



Standards and Ethical Principles for the Association of Clinical Pastoral Psychotherapists (ACPP)

Introduction

The standards and ethical principles are for pastoral psychotherapists and their work in all activities related to professional and educational roles as pastoral psychotherapists.

Certification with the ACPP requires adherence to the standards and code of ethics outlined here. Ignorance of these standards does not give one permission to violate them as this is a central aspect of certification and accountability within the ACPP.

All complaints against a certified pastoral psychotherapist shall be filed and will be investigated and resolved by the board of the ACPP. Certified members can be stripped of their certification regardless of their affiliation with any other professional groups. These standards do not determine legal liability against any member.

All members of the ACPP are expected to consider these standards whenever using their professional judgement as guiding principles. No set of standards could possibly cover every possible professional scenario. It is up to the pastoral psychotherapist to use these standards and apply them judiciously with consultation with other professionals as applicable. The goal of the standards is to provide a level of protection for both the professional and the one receiving those professional services, including students.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

There are four general principles that are the backbone of the ethical standards:

Beneficence and “Causing No-Harm”

Our members are committed to the welfare and well-being of the client is always of utmost importance. This begins with doing good for our clients as well as refraining from activities or behavior that has a high risk of causing harm.

Responsibility and Accountability

Our members are committed to taking responsibility for their own behavior and responsive to accountability from the ACP, peers, and students they may supervise.

Truthfulness

Our members are committed to being honest, open, and available for clients for their benefit. Integrity is an essential ingredient for building the necessary trust with client’s success in pastoral psychotherapy depends on.

Dignity and Justice

Our members are committed to providing equitable care to all clients regardless of faith, race, gender, gender identity, social economic status, or sexual orientation. All clients deserve the best care a member can always provide. Our members are expected to become increasingly aware of their held biases and work as to prevent those biases from preventing them from providing the best care possible.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

1 Competence

- 1.A—Recognition of Professional Boundaries**
- 1.B—Recognition of Limits of One’s Competence**
- 1.C—Obligation to Provide Emergency Care to Clients**
- 1.D—Obligation to Remain Competent and Continue Education**
- 1.F—Avoid Conflicts of Interest**

2 Responsibilities to the Client

- 2.A—Refrain from Providing Un-equitable Service**
- 2.B—Refrain from Sexual Harassment**
- 2.C—Refrain from All Forms of Harassment**
- 2.D—Refrain from Causing Harm**

2.E—Refrain from Entering a Relationship with Client that Could Compromise Objectivity

2.F—Avoid Conflicts of Interest

2.G—Clarify All Third-Party Requests for Service

2.H—Refer Appropriately With Other Professionals

2.I—Always Obtain Informed Consent

2.J—Clarify all Relationship When Delivering Services Through Organizations

2.K—Provide Back-Up Services in Event of Interruption of Counseling Services

3 Privacy And Confidentiality

3.A--Maintain Appropriate Confidentiality

3.B--Always Discuss the Limits of Confidentiality

3.C—Refrain From Recording in Any Form Without Consent

3.D—Protect Privacy

3.E—Obtain Consent for Disclosures And Discuss Legal Requirements for Disclosure Without Consent

3.F—Protection of Privacy When Consulting Peers

3.G—Avoiding Use of Confidential Information for Teaching or Other Puposes

4 Advertising Services

4.A--Avoiding Making Statements that are False or Misleading to Gain Clients

4.B—Practice Ethical Marketing

4.C—Media Presentations are Consistent with Professional Knowledge and Standards

4.D—Refrain from Using Personal Testimonials of Current Clients

4.E—Refrain from Partaking in Uninvited In-Person Solicitation

5 Fees and Documentation

5.A—Maintain Appropriate Service Documentation Securely

5.B—Dispose of Confidential Records Securely

5.C—Refrain from Withholding Records for Nonpayment

5.D—Practice Legal and Ethical Fee Collection

5.E—Non-Exploitation In Bartering

5.F—Accurate and Ethical Reporting to Client Insurance or Payment Source

5.G—Payment is Not To Be Made for Referrals

6 Education and Training

6.A—Education is Designed For Specific Professional Goals

6.B—Assures that Description of Education and Goals of Education is Accurate

6.C—Protect Disclosure of Student Information without Consent

6.D—Consistently Assess Educational Effectiveness and Goals

6.E—Sexual Relationships with Students is Prohibited

7 Research and Publication

7.A—All Research Should be Conducted Under the Guidance of an Institutional Review

7.B—Research and Recording Should Only be Conducted with Informed Consent

7.C—Research Subjects are Protected from Harm

7.D—Refrain from Offering Inducements for Research Participation

7.E—Refrain from Unethical Use of Deception in Research

7.F—Provide Appropriate Results of Research to Participants

7.G—Avoid Plagiarism and Report Work Only That was Actually Performed by Principal Author

7.H—Refrain from Holding Data for Research Verification

7.I—Research Assistants Respect Confidentiality

8 Client Assessment

8.A—Assessment of Client Should Be Based on Actual Work with Client

8.B—Apply Use of Assessments Appropriately

8.C—Conduct Assessments only with Informed Consent

8.D—Refrain from Providing Test Data Except to the Client or as Mandated by Law

8.E—Refrain from Using Non-Validated Tests Except in Research Purposes

8.F—Interpret Results in Light of Various Factors

8.G—Testing is Done Only by Qualified Professionals

8.H—Ensure that Results are Professionally Explained

8.I—All Test Materials Maintained Securely

9 Pastoral Psychotherapy

9.A— All Therapeutic Work is Subject First to Informed Consent

9.B—Clarify Expectations of Confidentiality When Counseling More Than One Member in a Household

9.C—Clarify Expectations of Confidentiality in Group Therapy

9.D—Clarify Role and Expectations When Providing Care to Someone Already Under the Care of Another Professional

9.E—Avoid any Sexual Contact with Current Clients or Their Relatives

9.F—Avoid Providing Care to a Person With Whom You Have Had a Prior Sexual Relationship

9.G—Avoid Sexual Contact With Former Therapy Clients/Patients

9.H—Provide Back Up as Appropriate to Avoid Interruption of Therapy Services

9.I—Responsibly Terminate Therapy