

Professional Standards of Practice for the CPCA



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All members of the Canadian Professional Counsellors Association are required to adhere to the Standards of Practice, which represent minimal behavioural statements of the Code of Ethics. Members should refer to the applicable section of the Code of Ethics for further interpretation and amplification of the applicable Standard of Practice.

Section A: The Counselling Relationship

- 1. Non-discrimination.** Counsellors respect diversity and must not discriminate against clients because of age, color, culture, disability, ethnic group, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, or socio-economic status.
- 2. Disclosure to Clients.** Counsellors must adequately inform clients, preferably in writing, regarding the counselling process and counselling relationship at or before the time it begins and throughout the relationship.
- 3. Dual Relationships.** Counsellors must make every effort to avoid dual relationships with clients that could impair their professional judgment or increase the risk of harm to clients. When a dual relationship cannot be avoided, counsellors must take appropriate steps to ensure that judgment is not impaired and that no exploitation occurs.
- 4. Sexual Intimacies with Clients.** Counsellors must not engage in any type of sexual intimacies with current clients and must not engage in sexual intimacies with former clients within a minimum of 2 years after terminating the counselling relationship. Counsellors who engage in such relationship after 2 years following termination have the responsibility to examine and document thoroughly that such relations did not have an exploitative nature.
- 5. Client Protection During Individual and Group Therapy.** Counsellors must take steps to protect clients from physical or psychological trauma resulting from interactions during individual and group work.
- 6. Advance Understanding of Fees.** Counsellors must explain to clients, prior to their entering the counselling relationship, financial arrangements related to professional services.
- 7. Termination.** Counsellors must assist in making appropriate arrangements for the continuation of treatment of clients, when necessary, following termination of counselling relationships.
- 8. Inability to Assist Clients.** Counsellors must avoid entering into, or immediately terminate a counselling relationship if it is determined that they are unable to be of professional assistance to a client. The counsellor may assist in making an appropriate referral for the client.

Section B: Confidentiality

- 9. Confidentiality Requirement.** Counsellors must keep information related to counselling services confidential unless a) the counsellor or his/her files are demanded under a subpoena of the court; b) the client reports he/she is suicidal/homicidal; c) the client reports suspected child or elder abuse or neglect (pursuant to the current legislation in their province of practice).
- 10. Confidentiality Requirements for Subordinates/Employees.** Counsellors must take measures to ensure that privacy and confidentiality of clients are maintained by subordinates or employees.
- 11. Confidentiality in Group Work.** Counsellors must clearly communicate to group members the importance of maintaining confidentiality of information shared by group members during group counselling sessions-
- 12. Confidentiality in Family Counselling.** Counsellors must explain any limits of confidentiality to participants in family, and/or couples counselling; and not disclose information about one family member to another family member without prior consent.
- 13. Confidentiality of Records.** Counsellors must maintain appropriate confidentiality in creating, storing, accessing, transferring, and disposing of counselling records pursuant to the Privacy Act of the province in which they practice.
- 14. Permission to Record or Observe.** Counsellors must obtain prior consent from clients in writing in order to record electronically or observe sessions.
- 15. Disclosure or Transfer of Records.** Counsellors must obtain clients written consent to disclose or transfer records to third parties, unless exceptions listed in SP-9 exist.
- 16. Data Disguise Required.** Counsellors must first obtain written permission and, when permission is received, he/she must disguise the identity of the client when using data for training, research, or publication.

Section C: Professional Responsibility

- 17. Boundaries of Competence.** Counsellors have a responsibility to recognize the limits of their competence and to practice within the boundaries of their scope of practice.
- 18. Professional Development/Continuing Education.** Counsellors must engage in professional development/continuing education to maintain their professional competence.
- 19. Impairment of Professionals.** Counsellors must refrain from offering professional services when their personal issues or conflicts may cause harm to a client or others.
- 20. Accurate Advertising.** Counsellors must give accurate information to avoid false claims when advertising their services.
- 21. Credentials Claimed.** Counsellors must claim or imply only professional credentials possessed and must correct any known misrepresentations.
- 22. Legal Conduct:** Counsellors must comply with federal and provincial laws relating to the conduct of health care professionals.
- 23. Unjustified Gains.** Counsellors must not use their professional positions to seek or receive unjustified personal gains, sexual favours, unfair advantage, or unearned goods or services.
- 24. Clients Served by Others.** With the written consent of the client, counsellors must inform other mental health professionals serving the same client that a counselling relationship between the counsellor and client exists.

Section D: Relationship With Other Professionals

- 25. Relationships with other Mental Health Professionals.** Counsellors must not devalue or discredit the competence of another mental health professional.
- 26. Referral Fees.** Counsellors must not accept referral fees.

Section E: Evaluation, Assessment and Interpretation

- 27. Appropriate Use of Assessment Instruments.** Counsellors must use assessment instruments in the manner for which they were intended.
- 28. Assessment Explanations to Clients.** Counsellors must provide explanations to clients prior to assessment about the nature and purposes of assessment and the specific uses of results.
- 29. Recipients of Test Results.** Counsellors must ensure that accurate and appropriate interpretations accompany any release of testing and assessment information.
- 30. Assessment;** Counsellors will make every effort when appropriate (e.g. except when the client is in crisis) to complete a comprehensive standard Clinical Assessment at the beginning of the counselling relationship;

Section F: Teaching, Training, and Supervision

- 31. Intern Use of Assessment Tools & Techniques:** Members must not allow the use of psychological assessment techniques by unqualified persons under their supervision.
- 32. Credit for Contributions to Research.** Members who are offering Educational and training programs during the course of their counselling and/or psychotherapy practice and Counsellors involved in research and scholarly projects, must give credit to students or interns for their contributions
- 33. Supervision Preparation.** Professionals who offer clinical supervision services must meet the CPCA supervisor criteria and be prepared in supervision methods and techniques.
- 34. Evaluation Information.** Members, who are supervising CPCA interns, must clearly state to interns in advance of training the levels of competency expected, appraisal methods, and timing of evaluations. Interns will be provided with periodic performance appraisal and evaluation feedback throughout the supervision process.
- 35. Limitations of Students and Interns.** Members who are providing Supervisory services must assist interns in securing remedial assistance, when needed, and must dismiss from the program interns who are unable to provide competent service due to academic or personal limitations.

36. Standards for Students and Interns. Students and interns who have become members of CPCA and are preparing to become counsellors must adhere to the CPCA Code of Ethics and the Standards of Practice of counsellors.

Section G: Research and Publication

37. Precautions to Avoid Injury in Research. Counsellors must avoid causing physical, social, or psychological harm or injury to subjects in research.

38. Confidentiality of Research Information. Counsellors must keep information obtained about research participants confidential.

39. Information Affecting Research Outcome. Counsellors must report all variables and conditions known to the investigator that may have affected research data or outcomes.

40. Accurate Research Results. Counsellors must not distort or misrepresent research data, nor fabricate or intentionally bias research results.

41. Publication Contributors. Counsellors must give appropriate credit to those who have contributed to research.

Section H: Resolving Ethical Issues

42. Ethical Behaviour Expected. Counsellors must abide by the Code of Professional Ethics of the Canadian Professional Counsellors Association.

43. Ethical Complaints. Counsellors must, when they possess reasonable cause that raises doubts as to whether or not other counsellors or mental health professionals are acting in an ethical manner, report and try to resolve the complaint with that individual. If a resolution cannot be reached, the counsellor is to write a formal complaint to the individual's governing body. If that person is not affiliated to any professional body, and the counsellor feels that a client may be in danger of being taken advantage of either financially, emotionally or physically, they are to report to the proper authorities in their province of practice.

44. Unwarranted Complaints. Counsellors must not initiate, participate in, or encourage the filing of ethics complaints that are unwarranted or intended to harm a mental health professional rather than to protect clients or the public.

45. Cooperation with Ethics Committees. Counsellors must cooperate with investigations, proceedings, and requirements of the CPCA Ethics Committee or ethics committees of other duly constituted associations or boards having jurisdiction over those charged with a violation.