

ACCT CODE OF ETHICS



BY RACHEL NEWTON

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The Association of Cooperative Counselling Therapists of Canada (ACCT) is dedicated to providing the highest standards of professional counselling and consulting services. The ACCT Code of Ethics and Practice Standards for ACCT provides guidelines and standards for Registered Therapeutic Counsellors, RTC (hereafter considered to include AC, MTC and RCS) to pursue excellence in providing their professional services.

The ACCT Code of Ethics provides a moral framework for making decisions when ethical dilemmas arise. It is not possible to anticipate or regulate every ethical dilemma and reasonable differences of opinion can and do exist in regard to ethical decisions. Therefore, these guidelines are intended to be used as part of an ethical Decision-making process, including consulting with knowledgeable resources, such as ACCT Ethics committee, trusted colleagues, research, or other reliable sources. These guidelines and standards do not take the place of legal advice, which must be obtained from a lawyer. It is also important to consider personal values and whether they may in any way unfairly bias one's perceptions and decision-making.

Members of ACCT have a responsibility to ensure that they are familiar with the ACCT Code of Ethics and strive to adhere to its principles and values. In addition, the ACCT Code of Ethics and Practice Standards for ACCT provides enforceable rules and behavioural expectations with which RTCs must comply, and for which sanctions may be applied for non-compliance. These standards address the application of ethical principles to specific areas of practice.

Reference:

- [Association of Cooperative Counselling Therapists of Canada - ACCT Code of Ethics](#)

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Members are accountable to the public as well as their peers and may, therefore, be subject to the complaints and disciplinary procedures of the ACCT. Violations of the ACCT Code of Ethics or Practice Standards for ACCT, however, do not automatically imply legal liability. Such a determination can only be made by legal and judicial proceedings. This peer review process is intended to enable ACCT to advise and to discipline its members in response to substantiated complaints originating either with peers or the public.

The law and professional standards usually complement each other. However, the law generally is considered to take precedence over professionally defined standards should they conflict, and should one choose to disobey the law on grounds of conscience, personal choice and risk are involved. ACCT encourages its members to carefully consider the implications of any such decisions and consult as widely as the situation demands.

The ACCT Code of Ethics may require a higher standard of behaviour than required by the law. Practice guidelines, position statements, special guidelines, etc, support counsellors in providing competent and ethical practice in specific areas of practice, and while they may help to define competency they are not binding or enforceable by themselves.

Reference:

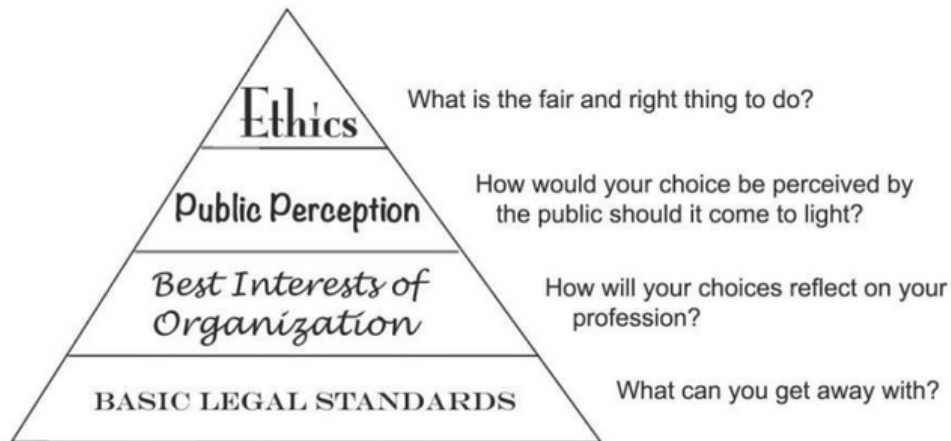
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Ethical Principles

The ACCT Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for ACCT are based on the following fundamental principles. These principles are of equal importance.

- A. Responsible Caring - Being proactive in promoting the client's best interests
- B. Integrity - Honouring commitments to clients and maintaining integrity in the counselling relationship
- C. Do No Harm - Refraining from actions that risk harm
- D. Independence - Respecting the rights of clients to self-determination
- E. Fairness - Respecting the dignity and just treatment of all persons
- F. Social Responsibility - Respecting the need to be responsible to society

Reference:

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Ethical Decision-Making

This summary of ethical decision-making is intended to offer counsellors some direction when making ethical decisions and resolving ethical dilemmas.

1. Quick Decision-Making

A. Public Knowledge - Would I feel comfortable with this decision if it were to become public knowledge?

B. Justice - Is this decision fair and reasonable for all who are involved?

C. Universality - Would other counsellors make this same decision? If they did, would that be a good thing? Would I make this same decision for any of my clients?

2. Principle-Based Ethical Decision-Making

A. Consider who is involved: the individuals and groups affected by the decision; the rights and interests of these individuals and groups and any relevant characteristics of these individuals and groups.

B. Consider the key ethical issues in the situation.

C. Consider the ACCT Code of Ethics and Practice Standards for ACCT and how those standards are relevant to this situation.

D. Consider which of the six ethical principles are of major importance in this situation. Also, secure additional information, consult with knowledgeable colleagues or the ACCT Ethics committee and consider the probable outcomes of various courses of action.

E. Consider how the relevant ethical principles can be applied in this circumstance and how any conflict between principles could be resolved and what might be the potential risks and benefits of this application and resolution.

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- F. Identify your own personal biases; life stressors and personal interests that could affect the decision-making process.
- G. Consider what your feelings and intuitions are telling you to do in this situation.
- H. Develop alternative courses of action. Consult with others as appropriate, remembering that sometimes this may include the parties directly involved. It may also include interdisciplinary team members.
- I. Consider the risks and benefits of each alternative on the individuals and groups involved, in the short and long terms, and on an ongoing basis and the values underlying each alternative.
- J. Choose the plan of action that would be most helpful in this situation.
- K. Commit and take action. Individually: Take all appropriate and necessary steps to ensure that the ethical issue is dealt with to the best of your ability. As a group or organization: Where the issue is a collective one the course of action chosen will often also require collective action. In this case, one person should be given the overall responsibility for implementation.
- L. Evaluate the results.
- M. Take responsibility for the consequences of the action; to correct so far as possible any negative consequences of the action and to re-engage in the decision-making process if the issue remains unresolved.
- N. Work to prevent future occurrences: Evaluate the organizational systems in which the issue arose to identify and remedy, if possible, the circumstances that may facilitate and reward unethical practices, e.g., poor communications, inadequate resources, restrictive policies, and arbitrary procedures. Evaluate which, if any, of your own behaviours or circumstances, may have contributed to the development of the ethical issue and take appropriate steps to address these.

Reference:

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3. Virtue-Based Ethical Decision-Making - Based on the belief that counsellors are motivated to be virtuous and caring. There is no step-by-step methodology for virtue ethics. The following questions may help the counsellor in the process of virtue-based ethical decision-making:

- A. As I consider this ethical dilemma, what are my emotions and intuitions telling me to do?
- B. How can I use my values to best show caring for the client in this situation?
- C. How will my choice and decision affect other individuals involved in this ethical dilemma?
- D. If I had to publicize my decision, what decision would I make?
- E. What decision would my best self-make?

Code of Ethics

As a Registered Therapeutic Counsellor (also includes Master Therapeutic Counsellor and Registered Counselling Supervisor) and member of ACCT I commit:

1. To protect the welfare of my clients and make reasonable efforts to ensure my services are used appropriately.
2. To treat all clients with respect and unconditional acceptance.
3. To consistently complete a comprehensive assessment at the beginning of the counselling relationship.
4. To never exploit a clients trust and to avoid dual relationships.

Reference:

- [Association of Cooperative Counselling Therapists of Canada - ACCT Code of Ethics](#)

Code of Ethics (cont.)

5. To report the sexual or physical abuse of a child to the authorities.
6. To avoid overtly or suggested sexual contact with clients and former clients.
7. To terminate counselling services when appropriate or requested by the client(s).
8. To respect the right of clients to autonomy.
9. To provide a private and safe setting for counselling.
10. To request payment for service, only after consent for service has been given.
11. To ensure proper self-care.
12. To maintain healthy boundaries with clients.
13. To obtain assistance and refer clients when appropriate.
14. To clearly disclose confidentiality limitations, facts about services offered and financial policies.
15. To be aware of and comply with all laws and legislation within the counsellor's relevant jurisdiction for the delivery of counselling services, including but not limited to Provincial Health Act, Privacy Information Protection Act and laws applicable to providing electronic services.
16. To maintain client confidentiality, except where there is written consent, danger to self or others or as required by law.

Reference:

- [Association of Cooperative Counselling Therapists of Canada - ACCT Code of Ethics](#)

Code of Ethics (cont.)

17. To carefully assess, develop a safety plan, and document the potential suicidal or homicidal behaviour by a client.
18. To maintain accurate and adequate session and financial records.
19. To continue to grow and develop as a professional counsellor.
20. To avoid conflicts of interest.
21. To avoid giving or receiving gifts of substantial value.
22. To be aware of the influence my public statements may have.
23. To deal appropriately with the unethical behaviour of another counsellor.
24. To accept that I cannot realistically expect to succeed with every client.
25. To promote my services professionally and accurately.

Reference:

- *Association of Cooperative Counselling Therapists of Canada - ACCT Code of Ethics*