

Code of Ethics

Applies to

- All ABA breastfeeding counsellors, breastfeeding educators and trainees
- ABA volunteers in appointed roles
- All staff

Preface

The Australian Breastfeeding Association's *Constitution* provides for a *Code of Ethics* to be ratified by the Board. In 1963, before the Association held its first meeting, a list of 'Rules and Regulations' was drawn up. Using those 'Rules' as a basis, a *Code of Ethics* was formulated in 1966. It was clear then, as it is today, that a national organisation requires a united code of conduct which is binding on all its personnel.

Mary Paton was the founder of the Nursing Mothers' Association. Since 2001, it has been known as the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

The clauses of the *Code of Ethics* have been derived from the 1963 'Rules and Regulations' and from the experience of members, breastfeeding educators and counsellors of the Association since that time.

The Code has been designed to protect the Association, its breastfeeding counsellors, breastfeeding educators, members and spokespersons as individuals in addition to mothers, babies, parents, families and the community. The Code is binding on all Australian Breastfeeding Association breastfeeding counsellors and educators, and any other member carrying out the business of the Association, as well as upon all spokespersons of the Association as the Board of Directors may from time to time determine. Failure to comply with the Code may lead to disciplinary action(s), including removal from office.

Breastfeeding educators, breastfeeding counsellors and members may hold positions including but not limited to:

- group leader
- committee or advisory group or management team or task group member
- regional representative
- branch president
- director
- honorary member

The Australian Breastfeeding Association's objects are set out in the *Constitution* which determines the functions of its personnel. The *Code of Ethics* determines the manner in which position holders conduct themselves whilst performing those functions and underpins the *Code of Conduct*.

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The principle objects for which the Association is established are:

- a) to encourage and to give confidence and moral support to mothers who wish to breastfeed their babies;
- b) to create in mothers an interest in breastfeeding as an aid to the art of skilled and loving mothering, thus encouraging close and happy family relationships;
- c) to create an awareness in the community of the importance of human milk, breastfeeding and nurturing and of the need for community support for the nursing mother and her baby;
- d) to encourage mother-to-mother contact, particularly through individual counselling and group activities;
- e) to make available the experience of breastfeeding mothers and the results of research to members of the Association and to other interested persons and organisations;
- f) to cooperate with medical and allied health professions, public health and education authorities and governments;
- g) to encourage, promote, stimulate, establish funds for and aid in the research and investigation into all aspects of breastfeeding;
- h) public relations and community education, including antenatal, parental and school education;
- i) to promote, establish, superintend, conduct, control and assist within Australian branches, regions, groups, committees and other forms of organisation and administration in relation to breastfeeding;
- j) to liaise and exchange with interested individuals and organisations within Australia and overseas;
- k) to collect, publish and disseminate information and provide resource facilities; and
- l) to undertake, sponsor and encourage research and liaisons with researchers in Australia and overseas.

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1. Within the Association

- 1.1. The duties and obligations as provided by the *Constitution* and as laid down by the Board of Directors are to be complied with. The objects as laid down in the *Constitution* are to be upheld.

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- 1.2. Duties, obligations and objects are to be carried out loyally, in a voluntary capacity and in a spirit of cooperation with the Association as a whole. Persons holding a position of responsibility are to encourage each person working with them to feel a useful and necessary part of the Association.
- 1.3. Confidential and copyright material is to be kept safely and used properly.
- 1.4. In cases where payment is given for Australian Breastfeeding Association services rendered (for example, lecture, seminar, or class) any such payment is the property of the Association.
- 1.5. Where the Australian Breastfeeding Association makes available publications and other goods for resale or hire, no member is to make a personal profit from that resale or hire and:
 - i. rates for resale are set by the Board of Directors from time to time
 - ii. basic hiring rates are set by the Board of Directors from time to time
 - iii. hiring rates of mothering and lactation aids other than those determined by the Board of Directors are set by the group leader, regional representative or branch president, as the case may be.
- 1.6. Persons entrusted with money belonging to the Association are legally responsible for it and are to ensure that proper financial records are kept.
- 1.7. No Australian Breastfeeding Association event, activity or mailing list, or any other aspect of the Australian Breastfeeding Association shall be used to promote the sale of goods or services by any person or organisation other than the Australian Breastfeeding Association, without the permission of the Board.
- 1.8. No Australian Breastfeeding Association event or activity, nor any other aspect of the Australian Breastfeeding Association is to be used for the sale or promotion of goods or services unless benefit to the Australian Breastfeeding Association is the primary consideration.
- 1.9. No Australian Breastfeeding Association event or activity shall be used for the promotion of political, religious, racial or other causes; nor shall political, religious or racial views be expressed in Australian Breastfeeding Association written matter, or when representing the Association in public.
- 1.10. Unless specific other arrangements are made by the Board of Directors, copyright in any material dealing in whole or in part with breastfeeding (which is written or otherwise recorded by a representative on behalf of or for the use of the Association, during or after their term of office), is and remains the property of the Australian Breastfeeding Association and is also subject to normal copyright laws.

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- 1.11. In the case of a member or members writing a significant publication such as a book, for publication by the Australian Breastfeeding Association, the Board of Directors may in its absolute discretion determine whether a royalty should be paid to the member or members and the appropriate rate.
- 1.12. Representatives of the Australian Breastfeeding Association when giving an interview, speaking in public or at a private meeting, or writing material for publication in which a personal opinion is expressed on matters related to breastfeeding or any other aspect of mothering, are to clearly state that the opinions expressed are not necessarily the opinions of the Association.
- 1.13. Your personal conduct and appearance inevitably reflect on the Association and the respect in which it is held. Do nothing which will bring the Association into disrepute.
- 1.14. Appointments may not be held with any association, institution or commercial enterprise which has been declared by the Board of Directors to be inimical to the Australian Breastfeeding Association.
- 1.15. The Australian Breastfeeding Association will act promptly to rectify the subject of any complaint which is found to be substantiated.
- 1.16. Australian Breastfeeding Association services shall be available to everyone who is entitled to them, and shall be free from any form of discrimination, irrespective of a person's country of birth, culture, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status or disability.
- 1.17. Australian Breastfeeding Association services shall be developed and delivered on the basis of fair treatment of clients who are eligible to receive them within the limits of its resources.

2. With the mother

- 2.1. A personal and friendly mother-to-mother approach is the very essence of the Australian Breastfeeding Association.
- 2.2. Each member is to be encouraged to feel a useful and necessary part of the Association.
- 2.3. Breastfeeding is for the baby, not the baby for breastfeeding.
- 2.4. The Australian Breastfeeding Association recognises the importance of skilled and loving parenting, and the dependence of the young child on their mother in their early formative years, but considers that the decision whether or not to work outside the home is one for each individual mother to make within the context of her own family.
- 2.5. Counselling on breastfeeding in the name of the Australian Breastfeeding Association may only be given by a breastfeeding counsellor who has qualified and been accepted by the Board of Directors.
- 2.6. Counsellors do not advise mothers, but offer suggestions on a mother-to-mother basis.

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- 2.7. Counsellors do not give medical advice. Any mother needing medical advice is to be referred to her doctor, child health nurse or other appropriate professional person or organisation.
- 2.8. When a mother seeks help, she is to be asked whether she has already sought advice from her doctor, child health nurse or other counsellor and what advice she has received. In situations where the mother has received advice which differs from Australian Breastfeeding Association policy or practice, the mother is to be provided with information that allows her to consider all possibilities and decide on the best course of action for herself and her baby.
- 2.9. Where a mother is unhappy because she has not breastfed her baby, she is to be helped to accept this situation, and encouraged to be aware of the importance of skilled and loving mothering in all its aspects, of which breastfeeding is just one.
- 2.10. Names, addresses and personal information relating to a mother who has received counselling or peer support are strictly confidential, and are not to be given to any person, save with the consent of that mother, or in exceptional circumstances with the consent of a director or branch president. The Australian Breastfeeding Association adheres to the National Privacy Principles.
- 2.11. Personal attitudes toward such matters as politics, religion, nationality, race, social standing, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status or disability are not allowed to influence dealings with any mother or others who access the services of the Australian Breastfeeding Association.
- 2.12. Breastfeeding counsellors and educators are to continue to strive for greater knowledge, skill and understanding in their role of leadership and in the discharge of their duties, and they are to ensure that they maintain contact with other breastfeeding counsellors and educators.
- 2.13. The Association's fund of knowledge of the art and science of breastfeeding is continually growing, both from research and from personal experience. Breastfeeding counsellors and educators are to ensure that their own knowledge of theory and practice is kept up to date.

3. With the community

- 3.1. Australian Breastfeeding Association personnel are to cooperate with local doctors, hospitals, child health nurses and other relevant healthcare providers, establish and maintain positive relationships and encourage exchange of knowledge. Mothers are to be encouraged to visit the child health nurse.
- 3.2. Discussion of particular doctors, hospitals, nurses or health centres is to be discouraged, either at activities, or in conversations.
- 3.3. A positive and constructive approach is to be taken towards all establishments including those that directly or indirectly do not encourage breastfeeding.
- 3.4. Communication through digital platforms such as social media, email and LiveChat must be respectful and professional at all times.

Approved by

ABA Board

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Revision history

Revision	Date	Description of modifications
V6	Apr 1982	Revision
V7	May 1994	Revision
V8	Feb 1997	Revision
V9	Aug 2001	Revision (Association name change)
V10	Aug 2007	Revision (In accordance with Registered Training Organisation)
V11	Mar 2009	Revision
V12	Aug 2012	Revision of sections 1.15 and 2.11
V12.1	Oct 2013	Formatting change only to fit website template – no change in content
V13	22 June 2018	Revision inclusion of 3.4 Social Media approved BM 190
V14	19 August 2023	<p>Revision includes: include mothers, babies, parents, families and the community to those the Code protects; include that breaching this Code can lead to disciplinary action(s) as well as removal from office; add that the Code underpins the Code of Conduct; addition of 'disability' to clauses 1.16 and 2.11; reflect an increase in the contacts through our services by those other than mothers, clause 2.11 and that there is an increase of variety of healthcare providers in local communities clause 3.1.</p> <p>Language changes include: changes of role name from 'community educator' to 'breastfeeding educator'; replace 'meetings' as it is no longer preferred language, with 'activity or event'.</p>