

# **IAAAC Code of Practice and Ethics**

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The purpose of this code is to establish and maintain standards for addiction counsellors who are members of the IAAAC, and to inform and protect members of the public seeking and using their services.

1.2 All members of this Association must abide by existing codes appropriate to their membership grade. Whilst this code cannot resolve all ethical and practice related issues, it aims to provide a framework for addressing ethical issues.

1.3 This Association has a Complaints Procedure.

## **2. Definition of Counselling**

2.1 Addiction Counselling seeks to provide the client with opportunities to explore, discover and clarify ways of recovery from addictive behaviours/substance abuse.

2.2 Addiction Counselling includes the giving of time, attention and respect in a confidential, therapeutic relationship. This includes work with individuals, couples or groups of people referred to as "clients."

2.3 The counsellor role is to facilitate the client's growth in ways which respect the person's values, personal resources and capacity for self determination, leading to lifelong recovery.

2.4 Only when both parties explicitly agree to enter into a counselling relationship and a contract is agreed between the counsellor and client does it become counselling.

2.5 Regardless of the theoretical approaches used by individual counsellors, there are ethical issues which are common to all counselling situations.

### **A. Code of Ethics**

A.1 The basic values of counselling are integrity, impartiality and respect. Counsellors should work ethically whether the counselling is paid for or received on a voluntary basis.

A.2 The Counsellor shall take all reasonable steps to ensure the client's safety during counselling.

A.3 The terms on which counselling is being offered must be made clear to clients before counselling commences. Regular reviews must be agreed at this stage. The contract forms the basis for the ensuing working relationship.

A.4 Counsellors shall take all reasonable steps to monitor and develop their own competence and to work within the limits of that competency. This includes having appropriate and ongoing counselling supervision from a Supervisor who is experienced and trained appropriately.

## **B. Code of Practice**

### **B.1 Issues of Responsibility:**

B.1.1 The counsellor-client relationship is the foremost ethical concern. This relationship also reflects upon colleagues, other associations and members of the wider community. These are addressed under separate headings.

### **B.2 To the Client:**

1.2.1. Client Safety: Counsellors should take all reasonable steps to ensure that the client suffers neither physical nor psychological harm during counselling.

#### **1.2.2 Client Autonomy:**

Counsellors are responsible for working in ways which promote the client's control over his/her own life; respects the client's ability to make decisions and change in the light of his/her own beliefs and values to make decisions and or changes which promote the clients desire to enter/maintain recovery.

1.2.3 Counsellors do not normally act on behalf of their clients. If they do, it will be only at the express agreement of both. This needs clarification at the time of contracting.

1.2.4 Counsellors are responsible for setting and monitoring boundaries in the counselling relationship, and making these explicit to the client.

1.2.5 Counsellors must not exploit clients financially, sexually, emotionally or in any other way.

1.2.6 Clients should be offered privacy for counselling sessions. The client should not be observed by anyone other than their counsellors without having given his/her informed consent. This also applies to audio/video taping of counselling sessions.

1.2.7 Counselling occurs in an environment that is safe and supportive, so attention must be paid to physical space.

#### *Pre-Counselling Information:*

1.2.8 Any publicity material and all written and oral information must accurately reflect the nature of the service on offer, and the training, qualifications and relevant experience of the counsellor. Only IAAAC accredited counsellors may claim membership of this Association.

1.2.9 Counsellors are responsible for communicating the terms on which counselling is being offered, including availability, the degree of confidentiality offered, and their expectations of clients regarding fees, cancelled appointments.

The communication of terms and any negotiations over these should be agreed upon by client and counsellor before the client incurs any financial liability. An assessment fee may be charged on initial consultation.

1.2.9 It is the client's choice whether or not to participate in counselling. Reasonable steps should be taken in the course of the counselling relationship to ensure that the counsellor and client are given an opportunity to mutually review the terms on which counselling is being offered.

1.2.10 Counsellor will not be involved with the client in friendship, formal business relationship, sexual relationship or training relationship while the counselling is current.

1.2.11 Counsellors must avoid unnecessary conflicts of interest and are expected to make explicit to the client any relevant conflicts of interest.

1.2.12 If records of counselling sessions are kept, clients should be made aware of this. At the client's request, information should be given about access to these records, their availability to other people, and the degree of security with which they are kept.

1.2.13 If the client is currently engaged in any other therapeutic or similar relationship, the counsellor must gain the client's permission before conferring with any such professional work

1.2.14 Counsellors should be aware that computer-based records are subject to statutory regulations under the Data Protection Act of Ireland and Freedom of Information Act.

### **Counsellor Competence**

1.2.15 Counsellors must review their own competence through counselling supervision. They should work within their own known limits.

1.2.16 Counsellors must cease work when their functioning is impaired due to personal or emotional difficulties, illness, disability, alcohol, drugs or for any other reason.

### **B.1.3 To Former Clients**

1.3.1 Counsellors remain accountable for relationships with former clients and must exercise caution over entering into friendships, formal business relationships or sexual relationships, with former clients. Any changes in relationships must be discussed in counselling supervision. The counsellor is

expected to wait two years before entering into a friendship, formal business relationship or sexual relationship.

#### **B.1.4 To Self as Counsellor**

1.4.1 Counsellors are accountable; to themselves their clients and the Association, to maintain their own effectiveness, resilience and ability to help clients. They are expected to monitor their own personal work and to seek help and/or withdraw from counselling, whether temporary or permanently, when their personal resources are so depleted as to warrant this.

1.4.2 Counsellors should have received adequate basic training before commencing counselling, and must maintain ongoing professional development. (20 hours minimum per annum)

1.4.3 Counsellors are strongly recommended to carry professional indemnity insurance and public liability insurance.

1.4.4 Counsellors submit to annual renewal criteria and apply for re-accreditation every five years.

1.4.5 Counsellors who develop an addiction ie. alcohol, gambling etc. must take concrete steps to enter recovery. While in recovery, they must limit contact with clients. They must ensure they promote best practice, even if this means they cease client work until recovery is complete.

#### **B.1.5 To Other Counsellors**

1.5.1 Counsellors should not conduct themselves in their counselling-related activities in ways which undermine public confidence in either their role as a counsellor or in the work of other counsellors.

1.5.1 If a counsellor suspects misconduct by another counsellor which cannot be resolved or remedied after discussion with the counsellor concerned, that person must go to P.C.C. doing so without breaches of confidentiality other than those necessary for investigating the complaint.

#### **B.1.6 To Colleagues and Members of the Caring Professions**

1.6.1 Counsellors should accept their part in exploring and resolving specific conflicts of interest between themselves and their agencies, especially where this has implications for the client.

#### **B.1.7 To the Wider Community**

1.7.1 Counsellors must work within the law.

1.7.2 Counsellors should take all reasonable steps to be aware of current law affecting their work as a counsellor. A counsellor's ignorance of the law is no

defence against legal liability or penalty, including inciting or encouraging the commission of offenses by clients.

## **B.2 Counselling Supervision/Consultative Support**

2.1 It is a breach of IAAAC requirement for counsellors to practice without regular counselling supervision.

2.2 Counselling supervision refers to a formal arrangement which enables counsellors/therapists to discuss their counselling regularly with one or more people who have an understanding of counselling supervision. Its purpose is to ensure the efficacy of the counsellor-client relationship. This relationship carries an appropriate confidentiality.

2.3 Counsellors who have line managers owe them appropriate managerial accountability for their work. The counselling supervisor role should be independent of the line manager role. However, where the counselling supervisor is also the line manager, the counsellor should also have access to independent consultative support.

2.4 The discussion of cases within supervision/consultative support should take place without revealing the personal identity of the client, unless it is deemed otherwise.

## **B.3 Confidentiality**

3.1 Confidentiality is a means of providing the client with safety and privacy.

3.2 Counsellors should take all reasonable steps to communicate clearly the extent of the confidentiality they are offering to clients. It should be made clear to the client that the counsellor is supervised. This information must be conveyed at initial contracting.

3.3 Counsellors must treat in confidence personal information about clients, whether obtained directly or indirectly or by inference. Such information includes name, address, biographical details, and other descriptions of the client's life and circumstances which might result in identification of the client.

3.4 Exceptional circumstances may arise which give the counsellor good grounds for believing that the client will cause serious physical harm to others or themselves, or have harm caused to him or her. In such circumstances, the client's consent to a change in the agreement about confidentiality must be sought and only after consultation with a counselling supervisor or an experienced counsellor.

3.5 Care must be taken to ensure that personally identifiable information is not transmitted through overlapping networks of confidential relationships.

3.6 Any agreement between the counsellor and client about confidentiality may be reviewed and changed by joint negotiations.

3.7 Agreements between counsellor and client about confidentiality continue after the client's death unless there are overriding legal or ethical considerations.

3.8 Special care is required when writing about specific counselling situations for case studies, reports or publication.

#### **B.4 Confidentiality in the Legal Process**

4.1 In a situation where a counsellor is in any doubt about their legal rights and obligations, or where a current crime is being disclosed, the counsellor should seek legal advice and/or contact their supervisor and the Association. Confidentiality in this case is limited.

#### **B.5 Advertising/Public Statements**

5.1 When announcing counselling services, counsellors should limit the information to name, relevant qualifications, address, telephone number, hours available, and a brief listing of the services offered and theoretical orientation. All such information must be accurate in every particular.

5.2 Counsellors should not display an affiliation with this Association in a manner which falsely implies the endorsement or verification of this Association.