

Alaska Commission for Behavioral Health Certification

ACBHC ETHICAL STANDARDS **Adopted by ACBHC from the NAADAC Code of Ethics**

Principle 1: Non-Discrimination

I shall affirm diversity among colleagues or clients regardless of age gender, sexual orientation, ethnic/racial background, religious/spiritual beliefs, marital status, political beliefs, or mental/physical disability.

- I shall strive to treat all individuals with impartiality and objectivity relating to all based solely on their personal merits and mindful of the dignity of all human persons. As such, I shall not impose my personal values on my clients.
- I shall avoid bringing personal or professional issues into the counseling relationship. Through an awareness of the impact of stereotyping and discrimination, I shall guard the individual rights and personal dignity of my clients.
- I shall relate to all clients with empathy and understanding no matter what their diagnosis or personal history.

Principle 2: Client Welfare

I understand that the ability to do good is based on an underlying concern for the well-being of others. I shall act for the good of others and exercise respect, sensitivity, and insight. I understand that my primary professional responsibility and loyalty is to the welfare of my clients, and I shall work for the client irrespective of who actually pays his/her fees.

- I shall do everything possible to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of client information except where the client has given specific, written, informed, and limited consent or when the client poses a risk to himself or others.
- I shall provide the client his/her rights regarding confidentiality, in writing, as part of informing the client of any areas likely to affect the client's confidentiality.
- I understand and support all that will assist clients to a better quality of life, greater freedom, and true independence.
- I shall not do for others what they can readily do for themselves but rather, facilitate and support the doing. Likewise, I shall not insist on doing what I perceive as good without reference to what the client perceives as good and necessary.
- I understand that suffering is unique to a specific individual and not of some generalized or abstract suffering, such as might be found in the understanding of the disorder. I also understand that the action taken to relieve suffering must be uniquely suited to the suffering individual and not simply some universal prescription.
- I shall provide services without regard to the compensation provided by the client or by a third party and shall render equally appropriate services to individuals whether they are paying a reduced fee or a full fee.

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Principle 3: Client Relationship

I understand and respect the fundamental human right of all individuals to self-determination and to make decisions that they consider in their own best interest. I shall be open and clear about the nature, extent, probable effectiveness, and cost of those services to allow each individual to make an informed decision of their care.

- I shall provide the client and/or guardian with accurate and complete information regarding the extent of the potential professional relationship, such as the Code of Ethics and professional loyalties and responsibilities.
- I shall inform the client and obtain the client's participation including the recording of the interview, the use of interview material for training purposes, and/or observation of an interview by another person.

Principle 4: Trustworthiness

I understand that effectiveness in my profession is largely based on the ability to be worthy of trust, and I shall work to the best of my ability to act consistently within the bounds of a known moral universe, to faithfully fulfill the terms of both personal and professional commitments, to safeguard fiduciary relationships consistently, and to speak the truth as it is known to me.

- I shall never misrepresent my credentials or experience.
- I shall make no unsubstantiated claims for the efficacy of the services I provide and make no statements about the nature and course of addictive disorders that have not been verified by scientific inquiry.
- I shall constantly strive for a better understanding of addictive disorders and refuse to accept supposition and prejudice as if it were the truth.
- I understand that ignorance in those matters that should be known does not excuse me from the ethical fault of misinforming others.
- I understand the effect of impairment on professional performance and shall be willing to seek appropriate treatment for myself or for a colleague. I shall support peer assistance programs in this respect.
- I understand that most property in the healing professions is intellectual property and shall not present the ideas or formulations of others as if they were my own. Rather, I shall give appropriate credit to their originators both in written and spoken communication.
- I regard the use of any copyrighted material without permission or the payment of royalty to be theft.

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Principle 5: Compliance with Law

I understand that laws and regulations exist for the good ordering of society and for the restraint of harm and evil, and I am aware of those laws and regulations that are relevant both personally and professionally and follow them, while reserving the right to commit civil disobedience.

- I understand that the determination that a law or regulation is unjust is not a matter of preference or opinion but a matter of rational investigation, deliberation, and dispute.
- I willingly accept that there may be a penalty for justified civil disobedience, and I must weigh the personal harm of that penalty against the good done by civil protest.

Principle 6: Rights and Duties

I understand that personal and professional commitments and relationships create a network of rights and corresponding duties. I shall work to the best of my ability to safeguard the natural and consensual rights of each individual and fulfill those duties required of me.

- I understand that justice extends beyond individual relationships to the community and society; therefore, I shall participate in activities that promote the health of my community and profession.
- I shall, to the best of my ability, actively engage in the legislative processes, educational institutions, and the general public to change public policy and legislation to make possible opportunities and choice of service for all human beings of any ethnic or social background whose lives are impaired by alcoholism and drug abuse.
- I understand that the right of confidentiality cannot always be maintained if it serves to protect abuse, neglect, or exploitation of any person or leaves another at risk of bodily harm.

Principle 7: Dual Relationships

I understand that I must seek to nurture and support the development of a relationship of equals rather than to take unfair advantage of individuals who are vulnerable and exploitable.

- I shall not engage in professional relationships or commitments that conflict with family members, friends, close associates, or others whose welfare might be jeopardized by such a dual relationship.
- Because a relationship begins with a power differential, I shall not exploit relationships with current or former clients for personal gain, including social or business relationships.
- I shall not under any circumstances engage in sexual behavior with current or former clients.
- I shall not accept substantial gifts from clients, other treatment organizations, or the providers of materials or services used in my practice.

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Principle 8: Preventing Harm

I understand that every decision and action has an ethical implication leading either to benefit or harm, and I shall carefully consider whether any of my decisions or actions has the potential to produce harm of a physical, psychological, financial, legal, or spiritual nature before implementing them.

- I shall refrain from using any methods that could be considered coercive such as threats, negative labeling, and attempts to provoke shame or humiliation.
- I shall make no requests of clients that are not necessary as part of the agreed treatment plan.
- I shall terminate a counseling or consulting relationship when it is reasonably clear that the client is not benefiting from the relationship.
- I understand an obligation to protect individuals, institutions, and the profession from harm that might be done by others. Consequently, I am aware that the conduct of another individual is an actual or likely source of harm to clients, colleagues, institutions, or the profession, and that I have an ethical obligation to report such conduct to competent authorities.

Principle 9: Duty of Care

I shall operate under the principle of Duty of Care and shall maintain a working/therapeutic environment in which clients, colleagues, and employees can be safe from the threat of physical, emotional or intellectual harm.

- I respect the right of others to hold opinions, beliefs, and values different from my own.
- I shall strive for understanding and the establishment of common ground rather than for the ascendancy of one opinion over another.
- I shall maintain competence in the area of my practice through continuing education, constantly improving my knowledge and skills in those approaches most effective with my specific clients.
- I shall scrupulously avoid practicing in any area outside of my competence.