples of services that are within and outside the scope of practice.
## Appropriate Scope of Practice

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

*Note: PNF = Proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation*
Accreditation of Allied Healthcare Credentials

- The acceptance of fitness professionals as legitimate members of the allied healthcare team has been lacking.
- As a result, ACE has earned third-party accreditation from the NCCA for its fitness certification programs.
- The NCCA has reviewed and accredited the certification programs for most professions within allied healthcare.
NCCA accreditation is recognized as the third-party standard for accreditation of certifications for personal trainers.

NCCA accreditation is also recognized by the following fitness industry professional trade organizations:

- The Medical Fitness Association (MFA)
- The International Health, Racquet, and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA)

Requirements for hiring fitness professionals that recognize the NCCA accreditation are being developed.
Recognition From the Education Community

- The ACE Personal Trainer college curriculum:
  - Helps instructors with course design
  - Provides discounts on the study materials for students
  - 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 Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs
The Department of Labor (DOL) reports that most personal trainers must obtain certification in the fitness field to gain employment.

ACE is specifically identified by the DOL as offering quality certifications for personal trainers.
Career Development

- Every personal trainer should have a general idea of his or her career path.
- Career paths are guidelines to help the professional reach certain career goals.
- A career plan can help a professional determine if a continuing education offering is in line with his or her goals.
  - A career plan can be used as a template for researching and selecting continuing education to work toward a trainer’s goals.
Completing continuing education in one or more areas of focus can advance a personal trainer’s career.

Factors to consider 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 continuing educations credits (CECs)
- Determining if the education provided is within the scope of practice
Specialization

- Specialization is a way to become recognized as an “expert” for a particular type of training or client population.

- Areas of specialization should be selected based on a trainer’s:
  - Desired career path
  - Interests
  - Client base

- The area of specialization should:
  - Fall within the scope of practice
  - Provide the trainer with knowledge that is complementary to what he or she does within the scope of practice
Degrees

- Having a degree in exercise science or a related field is not a requirement to earn an ACE Personal Trainer Certification.

- More than 70% of ACE-certified Professionals have four-year degrees, with many holding degrees in exercise science.

- A degree can help as trainers try to advance their careers into management or advanced positions within medical fitness or even teaching.
ACE encourages fitness professionals to earn certifications that provide them with new areas of expertise.

For example:

- Personal trainers can benefit from ACE’s Group Fitness Instructor (GFI) certification.
- Fitness professionals can benefit from ACE’s Lifestyle & Weight Management Consultant (LWMC) certification.
- Advanced or experienced fitness professionals can benefit from ACE’s Advanced Health & Fitness Specialist (AHFS) certification.
New Areas of Expertise Within Allied Healthcare

- A personal trainer who wants to expand his or her services must earn the appropriate credentials.

- 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
  - Going to medical school and becoming a medical doctor

- In all of these situations, the trainer can become an advocate for exercise and personal training in his or her new professional arena.
Many of the professions in healthcare are devoted to treating disease, while a personal trainer primarily helps people avoid disease.

The role that ACE-certified Personal Trainers play in the healthcare continuum has never been more important.

This session covered:

- The allied healthcare continuum
- The ACE Personal Trainer Certification
- Accreditation of allied healthcare credentials through the NCCA
- Career development