

CODE OF ETHICS FOR INDEPENDENT FACILITATORS

Preamble:

As Cal-IF members, we commit to self-governance through adherence to our established Code of Ethics. It is imperative that we recognize the unique responsibilities of our profession, which require us to conduct ourselves with integrity, respect, and accountability. Our actions must consistently reflect a commitment to ethical principles, not only in our interactions with participants but also in our relationships with colleagues, families, and the broader community.

In fostering a culture of trust and transparency, we uphold the values that are essential to empowering the individuals we support. This includes maintaining confidentiality, providing unbiased guidance, and advocating for the autonomy and rights of those we serve. We recognize that our behavior has a profound impact on the well-being of participants, and therefore, it is essential that we strive to create environments where individuals feel safe, respected, and valued.

Through self-governance, we take responsibility for upholding these standards, ensuring that our practices not only meet but exceed the expectations set forth by our professional guidelines. In doing so, we strengthen the integrity of the Independent Facilitator role and contribute to the continued growth and success of the Self-Determination Program.

The Code of Ethics is designed to guide IFs in their conduct, ensuring that their work remains person-centered, transparent, and grounded in ethical practices. This Code applies to all IFs, regardless of the individuals they support, the settings they work in, or the nature of their services.

The Code of Ethics for IFs serves six primary purposes:

1. **Core Values Identification:** The Code identifies the core values that form the foundation of the Independent Facilitator's mission, including respect for individual autonomy, choice, and person-centered practices.
2. **Ethical Principles:** It summarizes broad ethical principles reflecting these core values and establishes a set of specific ethical standards to guide IFs in their practice, ensuring that individuals' rights and preferences are prioritized.
3. **Conflict Resolution:** The Code is designed to help IFs identify relevant considerations when professional obligations conflict or when ethical uncertainties arise, ensuring decisions are made in the best interest of the individual.
4. **Public Accountability:** The Code provides ethical standards to which the public, including participants, families, and service providers, can hold IFs accountable, ensuring transparency and trust.

5. **Professional Socialization:** It helps practitioners new to the role of Independent Facilitation become familiar with the mission, values, ethical principles, and standards of practice, and encourages continuous education, self-reflection, and self-care.
6. **Ethical Assessment:** The Code articulates standards that the Independent Facilitation profession can use to assess whether IFs have engaged in unethical conduct. Procedures for addressing and resolving ethics complaints ensure accountability within the profession.

This Code provides a framework for decision-making and conduct when ethical issues arise. While it outlines essential values and standards, it is not a prescriptive set of rules. The application of the Code depends on the specific context of each situation and requires IFs to balance conflicting values, principles, and standards with careful consideration. Ethical responsibilities extend from all human interactions, from personal relationships to professional duties, ensuring respect for all individuals involved in the facilitation process.

Alignment with the Five Principles of the Self-Determination Program (SDP)

The Cal-IF Code of Ethics is intrinsically aligned with the five guiding principles of California's Self-Determination Program (SDP): **Freedom, Authority, Support, Responsibility, and Confirmation**. These foundational principles serve as the moral compass of the SDP and mirror the ethical obligations we uphold as Independent Facilitators (IFs). Together, they form the basis for ethical practice, person-centered planning, and respectful advocacy.

1. Freedom

Our Code of Ethics emphasizes autonomy, informed choice, and respect for the individual's right to design a life they value. IFs honor each participant's freedom to decide how they live, who supports them, and what goals they pursue, free from coercion or undue influence. This principle is central to ethical commitments around dignity, self-direction, and personal agency.

2. Authority

By supporting participants in understanding and managing their individual budgets, IFs ethically empower individuals to have authority over their services and supports. This reflects our obligation to provide accurate information, foster self-advocacy, and ensure that decision-making is led by the individual. The ethical principle of informed consent directly supports the participant's rightful control over their resources.

3. Support

The role of an IF is grounded in providing unbiased, person-centered support that reflects the values, needs, and priorities of each individual. The Code ensures that support is never prescriptive or directive but rather enabling—helping individuals explore their goals while connecting them with the people, tools, and services that reflect those goals in practice.

4. Responsibility

IFs are ethically obligated to promote responsible planning, resource use, and accountability. This includes accurate documentation, transparency in billing and services,

and adherence to all legal and regulatory standards. Ethical facilitation means supporting participants not only in exercising choice but also in recognizing their roles as contributors to their communities and as stewards of public funds.

5. Confirmation

The Code of Ethics calls on IFs to affirm that individuals with developmental disabilities are the primary decision-makers in their lives. Through active listening, respect for personal values, and inclusive planning practices, IFs uphold the principle of Confirmation by validating the individual's leadership in shaping their future.

In aligning Cal-IF's ethical standards with these five principles, the Code ensures that Independent Facilitators act not only in accordance with professional norms but in full fidelity to the spirit and intent of the Self-Determination Program. Our commitment to ethics is our commitment to the heart of SDP.

IF Ethical Responsibilities to Clients:

IFs have a range of ethical responsibilities to their clients, ensuring that their actions and decisions always prioritize the well-being, autonomy, and preferences of the individuals they serve. By adhering to these ethical responsibilities, IFs build trusting, respectful relationships with their clients while safeguarding their autonomy, rights, and well-being throughout the Self-Determination process.

1. Respect for Autonomy and Choice

- The first allegiance of an IF is to the person we support as IFs. All other activities and functions we perform flow from this allegiance. We recognize and honor the client's right to Self-Determination, ensuring their choices and preferences are central to all planning and decision-making processes.
- We will provide participants with all necessary information in a clear, understandable manner to support informed decision-making.

2. Person-Centered Approach

- IFs are responsible for developing and supporting a person-centered plan that reflects the client's unique needs, desires, and goals.
- This approach should prioritize the individual's voice, and IFs must actively listen to their clients and advocate for their wishes without imposing their own preferences.
- IFs will practice active listening to fully understand participants' needs, goals, and concerns and will communicate clearly and empathetically.

3. Confidentiality and Privacy

- IFs must protect the confidentiality of their clients' personal information. Any sensitive data, including health records, personal details, or financial information, should only be shared with consent or as required by law. We will communicate clearly about the limits of confidentiality with participants and respect their right to privacy.

- Ensuring privacy extends to conversations, meetings, and documentation related to the individual's services.
- We will implement secure methods for storing and handling participant information to prevent unauthorized access or breaches.

4. Informed Consent

- IFs have the ethical responsibility to ensure clients are fully informed about the services being offered and the choices available to them. This includes explaining options in an accessible manner that the individual can understand.
- Clients should give their informed consent to any decisions or actions, and IFs must respect the client's right to change their mind or revoke consent at any time.

5. Advocacy and Support

- IFs advocate on behalf of their clients, ensuring their rights are upheld and that their needs are met within the Self-Determination Program and other systems they engage with.
- IFs will support and empower participants to advocate for themselves and make decisions that align with their personal goals and values.
- This advocacy role includes helping individuals navigate barriers, addressing issues with service providers, and ensuring their voice is heard in all decision-making processes.
- We will do our best to assist participants with accessing and utilizing resources and services that are in their best interest and aligned with their self-determined plans.

6. Non-Discrimination

- IFs must provide equitable and non-discriminatory services to all clients, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or any other characteristic. They must respect diversity and inclusion in all aspects of their practice.

7. Ethical Conduct

- IFs must be honest and transparent in all their communications with clients. This includes providing clear information about the limitations of their role, the services available, and any challenges that may arise.
- They should not make false promises or misrepresent their abilities or the services available under the Self-Determination Program.
- We will provide accurate and honest information about available resources, processes, and potential outcomes. We shall accurately represent our qualifications and experience.
- IFs will detail the services offered to the client and the associated costs of those services. A facilitator shall not ask for payment out of pocket for services that can be paid for by Regional Center. Our rates must align with our level of professional experience and level of support provided. Example: IFs new to the profession should not be charging the same rates as proven and established IFs.
- IFs should avoid any conflicts of interest that could compromise their ability to act in the client's best interests. This includes having no financial or personal relationships with service providers or agencies that could unduly influence their recommendations.

- They must disclose any potential conflicts of interest to clients and recuse themselves from situations where impartiality is at risk.
- We shall avoid any dual relationships that could compromise our objectivity and/or create a conflict of interest.

9. Competence and Continuous Learning

- IFs shall complete appropriate training and develop our professional competence and only begin practicing when they have the knowledge and skills to effectively support participants. All training must adhere to the standards set by DDS. We will only accept assignments within our areas of expertise and level of capability. We shall seek supervision or consultation when needed to address complex issues and refer clients to other professionals when appropriate.
- IFs shall engage in ongoing reflection, continuous learning, and professional development to enhance their facilitation skills and stay updated on directives, best practices, legal requirements, and emerging changes in the Self-Determination Program.

10. Accountability

- IFs must hold themselves accountable for their actions and decisions, ensuring that their conduct meets professional and ethical standards. This includes addressing any mistakes or misunderstandings promptly and taking responsibility for resolving them.
- They must be open to feedback and willing to engage in self-reflection to improve their practice.
- In situations where a facilitator must terminate a working relationship with a participant, IFs are responsible for maintaining honest communication and make every effort to provide alternative options. It is critical that as professionals, we communicate with the client about termination. IFs will not abandon their clients without proper communication about termination of the relationship.

11. Collaboration and Coordination

- IFs are ethically responsible for working collaboratively with other service providers, Regional Centers, and family members (when applicable) to ensure the client receives comprehensive support.
- They should facilitate coordination across services and ensure that all efforts are aligned with the client's person-centered plan.

12. Compliance with Laws and Regulations:

- IFs will follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations governing the Self-Determination Program and related activities.
- IFs will adhere to the policies and guidelines set forth by DDS, The Lanterman Act and Self-Determination Program; including those related to funding, services, and participant rights.

IF Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues:

IFs not only have ethical responsibilities to their clients but also to their colleagues, other service providers, and professionals within the Self-Determination Program and broader service systems. These responsibilities help ensure collaboration, mutual respect, and a professional working environment that benefits individuals receiving services. The following outlines the key ethical responsibilities IFs have toward their colleagues:

1. Respect and Professionalism

- IFs must treat all colleagues, including other IFs, Regional Center staff, service providers, and professionals in related fields, with respect and professionalism.
- This includes refraining from demeaning, disrespectful, or discriminatory remarks and behavior, and promoting a culture of mutual respect.

2. Collaboration and Teamwork

- IFs are responsible for fostering collaboration and maintaining open lines of communication with colleagues. They should work as part of a team to ensure that the individual's needs are met, while understanding their role in the broader support system.
- They should contribute to a collaborative approach in planning and implementing person-centered services, sharing relevant information in a manner that benefits the individual while maintaining confidentiality.

3. Integrity and Transparency

- IFs must maintain honesty and transparency in their interactions with colleagues. This includes being clear about their role, capabilities, and limitations.
- When making recommendations or offering advice to colleagues, IFs should ensure that the information is accurate, and evidence based.

4. Conflict Resolution

- When conflicts or disagreements arise with colleagues, IFs are responsible for addressing them in a professional, respectful, and constructive manner.
- IFs should avoid public disputes or criticism and seek to resolve differences through dialogue, mediation, or other appropriate channels to preserve positive working relationships.
- IFs should not take advantage of a disagreement with a colleague in order to obtain a position or client or otherwise advance their own self-interest.

5. Consultation and Knowledge Sharing

- IFs should be open to consulting with colleagues on complex cases or ethical dilemmas, sharing knowledge and experience for the betterment of services provided to clients.
- They should also be willing to mentor or assist less experienced colleagues in understanding ethical practices and the nuances of the Self-Determination Program.

6. Non-Interference in Service Provision

- IFs must respect the professional boundaries and expertise of their colleagues, avoiding interference in the provision of services unless it is in the best interest of the client.

- They should recognize the unique contributions of each professional involved in supporting the individual and work to complement rather than undermine or duplicate efforts.

7. Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

- IFs should avoid any potential conflicts of interest when working alongside colleagues, particularly when financial or personal interests could influence their recommendations or actions.
- They should disclose any potential conflicts to colleagues and work collaboratively to ensure the individual's best interests are prioritized.

8. Fair Competition

- IFs are responsible for promoting fair and ethical competition in the marketplace. They should refrain from disparaging colleagues, unfairly competing for clients, or engaging in practices that undermine the professional standing of others.
- Marketing and promotion of services should be honest and not misrepresent qualifications or services.

10. Confidentiality in Professional Relationships

- IFs must respect the confidentiality of their colleagues, particularly in matters related to shared clients. This includes safeguarding sensitive information that may be shared during collaboration or consultation.
- They should avoid sharing personal or professional information about colleagues without permission.

11. Commitment to Collective Learning and Growth

- IFs have a duty to contribute to the collective growth and development of the field by engaging in peer learning, sharing best practices, and participating in professional development opportunities with colleagues.
- They should actively engage in continuing education and promote opportunities for learning within the broader community of IFs and related professionals.

12. Cultural Competence

- IFs should promote and respect cultural competency and inclusivity within their professional interactions, ensuring that colleagues' diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and contributions are valued and considered in service provision.
- They should support colleagues in their efforts to enhance cultural sensitivity and responsiveness in the delivery of services.

10. Legal and Ethical Compliance

- IFs must ensure that their practice complies with all relevant laws, regulations, and ethical guidelines. This includes understanding and adhering to the policies of the Self-Determination Program, Regional Centers, and other governing bodies.
- They should also be prepared to report unethical behavior or illegal practices within the practice setting, ensuring accountability across all levels of service provision.

11. Record-Keeping and Documentation

- IFs are ethically responsible for maintaining accurate, timely, and confidential records related to their clients and services. In a practice setting, this includes documenting all interactions, decisions, and actions taken on behalf of the client in a clear and professional manner.

- Proper record-keeping ensures transparency, allows for effective service continuity, and provides a clear history of the facilitation process for accountability purposes.

13. Impairment of Colleagues

- IFs who have direct knowledge of another IF's impairment due to personal problems, stress, substance abuse, or any other reason should directly discuss their concerns with that colleague when possible. IFs should assist that colleague with taking action to remedy their conduct and the situation.
- IFs who believe that a colleague's impairment is interfering with their ability to competently and ethically perform their duties and have not taken the necessary steps to address the situation should take action through reporting to Cal-IF. Cal-IF will investigate complaints regarding impairment and introduce remediation measures. If an IF is not able to comply with remediation measures, they may lose membership status with Cal-IF.

14. Incompetence of Colleagues

- IFs who have direct knowledge of another IF's incompetence in any of the areas outlined in this code should directly discuss their concerns with that colleague when possible. IFs should assist that colleague with taking action to remedy their conduct and the situation.
- IFs who believe that a colleague is incompetent and have not taken the necessary steps to address the situation should take action through reporting to Cal-IF. Cal-IF will investigate complaints regarding incompetence and introduce remediation measures. If an IF is not able to comply with remediation measures, they may lose membership status with Cal-IF.

15. Unprofessional or Unethical Conduct of Colleagues

- IFs should take appropriate measures to prevent, discourage, expose, and provide support to correct unethical conduct of other IF's.
- IF's who believe that a colleague has acted unethically should seek to resolve the situation by discussing their concerns with the colleague directly when possible and when such a conversation would be productive.
- When necessary, IFs should bring their concerns about unethical behavior to Cal-IF. Cal-IF will investigate complaints and concerns regarding unethical behavior and introduce remediation measures. They may lose membership status with Cal-IF or face other consequences.
- IF's should defend and support colleagues who are incorrectly accused of unethical conduct or behavior.

IF Ethical Responsibilities in Practice Settings:

In a practice setting, IFs have several ethical responsibilities that ensure they maintain professional integrity, provide high-quality services, and uphold the best interests of their clients. These responsibilities shape how they operate within the broader service ecosystem and influence their relationships with clients, colleagues, and the systems they engage with. Here are the key ethical responsibilities of IFs in a practice setting:

1. Commitment to Client-Centered Practices

- IFs must prioritize the needs, goals, and preferences of the individuals they serve. The practice setting should be built around person-centered principles, ensuring that services are customized and delivered based on the unique needs of each client.
- This includes actively involving the client in decision-making processes and respecting their autonomy.

2. Maintaining Confidentiality

- IFs must protect the confidentiality of all client information obtained during the facilitation process. In a practice setting, this includes ensuring that documentation, records, and personal details are securely stored and only shared with consent or when required by law.
- Confidentiality protocols must be in place to safeguard the privacy of clients and ensure compliance with legal and ethical guidelines.

3. Competence and Professional Development

- IFs are responsible for maintaining and continuously improving their professional skills and knowledge. This includes staying informed about changes in policy, best practices, and the legal frameworks that impact their clients in the Self-Determination Program.
- They should seek opportunities for professional development and self-improvement to ensure they are providing up-to-date, accurate, and effective services.

4. Boundaries and Professional Relationships

- IFs must maintain clear boundaries between their professional and personal lives, ensuring that their relationships with clients remain ethical and professional.
- They should avoid any form of dual relationship (e.g., personal, familial) that might impair their professional judgment or create conflicts of interest in the practice setting.

5. Accountability and Transparency

- IFs must be transparent about their role, responsibilities, and any limitations in their practice. This includes being clear with clients about the scope of services, fees, and potential outcomes.
- They must hold themselves accountable for their actions, decisions, and the overall quality of services provided. This includes addressing any mistakes or issues in the delivery of services promptly and professionally.

6. Ethical Use of Resources

- IFs have an ethical responsibility to use resources, including time and funding, responsibly and efficiently. They should avoid any misuse of client funds or resources and ensure that services are delivered within the agreed-upon budget and plan.
- IFs should also ensure that clients understand how their budgets are being utilized and help them make informed financial decisions in their Self-Determination Program.

- IFs have a responsibility to prevent the use of fraud and waste in their own services and to not participate in fraud, waste, or abuse of funds within the program overall.

7. Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

- IFs must avoid any situations where their impartiality may be compromised. This includes not accepting gifts or favors from service providers, clients, or other parties that could influence their professional judgment.
- They should disclose any potential conflicts of interest and take steps to manage or avoid these situations in the practice setting, ensuring that their decisions are always in the best interest of the client.

8. Informed Consent and Client Rights

- In a practice setting, IFs must ensure that clients understand their rights and are provided with all necessary information to give informed consent to any decisions, services, or interventions.
- This includes providing information in an accessible manner, explaining the benefits and risks of options, and ensuring that the client's consent is voluntary and based on a clear understanding of the services.

9. Cultural Competence

- IFs are responsible for ensuring that their practice setting is inclusive and culturally competent. This involves respecting the diverse backgrounds, cultures, and experiences of clients and tailoring services to meet their individual needs.
- We should be sensitive to cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic factors that may affect the client's access to services and provide culturally responsive support.

10. Legal and Ethical Compliance

- IFs must ensure that their practice complies with all relevant laws, regulations, and ethical guidelines. This includes understanding and adhering to the policies of the Self-Determination Program, Regional Centers, and other governing bodies.
- We should also be prepared to report unethical behavior or illegal practices within the practice setting, ensuring accountability across all levels of service provision.

11. Record-Keeping and Documentation

- IFs are ethically responsible for maintaining accurate, timely, and confidential records related to their clients and services. In a practice setting, this includes documenting all interactions, decisions, and actions taken on behalf of the client in a clear and professional manner.
- Proper record-keeping ensures transparency, allows for effective service continuity, and provides a clear history of the facilitation process for accountability purposes.

12. Client Empowerment and Advocacy

- IFs must advocate for their clients' rights and empowerment within the practice setting. This includes standing up for the client's needs, ensuring they have access to all available resources, and addressing barriers that may prevent them from exercising choice and control over their services.
- IFs should work to remove obstacles in the service system and actively engage in advocating for improvements in policies or practices that impact their clients.

13. Fairness and Equity in Service Provision

- IFs are responsible for ensuring that all clients receive fair and equitable services, regardless of their background, needs, or financial situation. They should work to eliminate any bias or discrimination in their practice setting and advocate for equal access to opportunities and resources.
- Equity in practice ensures that all clients, especially those from underserved or marginalized communities, receive appropriate support.

14. Self-Care and Professional Balance

- IFs have an ethical obligation to practice self-care and maintain their own physical and mental well-being. This helps ensure that they can provide effective, high-quality services to their clients without burnout or compromised judgment.
- Maintaining a healthy work-life balance and seeking support when needed are crucial for sustaining long-term ethical practice.

IF Ethical Responsibilities as Professionals:

As professionals, IFs have a set of ethical responsibilities that guide their conduct and ensure they uphold the highest standards of practice. These responsibilities are critical for maintaining professionalism, integrity, and trust within the Self-Determination Program, the individuals they serve, and the broader community. Here are the key ethical responsibilities of IFs as professionals:

1. Upholding Professional Integrity

- IFs must demonstrate honesty, transparency, and ethical behavior in all aspects of their professional practice. This includes being truthful about their qualifications, capabilities, and limitations, and ensuring that their actions are consistent with the values of the Self-Determination Program.
- They should avoid any form of deceit or misrepresentation in their communications, service offerings, or professional activities.

2. Commitment to Competence

- IFs have an ethical obligation to maintain competence in their field by pursuing ongoing professional development and staying informed about the latest practices, policies, and legal requirements in the Self-Determination Program.
- They should continuously seek to improve their skills and knowledge to ensure they provide high-quality services to clients. This includes seeking supervision or consultation when faced with complex or unfamiliar challenges.

3. Adherence to Legal and Ethical Standards

- IFs must comply with all relevant laws, regulations, and ethical standards governing their practice. This includes adhering to state and federal guidelines related to the Self-Determination Program, as well as any policies set forth by Regional Centers or other governing bodies.
- Ethical responsibilities include avoiding any actions that could result in harm or legal repercussions for themselves, their clients, or their colleagues.

4. Commitment to Client Welfare

- The welfare of the client must always be the IF's primary concern. This includes ensuring that services are tailored to the client's unique needs, preferences, and circumstances, and that the client's well-being is prioritized in all decision-making processes.
- IFs should act in the best interest of the client, avoiding any form of exploitation, neglect, or harm.

5. Advocacy for Client Rights

- As professionals, IFs are responsible for advocating for the rights of their clients, ensuring they have access to the services and resources they need to achieve their personal goals and maintain independence.
- They must work to remove any barriers that prevent clients from exercising their rights, making informed choices, or participating fully in their services.

6. Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest

- IFs must avoid situations where personal or financial interests could compromise their professional judgment. They should not have any affiliations or relationships with service providers or other parties that could influence their recommendations or actions in favor of anyone other than the client.
- When a potential conflict of interest arises, IFs must disclose it to the client and take appropriate steps to manage or avoid the conflict.

7. Respect for Client Autonomy

- IFs are ethically obligated to respect and support the autonomy of their clients. This means facilitating the client's ability to make decisions about their services and life, even if those decisions differ from the facilitator's personal views.
- IFs should provide clients with all the information necessary to make informed decisions and respect their choices without imposing their own beliefs or preferences.

8. Confidentiality and Privacy

- IFs must maintain the confidentiality of client information, protecting sensitive data from unauthorized access or disclosure. Information should only be shared with the client's consent or when required by law.
- This responsibility extends to both verbal and written communications and includes the secure handling of client records and other documentation.

9. Professional Boundaries

- IFs must establish and maintain appropriate professional boundaries with their clients. This includes avoiding dual relationships (e.g., personal relationships with clients or their families) that could impair their professional judgment or lead to conflicts of interest.
- Professional boundaries ensure that the facilitator's role remains focused on serving the client's best interests in an unbiased and objective manner.

10. Commitment to Equity and Non-Discrimination

- IFs have an ethical responsibility to provide services fairly and equitably to all clients, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristic.

- They should work to promote inclusivity and respect diversity in their practice, ensuring that all clients have equal access to opportunities and resources.

11. Accountability and Responsibility

- IFs must be accountable for their actions and decisions. They should be prepared to explain and justify the services they provide, the decisions they make, and any outcomes related to their professional practice.
- Taking responsibility for their work includes acknowledging mistakes or oversights and taking corrective action when necessary to protect the client's welfare.

12. Honesty in Professional Representation

- IFs must accurately represent their qualifications, experience, and the scope of services they are able to provide. This includes being clear with clients about what they can and cannot do and avoiding exaggeration or false claims about their expertise.
- Misrepresentation of qualifications or services could lead to harm for clients and damage to the professional reputation of the Independent Facilitator.

13. Promotion of Ethical Practice in the Field

- IFs have an obligation to contribute to the ethical development of the field by promoting ethical standards and practices among colleagues, peers, and within professional networks.
- They should encourage and support other IFs in maintaining high ethical standards, and they may report unethical behavior to relevant authorities when necessary to protect clients or the profession.

14. Commitment to Professional Collaboration

- IFs should collaborate professionally with colleagues, service providers, Regional Centers, and other stakeholders to ensure comprehensive, well-coordinated services for their clients.
- Collaboration should be grounded in respect, open communication, and a shared commitment to the client's well-being. This includes sharing relevant information in a way that respects confidentiality and benefits the client.

15. Ethical Marketing and Business Practices

- IFs should market their services ethically, ensuring that all promotional materials, websites, or public communications accurately represent their services and qualifications.
- They should avoid making false claims or using deceptive practices to attract clients. Ethical business practices also extend to fair pricing, transparency about costs, and clear communication about fees and services.

IF Ethical Responsibilities to the IF Profession

IFs have ethical responsibilities to the Independent Facilitation profession itself. These responsibilities are essential for maintaining the integrity, trust, and development of the profession. By adhering to these ethical principles, IFs contribute to a culture of professionalism and ensure that the standards of the field are upheld. Here are the key ethical responsibilities IFs have to their profession:

1. Upholding the Integrity of the Profession

- IFs must conduct themselves in a manner that upholds the reputation and integrity of the Independent Facilitation profession. This includes behaving ethically, acting with honesty, and maintaining professionalism in all interactions.
- They should avoid any behavior that could harm the profession's credibility, or the trust placed in IFs by clients, colleagues, or the public.

2. Promoting Ethical Standards

- IFs have a responsibility to promote and adhere to the highest ethical standards in their work and to encourage others within the profession to do the same. They should advocate for ethical behavior and practice among their peers.
- This includes supporting the development and enforcement of professional codes of ethics and guidelines that safeguard the profession's integrity and enhance service delivery.

3. Contributing to the Development of the Field

- IFs should contribute to the ongoing development and evolution of the profession by participating in discussions, research, training, and education that aim to improve practices and standards within Independent Facilitation.
- This may involve sharing insights from their experience, mentoring new IFs, or actively engaging in professional associations or working groups dedicated to advancing the field.

4. Continuous Professional Development

- IFs are responsible for continuously improving their own knowledge, skills, and competence within the profession. This includes participating in ongoing education, training, and professional development opportunities to stay current with evolving best practices, legal requirements, and policy changes.
- By maintaining and expanding their expertise, IFs help ensure that the profession remains innovative, responsive, and aligned with the needs of clients.

5. Supporting Accountability within the Profession

- IFs have a duty to support accountability within the profession by reporting unethical or unprofessional conduct of other IFs to appropriate authorities or professional bodies when necessary.
- They should engage in practices that promote accountability, such as self-assessment and peer review, to ensure that their own work and the work of their colleagues align with ethical standards.

6. Fostering a Collaborative Professional Community

- IFs should work to foster a sense of collaboration, mutual respect, and professional solidarity within the Independent Facilitation community. This includes engaging in open communication and sharing knowledge and resources with other IFs for the benefit of the profession.
- Collaborative efforts help to create a more robust and unified profession, where practitioners support each other's growth and contribute to collective problem-solving.

7. Mentorship and Support for New Practitioners

- Experienced IFs have an ethical responsibility to mentor and support new IFs entering the profession. This includes sharing knowledge, providing guidance, and modeling ethical behavior.
- Mentorship helps ensure that new practitioners understand and adhere to the ethical standards of the profession while gaining the skills needed to succeed in their roles.

8. Avoiding Exploitation of the Profession

- IFs should not exploit their role or profession for personal gain. This includes avoiding unethical financial practices, such as overcharging clients, entering into referral contracts with other businesses for their own benefit, or manipulating services to benefit themselves or their business at the expense of clients or the profession.

9. Advocating for the Profession

- IFs have an ethical duty to advocate for the advancement and recognition of the Independent Facilitation profession. This may include participating in advocacy efforts to improve the legal, financial, or policy environment for IFs, as well as promoting public awareness about the value of the profession.
- Advocacy can help the profession grow, gain recognition, and improve the conditions under which IFs work, ultimately benefiting both IFs and clients.

10. Participating in Professional Associations and Governance

- IFs should actively engage with professional organizations, regulatory bodies, and working groups that support the profession. This participation helps ensure that the profession's voice is represented in broader discussions about policy, ethics, and best practices.
- Engaging in governance or leadership roles within these organizations can also help shape the direction of the profession and ensure that ethical standards are upheld across the board.

11. Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in the Profession

- IFs have a responsibility to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Independent Facilitation profession. This includes advocating for diverse voices to be heard, ensuring that underrepresented groups have access to opportunities within the profession, and supporting inclusive practices.
- By fostering an inclusive environment, IFs help ensure that the profession reflects the diverse needs of the clients and communities they serve.

12. Avoiding Negative Public Representations

- IFs should refrain from engaging in any public conduct that would misrepresent or damage the image of the profession. They must be mindful of how their actions, both within and outside of their professional practice, can reflect on the field of Independent Facilitation.
- They should avoid speaking negatively about the profession in ways that are damaging or unproductive, and instead focus on contributing positively to its image and public understanding.

13. Upholding Professional Independence

- IFs should maintain professional independence in their practice, ensuring that their actions and decisions are not unduly influenced by external pressures such as conflicts of interest, financial incentives, or personal relationships with service providers or others.
- This independence is critical for maintaining objectivity and impartiality in their role, as well as for safeguarding the integrity of the profession.

14. Contributing to Ethical Research and Innovation

- IFs should support and engage in ethical research and innovation that enhances the understanding and effectiveness of Independent Facilitation. Research should be conducted with integrity, and any contributions to the development of new methodologies or approaches should reflect ethical standards.

IF Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society:

IFs have a set of ethical responsibilities that extend beyond their clients, colleagues, and profession to include the broader society. These responsibilities help ensure that their work positively impacts the communities they serve and that they contribute to societal well-being and justice. Here are the key ethical responsibilities of IFs to broader society:

1. Advocacy for Social Justice

- IFs have a responsibility to advocate for social justice and equity within the broader society. This includes working to eliminate barriers to access for individuals with disabilities and promoting policies and practices that advance their rights and opportunities.
- IFs should actively address systemic inequities, such as discrimination or lack of access to services, that may affect individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

2. Promoting Inclusion and Accessibility

- IFs should advocate for the full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society. This includes supporting initiatives and policies that foster accessibility in education, employment, housing, and community life.
- They should work to create a more inclusive society where individuals with disabilities can participate fully and equally, in line with their rights and preferences.

3. Ethical Public Representation

- IFs have a responsibility to represent their profession and the individuals they serve ethically in public forums. This includes ensuring that they accurately portray the needs and strengths of individuals with disabilities and that they avoid perpetuating stereotypes or misinformation.
- Public advocacy or engagement with media and other platforms should be done in a way that respects the dignity of the individuals they serve and contributes to societal understanding of disability rights and the Self-Determination Program.

4. Contribution to Public Awareness

- IFs should contribute to raising public awareness about the needs and rights of individuals with developmental disabilities and the importance of person-centered services. This includes educating the public about the Self-Determination Program and the broader movement for disability rights and autonomy.
- By increasing awareness, IFs help foster a more inclusive and informed society that supports the rights and dignity of all individuals, particularly those who may face marginalization.

5. Supporting Ethical Public Policy

- IFs have a responsibility to support and advocate for public policies that promote the well-being and rights of individuals with disabilities. This includes actively participating in policy discussions, providing feedback to lawmakers, and supporting legislative efforts that advance the goals of the Self-Determination Program and disability rights.
- IFs should work to ensure that public policies reflect the values of independence, choice, and self-determination for people with disabilities.

6. Encouraging Civic Participation

- IFs should encourage the individuals they serve, as well as their families, to engage in civic participation. This includes supporting individuals in understanding and exercising their rights as citizens, such as voting, advocacy, and community involvement.
- IFs have a role in helping clients become more engaged in their communities and ensuring that their voices are heard in societal discussions that affect their lives.

7. Protecting Vulnerable Populations

- IFs have an ethical obligation to protect and support vulnerable populations, particularly individuals with developmental disabilities who may face increased risks of exploitation, neglect, or abuse.
- This includes advocating for stronger safeguards within society, such as legal protections and accessible reporting mechanisms, to ensure that vulnerable individuals are protected and supported.

8. Promoting Social Responsibility

- IFs have a broader responsibility to ensure that their actions and those of the organizations they work with are socially responsible. This includes being mindful of how their work practices and the services they support impact
- They should promote sustainability and ethical business practices within the broader context of their work, ensuring that the services provided do not cause harm or exploit vulnerable communities.

9. Collaborating with Community Organizations

- IFs should work in collaboration with community organizations, local governments, and advocacy groups to enhance services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities. By building partnerships, they can contribute to the creation of a more cohesive and supportive community network.

- These collaborations should focus on addressing broader societal challenges, such as housing, employment, education, and healthcare, ensuring that individuals with disabilities are considered in community planning and development.

10. Fostering a Culture of Empathy and Respect

- IFs have a responsibility to foster a culture of empathy, respect, and understanding within society. This includes promoting the dignity and humanity of all individuals, especially those who may be marginalized or overlooked.
- Through their actions, IFs can help reduce stigma, challenge misconceptions, and promote a society where all individuals, regardless of their abilities, are valued and respected.

11. Contributing to Ethical Public Dialogue

- IFs should engage in and contribute to public discourse on ethical issues that affect individuals with disabilities and the broader society. This includes advocating for ethical standards in service delivery, raising concerns about societal practices that negatively impact individuals with disabilities, and participating in discussions about the future of disability rights and support services.
- By contributing to public dialogue, IFs help shape societal attitudes and policies in ways that benefit the individuals they serve and promote ethical, person-centered approaches in broader social systems.

12. Championing Human Rights

- IFs have an ethical responsibility to champion human rights within the broader society. This includes advocating for the protection and promotion of fundamental rights for individuals with disabilities, such as the right to live independently, the right to education, the right to work, and the right to participate fully in community life.
- IFs should work to ensure that societal systems, including healthcare, education, and the justice system, uphold the human rights of all individuals and that no one is denied opportunities based on their abilities or disabilities.