CERTIFIED PRACTISING COUNSELLORS AUSTRALIA

Code of Ethics and Practice





Contents

Section: Preamble 3

Section: Application 3

Section: Definitions 4

Section: Ethical foundations 5

Section: Commitments to clients 6

Section: Ethical standards for clinical practice 7

Section: Committees 10

Section: Equal Opportunities Policy Statement 10

Section: Preamble

Certified Practising Counsellors Australia (henceforth known as CPCA) strives to outline, promote, and adhere to a high standard of ethical practice for those within the counselling industry.

This Code outlines expectations and requirements of CPCA members with regards to counselling values and ethical practice. This Code is intended to provide a set of practicable ethical standards to cover most common and/or foreseeable circumstances experienced by counsellors.

The objective of this Code is to educate and guide CPCA members on expectations of ethical practice and conduct, with the welfare and protection of people with whom counsellors may work in mind.

To maintain the high standards expected within this industry, the CPCA Code of Ethics is informed by aspects of Codes of Ethics established by the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) and the Australian Psychological CPCA (APA).

This Code was partly based on the PACFA Code of Ethics 2017 and the APA Code of Ethics 2017. CPCA graciously acknowledges PACFA and APA for this document.

Section: Application

The CPCA Code of Ethics applies to all existing members of CPCA, whether they exist as:

a. Counsellors

b. Students

c. Supervisors

d. Educators

e. Researchers

Or any other relevant role.

Section: Definitions

a. Client refers to a party or parties to a counselling service. Clients may be individuals, couples, families, groups, organisations, communities, facilitators or those otherwise party to counselling services.

b. Code refers to this Code of Ethics and Practice.

c. Counsellor refers to anyone delivering a counselling service.

d. Counselling Service refers to any service provided by a counsellor to a client, including but not limited to:

   i. Counselling activities

   ii. Professional practice

   iii. Research practice

   iv. Supervision

   v. Teaching

e. Member(s) refers to all those covered by the CPCA Code of Conduct.

f. Multiple Relationships occur when a counsellor, throughout the provision of a Counselling Service, has been or is:

   i. In a non-professional relationship (whether it be sexual or nonsexual) with the same client

   ii. In a different professional relationship with the same client

   iii. A recipient of service by the same client

g. A Professional Relationship means the relationship between a counsellor and a client to whom a Counselling Service is delivered.

Section: Ethical foundations

CPCA acknowledges that counsellors and members may operate in adherence to a diverse range of ethics and principles. The following are a series of values and principles highly valued by CPCA, however they should be understood as a guideline and not a formal or sanctionable obligation.

CPCA observes a F-A-I-R model of values:

Fairness

CPCA members should be fair and just when conducting themselves, especially as they go about their work with clients. This includes being impartial and egalitarian in the provision of services and opportunities.

Accountability

CPCA members are both professionally and conscientiously responsible for taking full accountability for the services provided, observing and following all relevant legislature and policies that apply.

Integrity

CPCA members should conduct themselves with the utmost integrity, honesty, and authenticity in their relationships with clients and others.

Respect

CPCA members should be careful and considerate of ensuring clients and others with whom they interact within the provision of counselling services are treated with the utmost respect for their autonomy, privacy, and identity. This includes respect and compassion for diverse and different identities and backgrounds.

Section: Commitments to clients

In adherence to CPCA's goal to promote the ethical practice of counselling, CPCA acknowledges the following commitments to clients receiving counselling services:

a. Clients will be prioritised by:

   i. Acting with the utmost care and compassion for clients' needs

   ii. Protecting clients if/when determined they may be at risk of harm or detriment

   iii. Providing clearly defined terms on which services will be offered

   iv. Seeking informed consent for all client services

   v. Ensuring a clearly defined professional, practical relationship between clients and counsellors

   vi. Avoiding conflicts of interest that may harm or exploit clients

b. High professional standards will be upheld by:

   i. Delivering high-quality counselling services with clients' wants and needs in mind

   ii. Solely facilitating practice within the ethical and legal limits of counsellors' training and experience

   iii. Maintaining competence through ongoing supervision and professional development

c. Diversity will be respected by:

   i. Not discriminating against clients based on their gender, age, culture, ability, religion, sexual identity, values, or any other trait which may serve as a point of diversity

d. Confidentiality will be respected by:

   i. Upholding privacy and confidentiality laws to protect client privacy

   ii. Ensuring clients are fully informed on their right to confidentiality

   iii. Explaining the legal limits to confidentiality

   iv. Taking all practicable and reasonable steps to prevent the unauthorised disclosure of clients' personal information

e. Professional boundaries will be upheld by:

   i. Avoiding conflicts of interest in the form of multiple or complicated relationships with clients

   ii. Avoiding engagement in romantic or sexual relationships with clients or members of their family both throughout the counselling relationship for at least five years after the end of this relationship

Section: Ethical standards for clinical practice

a. Client safety & wellbeing

   i. Counsellors must take all reasonable and practicable steps to ensure the client does not suffer harm, be it physical, emotional, or psychological, during counselling sessions

   ii. Counsellors must not exploit their client/s in any capacity, be it financially, physically, emotionally, sexually or otherwise

   iii. Counsellors must ensure all counselling sessions are conducted privately. Sessions should not be able to be overheard, recorded, or observed by anyone without informed consent from the client

b. Working to high professional standards

   i. Counsellors must practice with the clients' desired outcomes in mind

   ii. Counsellors must give thoughtful and careful consideration to the extents and limitations of their training and experience, and work within these limits

   iii. If a counsellor determines they are unable to provide services to meet the client's needs, they should provide information on other services or make a referral, either in lieu of the counsellor's services or in parallel with them

   iv. Counsellors should give special consideration to whether they are competent or adequately trained/experienced to work with particular groups, such as (but not limited to):

i. Children and adolescents

ii. Couples and families

iii. Groups with other special needs

v. Counsellors should monitor their fitness to practice and provide safe and effective services, with special consideration to:

i. Ensuring the counsellor does not practice while intoxicated or otherwise impaired

ii. Ensuring the counsellor seeks the advice of a supervisor or manager if otherwise concerned about their ability to safely and effectively practice

vi. Counsellors should monitor and maintain their competence by:

i. Regularly seeking formal supervision

ii. Ensuring the counsellor is up to date with the latest knowledge and information on the counselling profession

vii. Counsellors should keep well-maintained records of their work with clients for accountability and future case planning purposes

i. Records should include session summaries as well as any contact with clients, such as via email, phone, or SMS

ii. All records should be kept with accuracy and respect of clients and colleagues in mind, including ensuring they are not easily accessed by anyone other than the counsellor for confidentiality and privacy purposes

viii. Counsellors should be and stay aware of legal requirements pertaining to their work, including mandatory reporting requirements

i. Counsellors should be aware that they are legally accountable for their practice

ix. Counsellors should comply with any Code of Conduct required by law in their practising state or territory

x. Counsellors have a responsibility and duty to disclose to CPCA information pertaining to any criminal investigations or convictions related to their ethical conduct as a counsellor, or complaints of professional misconduct

i. These disclosures are required as part of the application for and reactivation

of membership with CPCA

c. Building trust

i. Counsellors should inform clients about the nature of the counselling services being offered and refrain from making inaccurate or misleading claims about the extent of their services

ii. Counsellors should clarify with clients the terms of the service being offered, including fees and any other reasonably foreseeable costs or liabilities

iii. Counsellors should make clients aware of the process for cancelling sessions or seeking support outside of sessions

iv. Counsellors should accurately represent their own qualifications, accreditations, and professional standing to clients

v. Counsellors should work within a clearly defined and principled relationship with clients, with a contract or contracts clearly set out to define the relationship and services offered

vi. Counsellors should obtain informed consent from their clients prior to providing counselling services

vii. Counsellors should respect a client's right to choose whether to continue or withdraw from counselling services

viii. Counsellors acknowledge that implicit consent is not sufficient in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of clients throughout the provision of counselling services

ix. Counsellors should not abuse or exploit the trust of current or former clients for personal gain of any kind

x. Counsellors should confer with their supervisor or manager if a situation arises wherein a client may have been harmed in order to ensure the appropriate professional steps are taken to mitigate future harm

d. Breaks and endings to counselling services

i. Counsellors work with clients with the aim to reach a clear and recognized ending once clients have received the help they sought or when it is established by the client that counselling services are no longer needed or desired

ii. It is the responsibility of the counsellor to prepare clients appropriately for any planned or intended breaks from the counselling relationship or sessions

e. Responsibility to other counsellors

i. Counsellors have a responsibility to not conduct themselves in any way that may undermine confidence either in the role of counsellor or the broader profession of counselling

ii. Counsellors must take care not to violate or breach confidentiality to any extent aside from what is necessary for investigating the complaint

Section: Committees

a. All members of all committees established by CPCA to carry out CPCA's aims and objectives must observe and abide by the Code of Ethics and Practice.

b. CPCA shall, while acting in accordance with this Code, have discretionary power sufficient to appoint fit persons to serve on any such committees. Under circumstances wherein a committee member is not a member of CPCA, they must agree (in written form) to abide by the Code throughout the duration of their role.

c. Committees may be established for purposes including, but not limited to:

i. Education of CPCA members

ii. Education of the public regarding the wider counselling profession

iii. Review of the Codes, practices and procedures of CPCA

iv. Lobbying for the furtherment of CPCA goals

v. Resolving disputes between counsellors

vi. Assessment, review, and coordination of course and/or program development and delivery

Section: Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

CPCA is committed to promoting equal access and opportunity for all members in every capacity. CPCA is aware of and has due regard for groups with identifiable characteristics which may lead to barriers, such as age, sex, gender, nationality, race, creed, culture, ethnicity, education, disability, mobility, financial status, religion, sexual orientation, or social class and/or status.