

CODE OF ETHICS

VERSION

This is version 1.01 of this document.
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PRINCIPLES

1. Counsellors respect the essential humanity, worth and dignity of all people and promote this value in their work.
2. Counsellors recognise and respect diversity among people and oppose discrimination and oppressive behaviour
3. Counsellors respect the privacy of their clients and preserve the confidentiality of information acquired in the course of their work.
4. Counsellors protect the right of their clients including the right of informed consent.
5. Counsellors take steps to maintain and develop their competence throughout their professional lives
6. Counsellors abide by the laws of the society in which they practice.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities to the Client

1. Counsellors take all reasonable steps to avoid harm to the client as a result of the counselling process.
2. In the event of harm resulting from counselling, counsellors take initiatives for repair. Professional indemnity should be adopted in such contexts.
3. Counsellors promote clients autonomy and encourage clients to make responsible choices on their own behalf.
4. Counsellors consider the social context of the client and their connection to others.
5. Counsellors are responsible for setting and maintaining professional boundaries within the counselling relationship.

Exploitation

1. Counsellors must not exploit clients, past or present, in financial, sexual, emotional or any other way.
2. Counsellors will not accept or offer payments for referrals, or engage in any financial transactions apart from the ordinary fee charged to clients for interviews.
3. Sexual relations between the client and the counsellor can never be acceptable and constitute unethical behaviour. This is not restricted to sexual intercourse and includes any form of physical contact, whether initiated by the client or the counsellor, which has as its purpose some form of sexual gratification, or which may reasonably be construed as having that purpose.
4. Counsellors should consider that the deeper the involvement with the client's emotional life during counselling, the less likely is the possibility of a subsequent equal relationship following termination of therapy. Counsellors are advised to seek professional supervision should any attempt to build a special relationship with a former client be considered.

Confidentiality

1. Counsellors treat with confidence any personal information about clients, whether obtained directly or by inference. This applies to all verbal, written or recorded material produced as a result of the relationship. All records, whether written or in any form, need to be protected with the strictest confidence.
2. The client must not be observed by anyone, other than his or her counsellors without having given informed consent. This applies to direct observation, and to any other form of visual recording.
3. Exceptional circumstances may arise which give the counsellor good grounds for believing that the client will cause harm to self or others. In such circumstances, the breaking of confidentiality may be required, preferably with the client's permission, or after consultations with a counselling supervisor.
4. Any breaking of confidentiality should be minimised both by restricting the information conveyed to that which is pertinent in the immediate situation, and by limiting it to persons who can provide the help required by the client.
5. Agreements about confidentiality continue after the client's death, unless there are overriding legal considerations.
6. Special care is required when writing about specific counselling situations for reports and publication. The author must have the client's informed consent should there be any possibility of identification of the client.
7. Counsellors and supervisors are responsible for protecting the client's right of confidentiality and any shared information should be disguised when appropriate.

Contracts

1. Counselling activities are to be undertaken only with professional intent and not casually and/or in extra-professional relationships.
2. Contracts involving the client should be realistic and clear.
3. Any publicity material and all written and oral information should reflect accurately the nature of the service offered and the training qualification and relevant experience of the counsellor.
4. Counsellors are responsible for communicating the terms on which counselling is offered.
5. Counsellors will disclose any conflict of interest that may arise in relation to a client and will seek supervision to resolve appropriate action, which may include referral.

Responsibilities to Self as Counsellor

1. Counsellors have a responsibility to themselves to maintain their own effectiveness, resilience and ability to help clients. They are expected to monitor their own personal functioning and to seek help or withdraw from counselling when their personal resources are sufficiently depleted to require this.
2. Counsellors will not counsel when their functioning is impaired due to personal or emotional difficulties, illness, alcohol, or drugs or for any other reason.
3. Counsellors will have regular suitable supervision and will use such supervision to develop counselling skills, monitor performance and provide accountability for practice.

Responsibilities to other Counsellors

1. Counsellors do not conduct themselves in their counselling related activities in ways that undermine public confidence in either their role as counsellors or in the work of other counsellors.
2. MIECAT counsellors are committed to the MIECAT ethical code, which includes procedures to withdraw membership for unethical practice.
3. Counsellors who suspect misconduct by another counsellor, which cannot be resolved or remedied after discussion with the counsellor concerned, will approach the appropriate professional body in their field of work.
4. Counsellors do not solicit the clients of other counsellors. They have an obligation not to impair the work of their colleagues. Nevertheless, counsellors need to be aware of the client's right to seek a second opinion.

Responsibilities to the Wider Community

1. Counsellors work within the law
2. Counsellors take reasonable steps to be aware of current legislation affecting their work.
3. Counsellors are committed to protect the public against incompetent and dishonourable practice and are prepared to challenge these practices.

Complaint Procedures

MIECAT counsellors accept that:

1. MIECAT has a procedure to be followed in the event of a complaint of unethical conduct against a member
2. Included in these disciplinary procedures is the possibility that a counsellor can be debarred from membership. This would automatically lead to removal from any counselling register for which approved organisational membership is a requirement.
3. MIECAT will notify all organisations on whose register the person is listed, following the withdrawal of membership

Maintenance/Changes: MIECAT maintains this Code of Ethics document in conjunction with the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA). This document is progressive in nature and hence subject to change over the course of time. Amendment(s) will be stated publicly under the 'News' section of the MIECAT website, so please ensure that you check back from time to time and download the latest copy as necessary or alternatively contact one of our offices.