



NCCAOM News-Brief for State Regulatory Boards

Welcome to the first issue of NCCAOM Professional Ethics and Disciplinary Review (PEDR) News-Brief for State Regulatory Agencies and Boards. As the NCCAOM diligently works to grow relationships with one of our most important constituents, our state acupuncture regulatory board contacts, we wanted to offer a way to share new developments and information in Professional Ethics and Discipline here at the NCCAOM. We look forward to our bright and promising future ahead!

The Importance of NCCAOM Updates to States

The NCCAOM was founded in 1982 with an important mission in mind: *To assure the safety and well-being of the public and to advance and advocate for the professional practice of NCCAOM Board-Certified Acupuncturists™ by promoting established national standards focused on competence and credentialing.*

Since its inception, the NCCAOM has become widely regarded as the most influential leader in the field of certification for acupuncture and herbal medicine. With over 20,000 currently certified NCCAOM Board-Certified Acupuncturists and over 1,500 approved PDA providers offering 5,200 courses, the NCCAOM continues to set the standard for our profession across the country. The most frequent question we receive is “Why should I become board certified by the NCCAOM?”

Simply put, the NCCAOM sets the golden standard for the profession across the board.

Acupuncturists who meet the requirements stand out in their field to the public and other medical professionals. Our “Find a Practitioner” directory allows the public to find Nationally Certified Acupuncturists, and trust that the person they are going to see upholds strict ethical, moral, and safety standards to keep them safe and healthy.

Many insurance agencies, hospital credentialing staff, and potential employers use the NCCAOM's exams and certification as the main requirement for a job placement or bill insurance. These agencies understand that acupuncturists who commits to learning and upholding the NCCAOM's standards are bound by the NCCAOM Code of Ethics to hold themselves accountable. Furthermore, 46 states plus District of Columbia use the NCCAOM's exams or certification as a pre-requisite for state licensure. This unifies the

profession nationwide and furthers the public image of the profession.

The NCCAOM will always be the pinnacle of the profession – providing the public and states with a model of what you can achieve. Our Diplomates continue to learn and grow in their fields year after year, and our PDA program continues to build upon decades of knowledge and hard work in the AHM field.

The NCCAOM remains dedicated to listening to all our constituent groups and supporting our Board-Certified Diplomates. We continue to provide support to all of our state regulatory partners in ensuring the safe practice of acupuncture and herbal medicine. The NCCAOM also has a dedicated Professional Ethics and Disciplinary Committee working hard to ensure that our standards are constantly upheld and met nationwide.

Meet our Staff Spotlight: Chris Thompson, Ethics and Disciplinary Committee Coordinator



Meet our staff spotlight: Chris Thompson, Professional Ethics and Disciplinary Committee Coordinator. Chris Thompson came to the NCCAOM early in 2023 eager to help support the Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine community, and to work with an organization that dedicates itself to the continuing growth and betterment of the profession. After a career that sent him across the country both training and upholding disciplinary actions and ethical policies, he felt that it was time for a change, and the NCCAOM had a mission and core values that deeply aligned with his own.

Chris is extremely passionate about protecting the public and ensuring that those who seek and hold certification with the NCCAOM are both protected from baseless accusations and held accountable for their actions when necessary. Since joining the NCCAOM team, Chris has worked closely with the Professional Ethics and Disciplinary Committee (PEDC) Chair, Michael Taormina, Esq, to establish a program that will allow all states who require NCCAOM certification or exams as a prerequisite for licensure, to share disciplinary data in order to better protect the people public that they serve. It is the shared goal of both Chris and the PEDC to establish a strong connection between the NCCAOM team and the states. For that reason, Chris will continue to reach out and offer himself as an asset to your teams, to help unify our community nationwide and continue to grow the profession. As our profession grows, so does the need to communicate effectively and share data when available to stay ahead of any potential issues. Chris looks forward to improving the relationship between our teams and helping your state stay up to date on national information.

Professional Ethics and Disciplinary Review (PEDR) Update and Focus: FAILURE TO REPORT

By: Cathy Goldstein, AP, NCCAOM Dipl. Vice Chair of Professional Ethics and Disciplinary Committee

The NCCAOM has recently updated its Code of Ethics and Grounds for Professional Discipline. These updates demonstrate our shared commitment to ensuring patient safety and maintaining the highest standards of professional conduct among practitioners nationwide. To help meet these goals, the NCCAOM is including important details about specific areas of ethical concerns for your review:

Diplomate Reporting Requirements

Diplomates are required to notify NCCAOM within thirty (30) days of the following:

- Notice of a disciplinary, misconduct or ethics investigation in any jurisdiction pertaining to a healthcare license or practice.
- An order (including private or confidential) issued by any licensing board or jurisdiction pertaining to a healthcare license or practice.
- Violent felony charges.
- Misdemeanor charges related to healthcare practice.
- Non-violent felony convictions.

You may notice non-healthcare related misdemeanor charges are no longer reportable, but it must be stressed that ANY notice you receive of the initiation of an investigation by a state licensing board is. Whether or not a practitioner believes an investigation or complaint is based on false allegations, inaccurate or incomplete evidence is irrelevant to a practitioner's critical duty to self-report. Michael Taromina, Chair of PEDC, has stated, "Failure to report is an easily avoidable potential ground for discipline."

With our increasing staff and collaboration with state regulators I am personally certain we will always find out about state investigations anyway. Therefore, you do not want an unreported state investigation or complaint—especially one without merit—to lead to a disciplinary sanction on your record."

With our new ethical guidelines and staffing in place, the focus for the PEDC is to work more cooperatively with state licensing boards on investigations and enforcement. A state regulator's meeting was recently held where Mina Larson, CEO of NCCAOM, and Michael presented a plan to work together more efficiently and effectively in order to best protect the public and promote the highest ethical standards in every state. This was welcomed news to all the state regulators who attended and the strengthening of ties with the states is well underway.

Here's how you can simply report an incident or concern to the NCCAOM:

1. Send an email to pedrstaff@thenccaom.org with the state complaint or investigation documents and your details of the incident(s) or concern(s) within 30 days of learning about it.
2. If the 30-day window is within your certification or recertification application submission: Include the above listed information when you're applying for certification or recertification.

But wait, there's more! The NCCAOM has also rolled out a shiny new PEDR section on the NCCAOM website, making it a breeze for practitioners and the public to find information and resources related to professional ethics and disciplinary matters. This update is just another way the NCCAOM is working full-time to boost transparency, accessibility, and overall patient safety within the acupuncture and herbal medicine profession.

NCCAOM

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