

Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice

Purpose:

- to provide background information for participants at the National Symposium 2009 regarding a current collection of Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice
- to determine the baseline of Codes of Ethics currently used by counselling-related professions and/or organizations in Canada
- to determine the baseline of Standards of Practice currently used by counselling-related professions and/or organizations in Canada
- to clarify for participants the connection between Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice as keystones for a national standard of care (protection of the public) when considering the mobility of labour
- to supply participants with a succinct summary of information that supports ease of mobility of labour nationally for counselling-related professions

Findings:

These findings are based on the assumption that all Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice are credible documents that have withstood the test of time for use within the professional body and context for which they were written. These findings should therefore not be interpreted as establishing a hierarchy of standards or casting judgement on any Codes or Standards presented or omitted from the document.

Nine Codes of Ethics were reviewed

- Generally, all Codes of Ethics were aligned in their focus to protect the public from harm. It is only in specific areas that differences occur. Most of these differences can be attributed to the specialized form of therapy or intervention that the Association members provide to the public.
- The Codes of Ethics for the Canadian Association of Music Therapy, the Canadian Psychological Association and the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association aligned most closely with each other. The Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, and the Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education closely followed in alignment with these three associations.
- The Codes of Ethics for the Ontario College of Social Workers and the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association differed in alignment to all other Codes of Ethics.
- Specific differences amongst Codes of Ethics occurred in the following domains:
 - Evaluation and Assessment
 - Research and Publications
 - Counsellor Education, Training and Supervision
- Particularly noticeable were differences in Codes of Ethics related to computer use and delivery of service through electronic means.
- Specific areas of alignment occurred in the following domains:
 - Professional Responsibility
 - Consulting and Private Practice
 - Counselling Relationships

Five Standards of Practice were reviewed

- Generally, most Standards of Practice aligned to protect the public from harm. It is only in specific areas that differences occur. Most of these differences can be attributed to the specialized form of therapy or intervention that the Association members provide to the public.
- The Standards of Practice for the Canadian Psychologists Association and the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association are aligned in almost every domain.

- Particular differences of alignment in all Standards of Practice that were reviewed occurred in the following areas:
 - Extension of ethical responsibilities
 - Accurate advertising
 - Informed consent and recruitment of research participants
- Specific areas of alignment in all Standards of Practice that were reviewed occurred in the following domains:
 - Counselling Relationships
 - Consulting and Private Practice
 - Evaluation and Assessment
 - Self-development and Self-Awareness
- Many of the differences in the Codes of Ethics are not as evident when viewing Standards of Practice. Where some Associations have divided their Ethics from Standards, others have merged the two documents. It is through the compilation of both Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice where alignment among all counselling-related associations is most observed.

Discussion:

Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice are evolutionary and developmental, based on context, world history, and societal change (e.g., internet counselling) and the theoretical orientations or world views of the respective counselling bodies.

- The current Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice are a snapshot in time. Ongoing research and revision is required to ensure Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice provide appropriate protection of the public from harm
- Counselling is a profession that cuts across many provincial and or federal ministries such as Health, Education, Social Services, Justice, and Veterans Affairs.
- Counselling-related professionals require a structured environment to acquire and apply knowledge of Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice that provides appropriate service to clients
- Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice may be used to find a baseline of current expectations of counselling-related professions
- Strong similarities exist across Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice
- Interpretation of and conclusions related to data are not included in this study
- There is a link between the professionalism of counsellors, the mobility of labour, and an expressed Code of Ethics and Standard of Practice that is part of ensuring protection of the public from harm
- There appears to be a need for a national standard of practice that crosses jurisdictional lines due to access to professionals and the mobility of populations (such as Tele-Health use, critical intervention teams) between and across federal land, territorial and provincial jurisdictions
- A national Code of Ethics and Standard of Practice based on the points of convergence across existing specialty areas is valuable to supporting a baseline Codes of Ethics and/or Standard of Practice that may be used in provincial/territorial jurisdictions when creating a standard of care that protects the public from harm

The following table illustrates areas of alignment among all reviewed Associations when their Codes of Ethics are combined with their Standards of Practice. The ethics and standards domains of the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association have been used as an organizer.

Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice Alignments

Key: codes/ethics ≥75% aligned codes/ethics ≤75% aligned

CDN COUNSELG & PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOC.	CDN ASSOC. MUSIC THERAPY	CDN PROF'L COUNSEL-LORS ASSOC.	ONTARIO ART THERAPY ASSOC.	ONTARIO COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORKERS	CDN PSYCHO-LOGISTS ASSOC.	AMERICAN ASSOC. FOR MARRIAGE & FAMILY THERAPY (used by Cdn divisions)	CDN ASSOC. FOR PASTOR'L PRACTICE AND EDUCN	CDN STNDS AND GUIDELIN ES FOR CAREER DEV'T PRACTRS
General Responsibility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
Respect for Rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boundaries of Competence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Supervision and Consultation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Representation of Professional Qualifications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Responsibility to Counsellors and other Professionals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Unethical Behaviour by Other Counsellors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Responsibility to Clients	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Sexual Harassment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sensitivity to Diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extension of Ethical Responsibilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Primary Responsibility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Confidentiality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Duty to Warn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Children and Persons with Diminished Capacity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintenance of Records	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access to Records	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dual Relationships	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

POINTS OF CONSIDERATION FOR PARTICIPANTS:

1. How would a national Code of Ethics and Standard of Practice constrain or facilitate the mobility of counsellors across Canada?
2. In what ways may Provincial/Territorial Colleges for Counsellors ensure candidates have substantial knowledge of Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice?
3. What would be the implications to the protection of the public if a national Code of Ethics/Standard of Practice remained constant, was raised, or was lowered (based on the current baseline information provided)?

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