

*Sul Ross State University*

**RIO GRANDE COLLEGE**

# **Practicum in Counseling**

## *Handbook and Syllabus*



**Dr. Todd T. Russell**

*Professor and Coordinator*  
**COUNSELING PROGRAM**

**Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College**  
2623 Garner Field Road, Office #A126  
Uvalde, Texas 78801

**Email:** [trussell@sulross.edu](mailto:trussell@sulross.edu) & **Email:** [RGCCounselors@sulross.edu](mailto:RGCCounselors@sulross.edu)

**Business Cell:** (210) 253-0884

**Home Office:** (210) 233-1953

**University Office:** (830) 279-3025



# Practicum in Counseling

## *Handbook and Syllabus*

### Table of Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page Number</b>
Instructor Contact Information . . . . .	4
Syllabus for <b><i>Practicum in Counseling</i></b> . . . . .	4
Practicum Overview . . . . .	4
Practicum Purpose . . . . .	5
Practicum Prerequisites . . . . .	5
Practicum Grade Differentiation . . . . .	5
Practicum Structure . . . . .	6
Student Learning Outcomes . . . . .	6
Practicum Requirements . . . . .	7
Important Dates for Summer 2017 . . . . .	9
Practicum Counselor Blog . . . . .	10
Professional Counseling Identity and Behavior . . . . .	11
Accessibility and Safe Learning Environment . . . . .	12
College and Community Counseling Services . . . . .	15
Project Mission Statement . . . . .	16
Accessing Counseling Services . . . . .	16
Project Structure and Organization . . . . .	17
Project Procedures and Precautions . . . . .	17
Project Confidentiality and Record Keeping . . . . .	18
Video Audio Learning Tool (VALT) . . . . .	19
Project Crisis Response . . . . .	20
Project Integration in Counselor Training Program . . . . .	20
Ethical Practice Statement . . . . .	21
Professional Liability Verification Form . . . . .	22
Practicum Site, Site Supervision and Professional Behavior . . . . .	23
Counseling Practicum Site Supervisor Role Statement . . . . .	24
Practicum Placement Form . . . . .	25

# Table of Contents

(continued)

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page Number</b>
Practicum Counselor Evaluation .....	26
Professional Disclosure Statement and Informed Consent .....	29
Professional Disclosure Model .....	30
Professional Disclosure Statement Example .....	31
Information for Parents Model .....	32
Information for Parents Example .....	33
Practicum Experience Record .....	34
Weekly Practicum Log .....	35
Summary of Practicum Hours .....	36
Comprehensive Counseling Experiences .....	37
Counseling Contact Sheet: S.O.A.P. Template .....	38
Counseling Contact Sheet: S.O.A.P. Example .....	39
Counseling Contact Sheet: D.I.P. Template .....	40
Counseling Contact Sheet: D.I.P. Example .....	41
Comprehensive Case Summary Template .....	42
Personal Review and Self-Evaluation .....	43
Practicum Site Evaluation and Letter of Appreciation .....	43
Practicum Site Evaluation Form .....	44
<i>Appendix A</i> .....	45
Code of Ethics .....	46
Glossary of Terms .....	62

*Sul Ross State University*  
**Rio Grande College**  
**Counseling Program**

*Department of Education*

# **Practicum in Counseling**

## ***Handbook and Syllabus***

EDUC 7316

3 semester credit hours

Summer Sessions I & II 2017

**Instructor:** Todd T. Russell, Ph.D.

**Office:** RGC Uvalde Campus A126

**Office Phone:** (830) 279-3025

**Home Phone:** (210) 233-1953

**Cell Phone:** (210) 253-0884

**Fax:** (210) 340-2359

**Email:** [trussell@sulross.edu](mailto:trussell@sulross.edu)

**Office Hours and Student Availability**

Available for virtual assistance via online chat, email and cell phone 9:00 am – 12:00 pm Mondays, Tuesdays & Wednesdays.

Available at other times and locations by appointment.

**Faculty Emergency Contact:** Dr. Samuel Garcia

**Cell:** (830) 734-7732

**RGC Email:** [samuel.garcia@sulross.edu](mailto:samuel.garcia@sulross.edu)

## **Practicum Overview**

The ***Practicum in Counseling*** (EDUC 7316) is designed to provide the advanced graduate student in the Counseling Program with a closely supervised experience to facilitate further development as a professional counselor in a variety of work settings. The practicum experience requires dedication, a willingness to risk new behaviors and experiment with new methods, assumption of personal responsibility, and a major commitment of emotional and physical energy.

## Practicum Purpose

The purpose of this practicum course is to provide students with supervised practice in guidance, counseling, and psychotherapy to enhance their skills and development as professional counselors. This field experience will provide the practicum counselor with opportunities to work directly under the supervision of a qualified professional who will provide feedback and assistance.

**Note:** The practicum counselor must provide the instructor with proof of liability insurance before beginning the direct-contact experiences of practicum by completing and returning the Insurance Verification Form. (*Students continuing the practicum experience from a previous semester are not required to resubmit the practicum documentation.*)

## Practicum Prerequisites

This practicum course can only be taken after successful completion (i.e., a grade of B or better) of *Techniques of Counseling II* (EDUC 6322) and *Group Counseling* (EDUC 7315), the completion of a minimum of 30 semester credit hours of required counseling courses, and the approval of the University Professor (instructor). Before engaging in direct counseling contact, the practicum counselor must show proof of professional liability insurance.

## Practicum Grade Differentiation

Exemplary completion of all requirements of the practicum will earn the student a final grade of A for that semester in which all practicum requirements are satisfied. Nearly all students take two or more semesters to complete the practicum requirements for one (three semester credit hour) *Practicum in Counseling*. Therefore, those practicum counselors who do not complete the required number of clock hours of counseling experience within the semester time frame will be granted a grade of PR (in progress) and will be required to enroll in the practicum each subsequent semester until all practicum requirements are completed. The practicum experience should not be rushed. Students are encouraged to pace the practicum work in appropriate balance with other career and life demands.

# Practicum Structure

Practicum is not structured like a traditional course. The student-counselor's primary responsibility is to practice counseling in a school, agency, or institutional setting. To successfully complete one three-semester credit hour practicum, each student must complete a minimum total of 160 clock hours of practicum experience, with a minimum of 100 direct-contact clock hours (face-to-face counseling). When all requirements have been met, the student-counselor will be granted a final letter grade which signifies completion of the required experience. All students must continue to enroll in the *Practicum in Counseling* until all requirements have been successfully fulfilled. The practicum counselor is responsible for maintaining regular weekly contact with the University Instructor via an online blog, telephone, email, or in-person meetings. The practicum counselor is required to maintain a weekly blog (an informal and personal journal of the practicum experiences) on the Blackboard site for the *Practicum in Counseling* (EDUC 7316). Counseling graduate students rarely, if ever, complete the required 160 clock hours in one regular semester. All practicum counselors are expected to maintain continuous enrollment in the *Practicum in Counseling* (EDUC 7316) each semester until the required 160 clock hours have been satisfied. Practicum counselors who are not able to accumulate the required number of clock hours in a given semester will be awarded a final grade of PR (in progress) for that semester of practicum work. At the end of the semester in which all requirements are satisfied, the practicum counselor will be awarded a final letter grade.

## Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successfully completing the requirements of the *Practicum in Counseling* (EDUC 7316) the student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate professional counseling skills, at the entry level of competence, under the supervision of experienced professionals.
2. Identify and describe the basic principles of human growth and development, and how these principles impact the counseling process.
3. Formulate and implement counseling hypotheses and treatment plans that reflect a keen awareness of the theories, techniques, and procedures relevant to the counselor's emerging integrated personal approach to counseling.
4. Initiate, maintain, and successfully terminate professional counseling relationships in both small groups and individual settings in a professional and ethical manner.
5. Utilize and appropriately interpret a variety of assessment devices for personal, education, and career counseling purposes.
6. Work with other professional personnel in a comprehensive counseling approach to meet the individual needs of clients.
7. Utilize published resources and community agencies in assisting persons with personal, educational, or career needs.
8. Demonstrate a commitment and loyalty to professional counseling ethics, statutory standards of professional practice, and client confidentiality.
9. Organize, integrate and present case study information, maintain appropriate counseling records, and make appropriate reports to teachers, principals, parents, psychologists, social workers, and other professionals as requested.
10. Recognize personal and professional limitations and the ability to make appropriate referrals that enhance the achievement of a client's unique counseling goals.
11. Collaborate and work effectively under the direction of supervisory personnel.

12. Initiate and maintain a positive and professional working relationship with the University Instructor of the *Practicum in Counseling*.
13. Cultivate a personal life style that is genuine, authentic, and experimental, yet at the same time communicates a commitment to personal values.
14. Model professional identity and development by participating in learning experiences beyond the minimum requirements of the degree plan, and by maintaining involvement in the Graduate Counseling Club, as well as professional counseling organizations such as the Texas Counseling Association and/or the American Counseling Association.

## Practicum Requirements

A student's final grade in the *Practicum in Counseling* (EDUC 7316) will be based on the successful completion of the following:

1. Carefully review the ***Ethical Standards of the American Counseling Association*** and sign and submit the Ethical Practice Statement prior to logging contact hours
2. Select a practicum site and site supervisor, and complete the Practicum Placement Form, and return to the instructor prior to logging contact hours. Student counselors may choose to work at more than one practicum site. Complete the Practicum Placement Form for each site and supervisor and email to the instructor prior to logging contact hours toward the *Practicum* requirements.
3. Obtain professional liability insurance, complete the Insurance Verification Form, and email to the instructor prior to logging contact hours toward the *Practicum* requirements.
4. Develop and disseminate to all clients a personalized Professional Disclosure Statement (and a Spanish version if necessary), approved by both the site supervisor and the instructor, before engaging in direct contact with clients.
5. Allocate, and be available for, at least five (5) hours per week of counseling contact through the **College and Community Counseling Services**. Clients are assigned to practicum counselors by the Coordinator of the Counseling Program in consideration of geographic convenience.
6. Successfully complete a minimum of 160 clock hours of practicum experience, which includes a minimum of 100 clock hours of direct contact. A minimum of 20 hours of direct contact in a volunteer (unpaid) capacity is required as part of the 160 clock-hour total for those practicum students who are participating in a paid practicum experience.
7. Maintain a regular journal of your practicum experiences online in the form of a Practicum Counselor Blog on the Blackboard system. The blogs should include at least twice-per-week entries (300-500 words in length) based on the events and experiences of that week's practicum encounters. You are required to interact with fellow practicum counselors by commenting on their blog content through posting replies. Your initial blog entry must be posted by the end of the first full week of the semester or summer session.
8. Maintain the Weekly Practicum Log of counseling-related experiences and complete an end-of-the-experience Summary of Practicum Hours (when you have completed all requirements); weekly logs and summary are due, as part of your final portfolio, to the

University Instructor, when you have completed the required clock hours. If you do not complete the practicum requirements at the end of a given semester, you are not required to submit anything to the University Instructor. *(Note: All practicum counselors will receive grades of PR – indicating “in progress” – until they have completed all required fieldwork hours and documentation. Students who receive a PR will be required to enroll in the practicum each semester until they complete the fieldwork requirements. Students who are continuing the same practicum experience from a previous semester are not required to resubmit documentation.)*

9. Establish and maintain three (3) continuous-contact counseling relationships (at least eight sessions per each of the three cases), and complete weekly case notes (SOAP, DIP, or agency specific) and a Comprehensive Case Summary; comprehensive case study files should be included in the final portfolio. Site supervisors should approve case notes. Practicum counselors are not required to maintain such copious documentation for all clients, but rather only for the three specific cases that will be counseled for at least eight sessions. The particular school or agency in which the practicum is being conducted may require additional documentation and/or record-keeping to be maintained on each client.
10. Maintain contact with the instructor (in person, via online blogs, via telephone or text, or via email) on a regular basis for the review and supervision of counseling skills.
11. Read various texts and articles posted on Blackboard and/or recommended by the instructor. This is an individualized requirement based on the practicum counselor's specific needs.
12. Engage in self-review and self-evaluation for at least one hour per week, and complete a comprehensive written Self-Evaluation which is to be included in the final portfolio. The final Self-Evaluation is a narrative of two to three pages in length that critically examines and discusses the practicum experience, personal strengths and weaknesses, acquired knowledge and skills, and goals for continued professional growth.
13. Include site supervisor's completed Practicum Counselor Evaluation in the *Practicum Portfolio*. Student counselor's final grade is partially based on the feedback from the site supervisor. Any unprofessional or unethical behavior on the part of the practicum student will result in the student's immediate removal from the Practicum; the student will receive a final grade of F; and the student will be denied enrollment in any future Practicum courses at Rio Grande College. *(Note: All practicum counselors will receive grades of PR – indicating “in progress” – until they have completed all required fieldwork hours and documentation. Practicum counselors who receive a PR will be required to enroll in the practicum each semester until they complete the fieldwork requirements. Students who are continuing the same practicum experience from a previous semester are not required to resubmit documentation.)*
14. Include a completed Practicum Site Evaluation in the final portfolio.
15. Finalize and submit to the instructor your complete *Practicum Portfolio*, if you have completed all stated requirements for one practicum course, on or before the first day of the university-specified final examination period. *(If you have not completed all requirements by this date, you do not have to submit any forms or documents. You will receive a final grade of PR on your transcript.)*



# Remember these important dates:

## SUMMER SESSION I

<b>May 31</b>	Summer Session I begins
<b>June 1</b>	First weekly group supervision meeting on Collaborate 7:00 pm
<b>June 2</b>	Last day for late registration and schedule changes
<b>June 20</b>	Mid-Term
<b>June 22</b>	Last day to drop a course or withdraw from University
<b>June 29</b>	Last weekly group supervision meeting on Collaborate 7:00 pm
<b>July 3</b>	Practicum Portfolio is due if requirements are completed

## SUMMER SESSION II

<b>July 6</b>	Summer Session II begins
<b>July 6</b>	First weekly group supervision meeting on Collaborate 7:00 pm
<b>July 10</b>	Last day for late registration and schedule changes
<b>July 20</b>	Mid-Term
<b>July 31</b>	Last day to drop a course or withdraw from University
<b>August 3</b>	Last weekly group supervision meeting on Collaborate 7:00 pm
<b>August 10</b>	Practicum Portfolio is due if requirements are completed

- ☉ **Note:** Only those practicum counselors who successfully complete all of the practicum requirements during this semester or summer session are required to submit completed *Practicum Portfolios* by the specified dates. Practicum counselors who plan to complete the practicum requirements in a future semester are not required to submit any documentation by the specified dates.

## Practicum Counselor Blog

Within Blackboard, under the content area entitled Practicum Counselor Blog, you have the ability to create an individual journal blog. When you open this subheading click on “Create Blog Entry”, this will allow you to create your personal blog for the practicum. It is important that you keep the same blog throughout the semester. After the initial creation of your blog, you should not have to click on “create blog entry” again. You can modify your blog entries by clicking the down arrow that is beside the title of your blog. By selecting the Edit option the blog will allow you to type your weekly responses to classroom experiences and your individual counseling sessions. Remember to add your new entry prior to your previous blog entry; making sure to date and time each entry. The blogs should include at least twice-per-week entries (300-500 words in length) based on the events and experiences of that week’s practicum encounters. When commenting on your fellow student’s blogs simply click on the Comment button at the bottom of their blog. At various points throughout the semester, the instructor will provide feedback to individuals regarding the content and depth of the journal blog entries. You are required to read and comment on other students’ journal blogs by posting appropriate replies. Our discussions, disclosures, and debates across the Practicum Counselor Blogs serve as our weekly group supervision meeting; this is our virtual supervision class. You are encouraged to respond to the questions and comments of others in the body of your blog, as opposed to posting individual replies to replies.

Your practicum blog should include a detailed account of the activities and experiences encountered during your fieldwork experiences. Additionally, you will include your personal reactions, thoughts, and feelings about these experiences and adventures. Blogs should not be used as critiques of colleagues or supervisors, but rather thorough demonstrations of personal awareness and professional understanding. Practicum counselors must protect the confidentiality of clients and fellow staff members by using first names only.

In your initial blog entry, please tell us about your practicum plans for this semester, your personal and professional goals, and your expectations for the practicum. Additionally, in your initial blog entries describe and discuss your practicum site(s) and situation(s). You must protect the confidentiality of clients and fellow staff members by using first names only. In accordance with the *Ethical Standards of the American Counseling Association*, counselor blogs can only be viewed by fellow counselors, clinical supervisors and the university instructors.

# Professional Counseling Identity and Behavior

In registering for classes in the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College, graduate students accept responsibility for attending scheduled class meetings, completing assignments on time, contributing to class discussions, and fully participating in all experiential learning activities. Counseling faculty members maintain specific attendance and participation requirements for each particular class. Faculty members may impose academic penalties upon absences from some classes and/or experiences; however, such penalties for absences will be a part of each course syllabus and will be distributed to each class at the beginning of each class and a copy filed in the departmental office.

The Counseling Program has specific policies and procedures which provide students with a sequential, growth-oriented progression of courses to take; students are fully responsible for knowing and following these policies and procedures. This is not a singular academic program to prepare students for advanced levels of teaching or beginning levels of administration, but rather a distinctly different profession entirely. Counseling is not an appropriate career field for all students. In the process of pursuing professional training in counseling, some students discover (or faculty may advise) that they are not appropriate for the counseling field, nor is the field of counseling appropriate for them. Faculty of the Counseling Program will provide continuous, honest and pragmatic feedback to each student regarding progress and suitability in this program.

Unethical behavior (as defined by the *Code of Ethics* of the American Counseling Association; refer to Appendix C) by a student enrolled in any counseling course will result in the exclusion of that student from the Counseling Program of Rio Grande College, and may subject the student to civil penalties as well. Professional behavior is expected of each and every student at all times across all counseling courses. Failure to maintain professionalism is considered unethical behavior.

The Counseling Program emphasizes professional, personal, and academic development as essential in counselor education and training. Students must not only excel academically, but must adhere to the professional and ethical standards of the profession, demonstrate effective counseling skills and competencies, and attend to their own personal development as it impacts their ability to work effectively and ethically as counseling professionals.

Counseling students are expected to attend to their own social and emotional development through extensive self-reflection and mindfulness. They must be open to new and divergent ideas, willing to examine their own values and assumptions, able to receive critical feedback, and capable of engaging in personal growth and transformation. At times this will involve examining one's own life experiences and facing one's own emotional issues. Willingness to do this important personal work is an integral part of any counselor's training.

Therefore, graduation from the Counseling Program requires that students successfully complete the academic and experiential requirements with mindful regard to both professional and personal development. Students must, in the professional judgment of the faculty, understand and behave in accordance with the professional and ethical standards, meet the requisite counseling competencies and skills to work as an effective professional counselor, and be free from any psychological or emotional impairment that may act as a barrier to effective professional practice. Throughout the counseling course work and the practical experiences, the faculty members regularly review student progress on the following basic qualities:

- Openness to new ideas
- Flexibility
- Cooperativeness with others
- Willingness to accept and use feedback
- Awareness of own impact on others
- Ability to deal with conflict
- Ability to accept personal responsibility
- Ability to express feelings effectively and appropriately
- Attention to ethical and legal considerations
- Initiative and motivation
- Development of professional skills and competencies
- Psychological functioning and mindful self-management

It is the personal and professional responsibility of each and every graduate student in the Counseling Program of Rio Grande College to be familiar with the most current issue of the ***Counseling Program Handbook***. This document details and describes all aspects of the Counseling Program, from taking the first courses to passing the Comprehensive Oral Examination and graduating with the Master's in Counseling.

Unethical behavior (as defined by the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* of the American Counseling Association) by a student enrolled in any counseling course will result in the exclusion of that student from the Counseling Program of Rio Grande College, and may subject the student to civil penalties as well. Professional behavior is expected of each and every student at all times across all counseling courses. Failure to maintain professionalism is considered unethical behavior.

## **Accessibility and Safe Learning Environment**

The Counseling Program of Rio Grande College is committed to providing a learning environment that is free from intentional or unintentional sexual harassment, as defined below, or harassment on the basis of any protected classification including, but not limited to race, gender, color, religion, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability, medical condition, marital status, veteran status or on any other basis protected by law. Such conduct is unprofessional, unproductive, illegal, and generally unacceptable. All conduct of this nature is expressly prohibited, regardless of whether it violates the law.

The Counseling Program of Rio Grande College supports equal employment and educational opportunities for all persons. No person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity sponsored by Rio Grande College on any basis prohibited by applicable law, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability.

The Counseling Program is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Disability Services Coordinator assists students with disabilities in gaining opportunities for full participation in programs, services and activities. The Disability Services Coordinator is the Director of Student Services (830-758-5006) in Eagle Pass, Texas. Services available to all students include consultation, information and referral as well as personal counseling and academic advising. A student is eligible for disability services if s/he has been admitted to Rio

Grande College and has a documented physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Qualified students with disabilities who need academic adjustments, auxiliary aids or services or other accommodations to ensure equal access must register with Disability Services. It is the student's responsibility to bring disability documentation with them to an appointment with the Disability Services Coordinator to discuss their individual needs at this time. Each request is considered on an individualized, case-by-case basis. As considerable time may be involved in obtaining complete and adequate documentation and arranging for qualified service providers, prospective and current students should request services in a timely manner. These services should be requested well in advance of the anticipated need.

Recent disability documentation from appropriate qualified professionals must be provided by the student to establish current functional limitations and the impact of the disability. Any recommendations for specific accommodations may be helpful in making determinations and these will be considered as part of the documentation review process. Documentation of disability status and other related information is handled in a confidential manner and is maintained in files separate from a student's educational record.

In compliance with applicable laws, unless Rio Grande College can demonstrate that an academic requirement is an essential component of a degree or program, the University will make reasonable adjustments to requirements to ensure that the requirements do not discriminate against qualified students with disabilities. A student with a disability may request a course substitution or a modification of a degree or program requirement through the following process.

The student's first point of contact for assistance with this process should be the Disability Services Coordinator. The student should submit:

1. A written request for the modification explaining his/her difficulties in the relevant areas and reasons for requesting the modification;
2. Information about the results of previous efforts in the relevant area (transcripts, etc.); and
3. Comprehensive documentation of the disability and the specific aspects of the disability which impair the student's ability to learn or perform in the area in which the student is requesting the modification. The Disability Services Coordinator will meet with the student, review the documentation and prepare a recommendation on the request.
  - a. A diagnostic statement identifying the disability, date of the current diagnostic evaluation (within a 5 year period), and the date of the original diagnosis.
  - b. A description of the diagnostic criteria and/or diagnostic test(s) used.
  - c. A description of the current functional impact/limitations of the disability.
  - d. Treatments, medications, assistive devices/services currently prescribed or used.
  - e. A description of the expected progression or stability of the disability over time.
  - f. The credentials of the diagnosing professional(s) to include the training and experience which enable the person capable of making the diagnoses.

Recommendations for accommodation are helpful and will be given due consideration. If a student feels that s/he has been discriminated against based on disability, it is recommended that the student first attempt to resolve the issue directly with the individual or group suspected of discrimination. If this procedure is non-productive, a second step may be to seek assistance from the Disability Services office. Students may also file a complaint with the appropriate university officer for ADA/504 compliance, the ADA Compliance Officer, according to the student grievance procedure.

Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature where such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to: unwanted sexual advances; demands for sexual favors in exchange for favorable treatment; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; graphic commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess, or sexual deficiencies; leering; whistling; touching; pinching; assault; coerced sexual acts; suggestive, insulting or obscene comments or gestures. The Counseling Program prohibits all conduct of this nature whether or not such conduct violates any applicable laws.

# College and Community Counseling Services

In the fall of 2016 the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College officially implemented a valuable new component to both the *Practicum in Counseling* (EDUC 7316) and the *Internship in Counseling* (EDUC 7317). The **College and Community Counseling Services** continue evolving slowly but steadily. At each of the Rio Grande College sites (Del Rio, Eagle Pass & Uvalde) we offer no-cost counseling services to all students, staff and faculty of both Rio Grande College and Southwest Texas Junior College. Furthermore, we provide no-cost counseling services at the local RGC sites for children, adolescents and adults who do not have mental health insurance coverage or who cannot afford mental health services.

Practicum and internship counselors are the service providers for the College and Community Counseling Services and in collaboration with counseling faculty members and alumni of the Counseling Program on-site clinical supervision is provided. The RGC administration has provided secure and confidential office space for counseling sessions. All practicum and internship counselors are required to allocate at least five (5) hours of available counseling time at an RGC site of geographic convenience. As potential clients make contact with the project, counselors will be assigned clients based on geographic proximity.

As an example, let's imagine that Nick Garcia is an intern who lives in the Eagle Pass area. Nick is an elementary teacher who is accumulating hours under the supervision of the head school counselor. Additionally, Nick makes himself available after school on Mondays and Wednesdays for the College and Community Counseling Services. If a client from the Eagle Pass area has been referred, or has self-referred, for counseling services then Nick would receive an email from the Coordinator of the Counseling Program notifying him to contact the client and schedule an initial intake session. Once Nick contacts the client he must consult the administrative assistant in Eagle Pass who is charged with scheduling the counseling office at that site. When Nick has scheduled his appointment and then confirmed with the client, he will send a notification email to the Coordinator of the Counseling Program with the client's name as well as the date and time of the initial appointment.

Like everything new, this project will take time to evolve and "catch on" with the various communities and constituencies. The likelihood of practicum and internship counselors accumulating a significant number of direct contact hours through this project during the 2016-2017 academic year is fairly low. However, the College and Community Counseling Services will evolve rapidly and thereby serve a pronounced need in the counties and communities of Southwest Texas. Practicum and internship counselors should carefully examine their personal schedules so that they can volunteer at least five hours per week to the College and Community Counseling Services if and when there is sufficient client demand. The RGC sites are open from 8:00 am through 9:00 pm (sessions must end by 8:45 pm) Monday through Thursday, and 8:00 am through 5:00 pm (sessions must end before 4:45 pm) on Fridays. Unfortunately, at this point, we are not able to schedule counseling appointments on the weekends because of building security issues.

# **Project Mission Statement**

The mission of the College and Community Counseling Services is to support the intellectual, emotional, social, and cultural development of Rio Grande College (RGC) and Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) students, staff and faculty by offering a variety of counseling services. Additionally, the program provides no-cost counseling services to the various Rio Grande College service communities and area school districts. The College and Community Counseling Services functions as a vital component in the training of graduate students enrolled in the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College.

The services provided by practicum and internship counselors (advanced graduate students in the Counseling Program) are designed to assist college students, staff and faculty, as well as community members (children, adolescents, adults, couples and families) in resolving personal difficulties, and acquiring the skills, attitudes, abilities, and knowledge that will enable them to live richer and more meaningful lives. All students, staff, faculty and community members are welcome to participate in the College and Community Counseling Services, regardless of race, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, age, religion, citizenship, language or disability.

The cultural and linguistic fusion of South Texas gives rise to the unique and relevant specialties of the Counseling Program: Biculturalism and bilingualism. The practicum and internship counselors who provide the various counseling services foster and develop bicultural and bilingual competence to promote awareness of and empathy for the unique and rich cultural environment of rural South Texas.

## **Accessing Counseling Services**

The students, staff and faculty of both Rio Grande College and Southwest Texas Junior College are eligible for no-cost counseling services provided by the College and Community Counseling Services. Additionally, all members of the Rio Grande College service area communities (children, adolescents, adults, couples and families) are eligible for no-cost counseling services provided by the College and Community Counseling Services. The advanced graduate students enrolled in the Counseling Program of Rio Grande College provide all counseling services as essential components of both the *Practicum in Counseling* (EDUC 7316) and *Internship in Counseling* (EDUC 7317) learning experiences. The operation and management of the College and Community Counseling Services are overseen and supervised by the Counseling Program faculty members and Graduate Teaching Assistants.

Difficult issues of day-to-day life can easily serve as obstacles and barriers to living a happy and fulfilled life. The practicum and internship counselors associated with the College and Community Counseling Services will assist clients in managing these personal issues and stressful situations. Persons seeking counseling services, or professionals referring someone for counseling or mental health services, can inquire via email at [rgccounselors@sulross.edu](mailto:rgccounselors@sulross.edu) or contact the Coordinator of the Counseling Program: Dr. Todd T. Russell ([trussell@sulross.edu](mailto:trussell@sulross.edu) or 210-253-0884).



# **Project Structure and Organization**

In the final semesters of counselor training in the Counseling Program, all counseling graduate students are required to complete the *Practicum in Counseling* (EDUC 7316) and the *Internship in Counseling* (EDUC 7317). Each semester, every graduate student enrolled in either the *Practicum* or the *Internship* must be available for a minimum of five hours per week for counseling services at the campus of their choice (Del Rio, Eagle Pass or Uvalde). The practicum counselors and interns are assigned clients based on geographic proximity as referrals are received. Each counselor is responsible for managing his/her own schedule of counseling appointments by clearly communicating with the designated administrative assistant at each campus site and recording the scheduled appointment in the VALT system when it goes online. The web link, username and password for the respective master schedules will be provided to all practicum and internship counselors. Once a counseling appointment is entered on the master schedule and confirmed with the client, the practicum counselor must send an email to the Graduate Teaching Assistants indicating the client's name and the date and time of the appointment.

During the 2016-2017 academic year all three counseling rooms will be fully equipped with a computer terminal and digital recording equipment. All counseling sessions must be video recorded for the purpose of supervision as well as professional liability. Until all necessary equipment has been installed and tested, practicum counselors are responsible for providing their own video recording equipment.

At the beginning of each new semester and summer sessions, information about the College and Community Counseling Services is distributed widely to all students, staff and faculty of Rio Grande College and Southwest Texas Junior College, as well as to all at-large community members. Methods for promotion of the Project include email announcements, newsletters, college and university web pages, and campus/community flyers and brochures. Persons seeking counseling services, or professionals referring someone for counseling or mental health services, can inquire via email at [rgccounselors@sulross.edu](mailto:rgccounselors@sulross.edu) or contact the Coordinator of the Counseling Program or one of the Graduate Teaching Assistants.

## **Project Procedures and Precautions**

To schedule the offices designated for the Counseling Program the following procedures will be employed. Each counseling room is equipped with a digital security keypad on the door. Key codes are available from the Graduate Teaching Assistants. The designated offices for the Counseling Program are Room 211 in Del Rio, Room B108 in Eagle Pass, and Room A111 in Uvalde.

Counseling sessions can be scheduled Mondays through Thursdays (when classes are in session) from 8:00 am to 7:30 pm (counselor and client must be out of the building prior to 8:45 pm) and Fridays from 8:00 am to 3:45 pm (counselor and client must be out of the building prior to 4:00 pm). The weekly schedule for each site is maintained by each of the respective Administrative Assistants and will be available online when the VALT system is fully operational. The Administrative Assistants responsible for overseeing and scheduling the counseling offices are Cheyanne Lee (830-703-4821) in Del Rio, Ms. Connie Esparza (830-758-

5004) in Eagle Pass, and Ms. Jazell Diaz (830-279-3002) in Uvalde. Practicum counselors and interns are expected to arrive at least fifteen (15) minutes before their scheduled counseling sessions. It is the counselor's responsibility to notify the Program Coordinator and the Graduate Teaching Assistants of this security-related issue.

If and when working after hours, counselors will remember to be out of the building by 8:45 pm; not doing so will result in a breach of building security systems thereby setting off the security alarms. Counselors are responsible for reminding clients that licensed concealed hand gun holders are requested to leave their weapons at home or in their vehicle during counseling sessions. A notice of this restriction should be posted in each counseling room and included on all consent and disclosure forms related to the *College and Community Counseling Services*.

## **Project Confidentiality and Record Keeping**

Professional ethical codes and state and federal laws consider the personal information discussed in counseling to be highly confidential. All information gathered in counseling, including the fact that the client (consumer) has made initial contact with the College and Community Counseling Services, is held in strict confidence. Exceptions to this will be discussed by the counselor. The personnel of the College and Community Counseling Services maintain secure and confidential records of all client and consumer contacts, beginning with initial contact and ending with the termination of the services. The minimum information which is collected and saved electronically on the secure VALT (Video Audio Learning Tool) system includes the following documentation:

- Date, time and action of the initial client or consumer contact
- Client identifying data and contact information
- Client informed consent or assent for services
- Waivers of confidentiality and authorization or consent for release of information
- Mandated disclosure of confidential information
- Client presenting concerns or primary counseling issues
- Counseling treatment plan
- Dates of counseling sessions and session progress notes
- Formal or informal assessment of client status
- Case related consultations
- Clinical supervision of counselor

# **Video Audio Learning Tool**

Digital video recording is an essential component of counselor training. The Counseling Program at Rio Grande College employs cutting-edge technologies to better train counselors and therapists for work in a variety of community settings. Intelligent Video Solutions provides VALT (Video Audio Learning Tool) to capture and stream video and audio content in high definition resolution. The system incorporates the latest technologies in video observation and capture. A counseling room has been designated at each of the primary campus sites – Del Rio, Eagle Pass and Uvalde. High definition cameras and audio streams from each of the three counseling rooms are simultaneously recorded with perfect audio-visual synchronization. VALT allows the Counseling Program to record, save and manage a comprehensive training video database.

In compliance with the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and approved by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), the video recordings and client data are highly secure through data and video encryption, extensive user permissions and rights, group containers, user access control and a robust audit trail.

A built in scheduler allows counselors to set up recordings in advance so that they only need to meet the client at the scheduled time and the counseling session is automatically recorded and cataloged with the proper identifying data.

Each of the three designated counseling rooms is equipped with network cameras combined with high-quality microphones and audio equipment which provide a high-definition audio and video experience. Counseling session recordings can be initiated via a common Internet browser, a built-in automatic scheduler, or a physical button located in each of the three designated counseling rooms. Each recorded counseling session is stamped with identifying data that allows counselor students and faculty members to easily locate and track specific video content. VALT video is recorded in the standard MP4 format, making session videos easy to share and store.

The VALT system is equipped with features that allow for the input of client level data and case session notations in association with the video record. Counselors can include relevant session information that is necessary for clinical supervision. Markers allow counseling students and faculty members to tag specific points, create notes and annotate during live recordings or during the review and supervision processes. VALT enabled users to quickly search and find the desired session or interview. Videos are available for review seconds after the recording is completed and stream almost instantaneously. All information is completely searchable allowing student-counselors and faculty members to easily identify the specific content they are searching for and quickly play back the video. At the end of the academic year, all recordings are deleted.

## **Project Crisis Response**

In the event that a person who either self-referred, or is referred by another, presents potential crisis risk, then the Program Coordinator or one of the Graduate Teaching Assistants will quickly intervene and assign the case to the appropriate available practicum or internship counselor or other advanced graduate student who can see the client within 24 hours of initial contact. Additionally, when all recording equipment has been installed and tested, the faculty members and clinical supervisors will have real-time access to monitor the sessions in progress as a safety measure for both the client and the counselor.

## **Project Integration in Counselor Training Program**

The College and Community Counseling Services is the centerpiece of a unique and remarkable counselor training program at Rio Grande College. The Project is not only thoroughly integrated into the *Practicum in Counseling* and the *Internship in Counseling* experiences, but also finely woven into the fabric of the counselor training curriculum. Examples of this curricular integration include the following:

- Advanced graduate students enrolled in the pre-practicum course of *Techniques in Counseling II* provide individual counseling services to at least one client for the duration of the semester.
- Graduate students enrolled in *Group Counseling* will partner with a classmate and provide a five-session group counseling experience for interested community clients.
- Graduate students enrolled in *Marriage and Family Counseling* will provide co-counseling to a couple or a family.

# Ethical Practice Statement

Carefully review the *Code of Ethics* and the *Standards of Practice* of the American Counseling Association (refer to Appendix A) and sign the Ethical Practice Statement. Return this signed form to the instructor prior to beginning any Practicum-related experiences.

*All practicum counselors are required to read the **Code of Ethics** and the **Standards of Practice** of the American Counseling Association and then sign and submit to the University Instructor this Ethical Practice Statement prior to engaging in any direct counseling experiences.*

## Ethical Practice Agreement

I have read and subscribe to the professional Ethical Standards of the American Counseling Association. I understand that it is my obligation to protect the privacy of the clients about whom I have confidential information, and to not reveal confidential materials (information, case notes, video tapes, audio tapes) to unauthorized persons, except where state law requires, without the written consent of the client. I am aware that I am prohibited from discussing my clients with anyone except my supervisors, professors, and professional colleagues.

I have read the Ethical Standards of the American Counseling Association and I agree to abide by these standards and the confidentiality rules stated above. I understand that violation of this agreement, or any unprofessional behavior, may subject me to civil penalties, as well as exclusion from further practicum experiences in the Counseling Program of Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Professional Liability Insurance Verification Form

Practicum Counselor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date to Begin Practicum: \_\_\_\_\_

Practicum Counselor's Home Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Company/Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Company Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Policy Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Period of Coverage: \_\_\_\_\_

*My signature below certifies that the above information is accurate and true.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Practicum Counselor**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date Signed**

Return this completed form to the instructor prior to  
beginning your counseling practicum experiences.

# Practicum Site, Site Supervision and Professional Behavior

Each practicum student counselor must accumulate a minimum of 160 hours of counseling-related work at an approved practicum site under the guidance and direction of a site supervisor. The practicum site must be a school, agency, or situation in which counseling and psychotherapy (individual, group, and/or family) are the primary services. Practicum counselors are required to make all necessary arrangements with potential practicum sites and are required to complete the *Practicum Placement Form* as soon as a practicum site has been established. Completed Practicum Placement Forms are due to the University Instructor prior to beginning any Practicum-related activities or experiences.

The site supervisor must be a credentialed and experienced counselor who is willing and able to meet with the practicum student on a regular basis (at least one hour per week) to discuss and supervise the counseling experiences. Additionally, the site supervisor must sign the weekly practicum logs and submit the Evaluation Checklist (included in the ***Practicum Portfolio***). A student's final grade is partially based on the feedback from the site supervisor. Any unprofessional or unethical behavior on the part of the practicum counselor will result in the student's immediate removal from the Counseling Practicum; the student will receive a final grade of F; and the student will be denied enrollment in any future Counseling Practicum courses at Rio Grande College. At the end of the practicum experience, the student must complete a Practicum Site Evaluation (included in ***Practicum Portfolio***). *(Note: All students will receive grades of PR – indicating “in progress” – until they have completed all required 160 clock hours and documentation. Students who receive a PR will be required to enroll in the practicum each semester that they are completing the fieldwork requirements.)*

The instructor is available to meet with practicum counselors at their practicum sites on an as needed basis. If either the student or the site supervisor desires a site visitation, one will be scheduled. Unless the instructor hears otherwise from either the student or the site supervisor, it is assumed that everything is going well.

***Instructor Idiosyncrasy:*** I operate on the assumption that if I don't hear otherwise, everything is absolutely wonderful. Please keep me informed of everything. I hate surprises.

# **Counseling Practicum Site Supervisor Role Statement**

## ***The role of the Practicum Site Supervisor includes:***

- Providing one hour of individual supervision to the practicum counselor for every ten hours of practicum experience accrued.
- Providing an evaluation of the practicum counselor's development and progress prior to the end of the practicum experience.
- Introducing and orienting the practicum counselor to the structure, programs, function, forms and procedural practices at the site.
- Familiarizing the practicum counselor with policies and procedures regarding case management, record-keeping and confidentiality, crisis team functions, abuse reporting procedures, and the consulting role.
- Orienting the practicum counselor to the dynamics and diversity of the client population.
- Affording the practicum counselor the opportunity to identify with the site supervisor as a professional practitioner by jointly participating in interviews, parent meetings, conferences, counseling sessions, classroom guidance lessons, and other relevant activities.
- Assigning and supervising the completion of tasks and responsibilities consistent with the practicum counselor's role at the site.
- Consulting with the Professor and Coordinator of the Counseling Program in the event that the supervisor becomes aware of personal or professional issues or limitations which are impairing the practicum counselor's learning and/or performance.
- Providing independent counseling experiences with a caseload that reflects a variety of client needs.
- Providing opportunities for decision-making and risk-taking.
- Introducing the practicum counselor to the professional and support staff associated with the site.
- Orienting the practicum counselor to the site policies regarding appropriate dress, office hours, scheduled meetings and conferences, and scheduled counseling sessions.
- Providing opportunities for gaining counseling experience in multiple areas such as individual counseling, small group counseling, couples and family counseling, psycho-education, and professional consultation.



# Practicum Placement Form

Practicum Counselor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date to Begin Practicum: \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Practicum Placement Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Site Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Site Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Primary Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

## Verification of Site Supervisor

I understand the requirements of the *Practicum in Counseling* and I agree to serve as the clinical Site Supervisor for the above named practicum counselor. I agree to provide at least one hour of individual supervision to the above named practicum counselor for every ten hours of practicum experience accrued. I understand that the practicum counselor will be providing counseling services to clients/students by conducting individual and small group counseling, as well as other counseling-related tasks. Additionally, I agree to contact Dr. Todd T. Russell of the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College ([trussell@sulross.edu](mailto:trussell@sulross.edu) or 210-253-0884) if the performance of the above named practicum counselor becomes problematic or unsatisfactory.

Site Supervisor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Practicum Counselor Evaluation

## Supervisor Evaluation and Feedback

Practicum Counselor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Evaluation: \_\_\_\_\_

Clinical Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Practicum Site: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions to Clinical Supervisor:** This form is designed to help counseling supervisors provide feedback about the performance of a practicum counselor at the end of the practicum experience. This completed form will become part of the practicum counselor's record for *Practicum in Counseling* (EDUC 7316) and will be considered in assigning a letter grade for the three semester credit hour experience. Please answer each item using the Likert-type scale defined below. Space is provided following each category group for specific feedback and comments. There is also space at the end of this form for general comments. For each item, please circle the appropriate number with regard to the performance of the practicum counselor for the duration of the practicum experience:

- 1** = Area of Concern: Needs Much Improvement
- 2** = Below Expectations: Needs Some Improvement
- 3** = Satisfactory: Meets Standards at Average Level
- 4** = Above Expectations: Performs at Above Average Level
- 5** = Exceeds Expectations: Performs at an Outstanding Level
- NA** = Not Applicable or Insufficient Observation for Evaluation

### Basic Work Requirements

1. Arrives on time consistently	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2. Uses time effectively	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3. Informs supervisor and makes arrangements for absences	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4. Reliably completes requested or assigned tasks on time	1	2	3	4	5	NA
5. Completes agreed upon number of hours per week	1	2	3	4	5	NA
6. Is responsive to norms about appropriate dress, language, and professional protocol	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Comments:

### Ethical Awareness and Conduct

7. Knowledge of general ethical guidelines	1	2	3	4	5	NA
8. Knowledge of ethical guidelines of practicum placement	1	2	3	4	5	NA
9. Demonstrates awareness and sensitivity to ethical issues	1	2	3	4	5	NA
10. Personal behavior is consistent with ethical guidelines	1	2	3	4	5	NA
11. Consults with others about ethical issues if necessary	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Comments:

### **Knowledge and Learning**

12. Knowledge level of client population at beginning of practicum	1	2	3	4	5	NA
13. Knowledge level of client population at end of practicum	1	2	3	4	5	NA
14. Knowledge of counseling approaches at beginning of practicum	1	2	3	4	5	NA
15. Knowledge of counseling approaches at end of practicum	1	2	3	4	5	NA
16. Knowledge and familiarity with counseling skills and strategies at beginning of practicum	1	2	3	4	5	NA
17. Knowledge and familiarity with counseling skills and strategies at end of practicum	1	2	3	4	5	NA
18. Receptive to learning when new information is offered	1	2	3	4	5	NA
19. Actively seeks new information from staff and supervisor	1	2	3	4	5	NA
20. Ability to learn and understand new information	1	2	3	4	5	NA
21. Understanding of concepts, theories, and information	1	2	3	4	5	NA
22. Ability to apply new information in clinical setting	1	2	3	4	5	NA

**Comments:**

### **Response to Supervision**

23. Actively seeks supervision when necessary	1	2	3	4	5	NA
24. Receptive to feedback and suggestions from supervisor	1	2	3	4	5	NA
25. Understands information communicated in supervision	1	2	3	4	5	NA
26. Successfully implements suggestions from supervisor	1	2	3	4	5	NA
27. Aware of areas that need improvement	1	2	3	4	5	NA
28. Willingness to explore personal strengths and weaknesses	1	2	3	4	5	NA

**Comments:**

### **Interactions with Clients**

29. Appears comfortable interacting with clients	1	2	3	4	5	NA
30. Initiates interactions with clients	1	2	3	4	5	NA
31. Communicates effectively with clients	1	2	3	4	5	NA
32. Builds rapport and respect with clients	1	2	3	4	5	NA
33. Is sensitive and responsive to client's needs	1	2	3	4	5	NA
34. Is sensitive to cultural and linguistic differences	1	2	3	4	5	NA
35. Is sensitive to gender and sexual orientation differences	1	2	3	4	5	NA

**Comments:**

### Interactions with Staff

36. Appears comfortable interacting with other staff members	1	2	3	4	5	NA
37. Initiates interactions with staff and coworkers	1	2	3	4	5	NA
38. Communicates effectively with staff and coworkers	1	2	3	4	5	NA
39. Effectively conveys information and expresses own opinions	1	2	3	4	5	NA
40. Effectively receives information and opinions from others	1	2	3	4	5	NA

**Comments:**

### Work Products

41. Reliably and accurately keeps necessary records	1	2	3	4	5	NA
42. Written or verbal reports are accurate and factually correct	1	2	3	4	5	NA
43. Written or verbal reports are presented in professional manner	1	2	3	4	5	NA
44. Reports are clinically or administratively useful	1	2	3	4	5	NA
45. Remains current and up-to-date on practicum forms and record-keeping	1	2	3	4	5	NA

**Comments:**

### Attitude and Personal Characteristics

46. Expresses warmth and acceptance in counseling and social relationships	1	2	3	4	5	NA
47. Handles ambiguity and complexity effectively and gracefully	1	2	3	4	5	NA
48. Recognizes and mindfully accepts his/her own emotions	1	2	3	4	5	NA
49. Recognizes, reflects and mindfully works with client emotions	1	2	3	4	5	NA
50. Demonstrates authenticity and mindfulness in both the counseling and social relationships	1	2	3	4	5	NA

**Comments:**

Signature of Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this completed form to the practicum counselor or send/email it to:

**Dr. Todd T. Russell**  
**Rio Grande College**  
 2623 Garner Field Road, Office #A126  
 Uvalde, Texas 78801  
**Email:** [trussell@sulross.edu](mailto:trussell@sulross.edu)  
**Cell:** (210) 253-0884

# **Professional Disclosure Statement Informed Consent**

Each practicum counselor is required to develop a **Professional Disclosure Statement**. The Site Supervisor, and then the University Instructor, prior to the student counselor engaging in direct-contact counseling, must first approve this statement. The approved Professional Disclosure Statement must be readily available to all clients and/or the parents (when appropriate). A Professional Disclosure Statement must include a clear statement of the student's status as a practicum counselor in the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College, educational and training experiences, a description of services offered and methods employed, and reference to both the site supervisor and University Instructor. Practicum counselors may need to provide clients with a Spanish version of the Professional Disclosure Statement. An example of a Professional Disclosure Statement that includes a client statement of informed consent is included on the following page. Each practicum counselor should develop their own statement based on the above criteria. Practicum counselors will need to prepare the statement in accordance with the specifications of the practicum site. Practicum counselors are encouraged to use agency letterhead (practicum site) and establish procedures for information dissemination. Before disseminating the Professional Disclosure Statement, practicum counselors must receive final approval from the University Instructor.

All clients (or parents of minor children) must be provided with clear information about the counseling relationship prior to engaging in the counseling process. It is recommended that all clients (or parents of minor children) sign statements of informed consent. Some practicum counselors simply incorporate the statement of informed consent with the Professional Disclosure Statement. Discuss this issue with the clinical Site Supervisor.

# Professional Disclosure Model

The Counseling Program in the Department of Education at Rio Grande College conducts counseling practicum experiences each semester and during the summer. This semester (*practicum counselor's name*) will be working at (*name of practicum site/agency*) as a practicum counselor.

## Education and Experience

The counseling practicum is open to advanced graduate students in the Counseling Program. Before participating in the practicum experience, trainees must complete required course work, and must demonstrate competency in and knowledge of counseling theories and techniques. (*practicum counselor's name*) has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and has been a high school teacher for the past four years. In addition, (*she or he*) has skills and knowledge in multicultural issues; group counseling, ethical and legal issues, human growth and development, family counseling, community referral resources, and testing and assessment.

## Counseling Services

Practicum counselors are expected to work with clients who are seeking counseling services. Practicum counselors may conduct individual and small group counseling sessions, large group guidance and training, and consultation with persons regarding a specific client.

## Confidentiality

All client and counseling information is highly confidential and cannot be released without the written permission of the client, or in the case of a client under the age of 17, permission of the parents. However, Texas state law requires the reporting of persons who present a danger to themselves or others and any known or suspected cases of child abuse.

## Supervision

As a practicum counselor, (*counselor name*) is closely supervised by (*name of site supervisor*), (*title of supervisor*) of the (*name of practicum site*) (*site supervisor contact number*), and Dr. Todd T. Russell, Professor and Coordinator of the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College (210-253-0884).

## Personal Responsibility

In compliance with Texas state law, the university administration requests that licensed concealed hand gun holders leave their weapons at home or in their vehicle during all counseling sessions.

## Client Informed Consent Statement

I agree to participate in counseling with a practicum counselor. I understand that I will participate in counseling sessions that may be discussed confidentially with clinical supervisors. I understand that the practicum counselor will be supervised by (*name of site supervisor*) and Dr. Todd T. Russell.

Client's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Practicum Counselor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Professional Disclosure Statement

*Practicum Counselor: Rogelio A. Ramirez*

The Counseling Program in the Department of Education at Rio Grande College conducts counseling practicum experiences each semester and during the summer. This semester, **Rogelio A. Ramirez** will be working at the **D’Hanis Metropolitan Mental Health Center** as a practicum counselor.

## Education and Experience

The counseling practicum is a requirement for all advanced graduate students in the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College. Before participating in the practicum experience, graduate students must complete required course work, and must demonstrate competency in and knowledge of counseling theories and techniques. Rogelio A. Ramirez has a Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology from the University of Texas at San Antonio. For the past four years he has worked for the Texas Department of Family and Adult Protective Services as a case worker in the adult protective division. Mr. Ramirez has successfully completed graduate-level course work in personality and counseling theories, testing and assessment, group counseling, counseling skills and techniques, play therapy, human growth and development, graduate research, and couples and family counseling. Additionally, he has attended professional workshops and trainings in action-oriented therapy, the use of the expressive arts in counseling, and mindfulness-based counseling and psychotherapy.

## Services Offered

Mr. Ramirez has volunteered to work with clients and patients of the D’Hanis Metropolitan Mental Health Center for the duration of the summer. As a student counselor, he is able to provide individual, family, and small group counseling. Additionally, Mr. Ramirez will engage in professional consultation and collaboration when necessary for the benefit of his clients.

## Confidentiality

All client and counseling information is highly confidential and cannot be released without the written permission of the client, or in the case of a client under the age of 17, permission of the parents. However, Texas state law requires the reporting of persons who present a danger to themselves or others and any known or suspected cases of child abuse.

## Supervision

As a practicum counselor, Mr. Ramirez is closely supervised by Mr. Marco Tijerina, Assistant Director of the D’Hanis Metropolitan Mental Health Center (830-773-9675), and Dr. Todd T. Russell, Professor and Coordinator of the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College (210-253-0884).

## Personal Responsibility

In compliance with Texas state law, the university administration requests that licensed concealed hand gun holders leave their weapons at home or in their vehicle during all counseling sessions.

## Client Informed Consent Statement

I agree to participate in counseling with Mr. Rogelio A. Ramirez. I understand that I will participate in counseling sessions that may be discussed confidentially with clinical supervisors. I further understand that Mr. Ramirez will be supervised by Mr. Marco Tijerina and Dr. Todd T. Russell.

Client’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Practicum Counselor’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Information for Parents Model

The Counseling Program in the Department of Education at Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College conducts counseling practicum experiences each semester and summer sessions. This semester, (*practicum counselor's name*) will be working at (*name of practicum site/agency*) as a practicum counselor.

## Education and Experience

The counseling practicum is open to advanced level graduate students in Counseling. Before participating in the practicum experience, trainees must complete required course work, and must demonstrate competency in and knowledge of counseling theory and techniques. (*practicum counselor's name*) has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and has been a high school teacher for the past four years. In addition, she or he has skills and knowledge in multicultural issues, group counseling, ethical and legal issues, human growth and development, family counseling, community referral resources, and testing and assessment.

## Services Offered

Counselor trainees are expected to work with clients who are seeking counseling services. Trainees may conduct individual and small group counseling sessions, large group guidance and training, and consultation with persons regarding a specific client.

## Confidentiality

All client and counseling information is highly confidential and cannot be released without your written permission. However, Texas state law requires the reporting of persons who present a danger to themselves or others and any known or suspected cases of child abuse.

## Supervision

All counseling sessions are closely supervised by (*site supervisor's name*). Additionally, practicum counselors are supervised by Dr. Todd T. Russell of the Counseling Program in the Department of Education at Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College (210-253-0884).

## Parent Permission Statement

I give permission for my child to participate in counseling services with a practicum counselor. I understand that the confidential counseling sessions may be discussed with a clinical supervisor. I understand that the practicum counselor will be supervised by (*name of site supervisor*) and Dr. Todd T. Russell of the Counseling Program Rio Grande College.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Practicum Counselor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Information for Parents

*Practicum Counselor: Rogelio A. Ramirez*

The Counseling Program in the Department of Education at Rio Grande College conducts counseling practicum experiences each semester and during the summer. This semester, **Rogelio A. Ramirez** will be working at the **D’Hanis Metropolitan Mental Health Center** as a practicum counselor.

## **Education and Experience**

The counseling practicum is a requirement for all advanced graduate students in the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College. Before participating in the practicum experience, graduate students must complete required course work, and must demonstrate competency in and knowledge of counseling theories and techniques. Rogelio A. Ramirez has a Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology from the University of Texas at San Antonio. For the past four years he has worked for the Texas Department of Family and Adult Protective Services as a case worker in the adult protective division. Mr. Ramirez has successfully completed graduate-level course work in personality and counseling theories, testing and assessment, group counseling, counseling skills and techniques, play therapy, human growth and development, graduate research, and couples and family counseling. Additionally, he has attended professional workshops and trainings in action-oriented therapy, the use of the expressive arts in counseling, and mindfulness-based counseling and psychotherapy.

## **Services Offered**

Mr. Ramirez has volunteered to work with clients and patients of the D’Hanis Metropolitan Mental Health Center for the duration of the summer. As a student counselor, he is able to provide individual, family, and small group counseling. Additionally, Mr. Ramirez will engage in professional consultation and collaboration when necessary for the benefit of his clients.

## **Confidentiality**

All client and counseling information is highly confidential and cannot be released without the written permission of the client, or in the case of a client under the age of 17, permission of the parents. However, Texas state law requires the reporting of persons who present a danger to themselves or others and any known or suspected cases of child abuse.

## **Supervision**

As a practicum counselor, Mr. Ramirez is closely supervised by Mr. Marco Tijerina, Assistant Director of the D’Hanis Metropolitan Mental Health Center (830-773-9675), and Dr. Todd T. Russell, Professor and Coordinator of the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College (210-253-0884).

## **Parent Permission Statement**

I give permission for my child to participate in counseling with Mr. Rogelio A. Ramirez, a practicum counselor at Rio Grande College. I understand that the confidential counseling sessions will be discussed with a clinical supervisor. I understand that Mr. Ramirez will be supervised by Mr. Marco Tijerina, Assistant Director of D’Hanis Metropolitan Mental Health Center (830-773-9675), and Dr. Todd T. Russell, Professor and Coordinator of the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College (210-253-0884).

Child’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Practicum Counselor’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Practicum Experience Record

For purposes of verification and accountability, each student must keep a log of the practicum experiences. Students should use the “grid” form (Weekly Practicum Log) and the Summary of Practicum Hours. The completed practicum experience log and summary are due at the completion of the practicum experience (included in the *Practicum Portfolio*). To successfully complete the three-semester credit practicum, each student must complete a minimum total of 160 clock hours of practicum experience, with a minimum of 100 direct-contact clock hours (face-to-face counseling). A minimum of 20 hours of direct contact in a volunteer capacity is required as part of the 160 clock-hour total if the student-counselor is completing the practicum in his/her place of employment. It may be beneficial for practicum counselors to also keep “journal-like” logs for reflection and retrospection. Practicum counselors must obtain their site supervisor’s initials or signature each week and complete a summary sheet at the conclusion of the practicum experience. Practicum counselors may be required to complete additional documentation as required by the specific agency or institution.

# Weekly Practicum Log

Practicum Counselor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Practicum Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Clinical Site Supervisor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** This log must be completed for each week of practicum experience. You can record time in minutes (e.g., 90 m.), hours (e.g., 1.5 h.), or time-spans (e.g., 9:30-11:00). Only record time to the nearest half-hour. Do not log any time less than the half-hour. Be consistent with the style in which you complete this log. Clearly specify any activities that you included under "Other."

Week of: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Day/Date	Individual Counseling	Group Counseling	Large Group/Class Guidance	Consultation or Staffing	Record-Keeping or Other	Total
<i>Activity Total:</i>						

Direct Contact Hours: \_\_\_\_\_ Indirect Contact Hours: \_\_\_\_\_ Weekly Total: \_\_\_\_\_

# Summary of Practicum Hours

Practicum Counselor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Practicum Site: \_\_\_\_\_ Site Supervisor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

	<u>Direct Hours</u>	<u>Indirect Hours</u>
Week 1	_____	_____
Week 2	_____	_____
Week 3	_____	_____
Week 4	_____	_____
Week 5	_____	_____
Week 6	_____	_____
Week 7	_____	_____
Week 8	_____	_____
Week 9	_____	_____
Week 10	_____	_____
Week 11	_____	_____
Week 12	_____	_____
Week 13	_____	_____
Week 14	_____	_____
Week 15	_____	_____

Total Direct Hours    Total Indirect Hours

\_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL PRACTICUM HOURS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Note:** Be sure to complete a single summary sheet to document your grand total of all contact hours for the entire experience when submitting the *Practicum Portfolio*.

# **Comprehensive Counseling Experiences**

Each practicum counselor is required to work with three clients on a continuous contact basis (minimum of eight sessions) and complete session progress notes and comprehensive case summaries for each client. Each case file must include weekly contact or progress notes (either DIP, SOAP or agency specific) and a Comprehensive Case Summary. Practicum counselors may be asked to discuss these clients during supervision sessions. Final case files are due at the completion of the practicum experience (included in portfolio). Also included in these client files are any other data or assessments collected on the clients.

Practicum counselors are not required to complete such copious documentation on all clients, but rather only three clients who are seen on a continuous contact basis of at least eight regular counseling sessions. The practicum site may require additional record keeping for each client counseled. Practicum counselors are required to comply with all agency recording and documentation requirements.

# **Counseling Contact Sheet: S.O.A.P. Template**

## *The “SOAP” Format*

Practicum Counselor:

Date:

Client:

Session Number:

### **I. SUBJECTIVE:**

*Presenting concerns in client’s words; content of session; situational information contributing to understanding of the client. What was discussed? Where did the session go? Any new case information that is important to understanding client and concerns? Your recollection of what happened during the session.*

### **II. OBJECTIVE:**

*Description of the client in terms of behavior, appearance, and affect. Observable description of what client did during session, what the vocal quality was, what emotions the client demonstrated or refrained from demonstrating, what the client’s interaction with counselor was.*

### **III. APPRAISAL:**

*What is your current “working” hypothesis about this client and his/her concerns? What is the problem/purpose of counseling? What is the client working on or need to work on?*

### **IV. PLAN:**

*What to work on; what to do to “get at” the problem; what to do to move towards resolution, including possible interventions, skills and techniques. Where to from here? What next? What will be your counseling strategy? Any homework assigned?*

# Counseling Contact Sheet: S.O.A.P. Example

**Practicum Counselor:** Rogelio A. Ramirez

**Date:** July 22, 2017

**Client:** Austin Smith

**Session Number:** Three (#3)

## I. SUBJECTIVE:

Austin seemed eager and excited to begin the counseling session. He said, "I have a lot to tell you today. I had a great weekend. My girlfriend and I are back together." In the first two counseling sessions, Austin was dealing with feelings of sadness and rejection upon breaking up with his girlfriend. In today's session he shared that the two of them had "made up" and were once again girlfriend-boyfriend. This session was very upbeat and positive. Austin also indicated that he was "taking it one day at a time" with his girlfriend. Near the end of the session, I suggested that next week we explore how easily and quickly he felt rejected by his girlfriend. I told him that sometimes it was good to explore the uncomfortable feelings at a time when we are actually feeling upbeat and happy. He agreed with this suggestion.

## II. OBJECTIVE:

Austin is a 16 year-old male who just completed his sophomore year at Hondo High School. During our first two sessions, he was sad, somewhat withdrawn, and anxious about sharing his thoughts and feelings in counseling. Today he arrived smiling and jovial. His behaviors and mannerisms appeared upbeat, optimistic and positive. On several occasions he said that he was "excited" and "happy." He indicated that he had been "looking forward to today's counseling session."

## III. APPRAISAL:

Austin presents as a "normal" adolescent male of 16 years of age. He is involved in his first romantic relationship/friendship. During the first two counseling sessions he was struggling to cope with his feelings of sadness and rejection at the break-up with his girlfriend. During today's session he was excited and giddy at being back together with his girlfriend. Like many adolescents his age, Austin experiences wide mood swings – happy and elated one day and then sad and withdrawn another day.

## IV. PLAN:

In the next session we will address the mood swing pattern and his tendency toward self-loathing and condemnation when things are going stressful in his life.

# **Counseling Contact Sheet: D.I.P. Template**

## *The “DIP” Format*

Practicum Counselor:

Date:

Client:

Session Number:

### **I. DESCRIPTION:**

*Description of the client in terms of behavior, appearance, and affect. Observable description of what client did during session, what the vocal quality was, what emotions the client demonstrated or refrained from demonstrating, what the client’s interaction with counselor was. Describe the presenting concerns using the client’s words; content of session; situational information contributing to understanding of the client; counseling interventions. Your recollection of what happened during the session.*

### **II. IMPRESSIONS:**

*What are your thoughts about the client? What is your current hypothesis about this client and his/her concerns? What is the purpose of counseling? What do you think the client needs to work on?*

### **III. PLAN:**

*What to work on and how to relieve symptoms, problems; to “get at” the problem; to move towards resolution, including possible interventions, skills and techniques to use in future sessions. Where to from here? What next? What will be your counseling strategy?*



# Counseling Contact Sheet: D.I.P. Example

**Practicum Counselor:** Rogelio A. Ramirez

**Date:** July 22, 2014

**Client:** Austin Smith

**Session Number:** Three (3)

## I. DESCRIPTION:

Austin is a 16 year-old male who just completed his sophomore year at Hondo High School. During our first two sessions, he was sad, somewhat withdrawn, and anxious about sharing his thoughts and feelings in counseling. Today he arrived smiling and jovial. His behaviors and mannerisms appeared upbeat, optimistic and positive. On several occasions he said that he was “excited” and “happy.” He indicated that he had been “looking forward to today’s counseling session.” Austin presents as a “normal” adolescent male of 16 years of age. He is involved in his first romantic relationship/friendship. During the first two counseling sessions he was struggling to cope with his feelings of sadness and rejection at the break-up with his girlfriend. During today’s session he was excited and giddy at being back together with his girlfriend. Like many adolescents his age, Austin experiences wide mood swings – happy and elated one day and then sad and withdrawn another day.

## II. IMPRESSIONS:

Austin seemed eager and excited to begin the counseling session. He said, “I have a lot to tell you today. I had a great weekend. My girlfriend and I are back together.” In the first two counseling sessions, Austin was dealing with feelings of sadness and rejection upon breaking up with his girlfriend. In today’s session he shared that the two of them had “made up” and were once again girlfriend-boyfriend. This session was very upbeat and positive. Austin also indicated that he was “taking it one day at a time” with his girlfriend. Near the end of the session, I suggested that next week we explore how easily and quickly he felt rejected by his girlfriend. I told him that sometimes it was good to explore the uncomfortable feelings at a time when we are actually feeling upbeat and happy. He agreed with this suggestion.

## III. PLAN:

In the next session we will address the mood swing pattern and his tendency toward self-loathing and condemnation when things are going stressful in his life. Client agreed to practice a brief five-minute mindfulness exercise each evening.

# Comprehensive Case Summary Template

At the completion of your three comprehensive counseling experiences (a minimum of eight sessions with each of three clients) you must complete a Comprehensive Case Summary for each case study. Typically, comprehensive case summaries are about two to three pages in length. Use the following headings and appropriate responses in compiling your case summaries. Include the completed Comprehensive Case Summary, along with the session case notes, in your **Practicum Portfolio** that is due at the completion of the practicum experience.

## I. Basic Information

Indicate client's name, date of birth, date of first session, date of last session, and total number of counseling sessions.

## II. Client Description and Brief History

Provide brief description of your client by indicating such things as age, physical appearance, grade-level, living situation, family situation, etc. Also, indicate any relevant history, including family background, school, work, or medical history.

## III. Presenting Problems

Indicate the client's presenting concerns and reasons for seeking and continuing counseling.

## IV. Counseling Process

Describe the initial session, including your impressions. Provide a brief narrative of the subsequent counseling sessions. Major focus is on the process rather than the content. Note difficulties and progress as appropriate. Also, indicate the nature and reason for termination and client recommendations for the future or professional referrals.

## V. Counseling Goals

Indicate your counseling goals, interventions, and rationales. Explain your counseling interventions and state your desired effect. Did this case involve any consultation with significant others? If so, explain your approach to consultation.

## VI. Self-Evaluation

Provide a brief evaluation of your own counseling skills with this particular client. Did you accomplish your goals? If you could do it again, is there anything you would do differently?

# Personal Review and Practicum Self-Evaluation

All practicum counselors are expected to spend one to two hours each week reviewing and critiquing their own counseling work. Personal and professional growth is highly dependent upon self-analysis and self-evaluation. Each student is required to complete a comprehensive self-evaluation at the end of the practicum experience which is included in the completed ***Practicum Portfolio***. The Self-Evaluation, a three- to four-page narrative of the practicum experience, acquired knowledge and skills, and strengths and weaknesses, is due, as part of your ***Practicum Portfolio*** at the completion of the practicum experience.

## Practicum Site Evaluation *and* Letter of Appreciation

All practicum counselors are required to complete a Practicum Site Evaluation form in order to provide confidential feedback about the school or agency in which the practicum was conducted. The completed Practicum Site Evaluation form is due as part of the ***Practicum Portfolio*** at the completion of the practicum experience.

At the completion of the practicum experience at a particular site, the practicum counselor is required to write (and send) a professional letter of appreciation and gratitude to both the site supervisor as well as the various site administrators with whom the practicum counselor worked. Copies of these letters of appreciation must be included in the ***Practicum Portfolio*** at the completion of the practicum experience.

# Practicum Site Evaluation

Practicum Counselor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Practicum Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Site Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What were the positive aspects of your practicum placement?
  
2. What were the negative aspects of your practicum placement?
  
3. For each item below, please circle the appropriate number with regard to your site supervisor:

**1 = strongly agree    2 = agree    3 = undecided    4 = disagree    5 = strongly disagree**

a. Helped you to work independently with clients.

**1            2            3            4            5**

b. Helped you to improve your counseling skills.

**1            2            3            4            5**

c. Helped you to obtain a variety of counseling-related experiences.

**1            2            3            4            5**

d. Helped by giving you necessary information for understanding and working with clients.

**1            2            3            4            5**

e. Helped by showing you or discussing with you various counseling methods and techniques.

**1            2            3            4            5**

f. Helped you by providing valuable feedback regarding counseling skills and professional behavior.

**1            2            3            4            5**

g. Helped you to feel welcome at the practicum site.

**1            2            3            4            5**

h. Overall, this practicum placement was highly beneficial.

**1            2            3            4            5**

**APPENDIX A**

**CODE OF ETHICS**

**OF THE**

**AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION**

© 2005 by the American Counseling Association.

[www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)

# Preamble

The American Counseling Association is an educational, scientific, and professional organization whose members work in a variety of settings and serve in multiple capacities. ACA members are dedicated to the enhancement of human development throughout the life span. Association members recognize diversity and embrace a cross-cultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of people within their social and cultural contexts. Professional values are an important way of living out an ethical commitment. Values inform principles. Inherently held values that guide our behaviors or exceed prescribed behaviors are deeply ingrained in the counselor and developed out of personal dedication, rather than the mandatory requirement of an external organization.

# Purpose

The *ACA Code of Ethics* serves five main purposes:

1. The *Code* enables the association to clarify to current and future members, and to those served by members, the nature of the ethical responsibilities held in common by its members.
2. The *Code* helps support the mission of the association.
3. The *Code* establishes principles that define ethical behavior and best practices of association members.
4. The *Code* serves as an ethical guide designed to assist members in constructing a professional course of action that best serves those utilizing counseling services and best promotes the values of the counseling profession.
5. The *Code* serves as the basis for processing of ethical complaints and inquiries initiated against members of the association.

The *ACA Code of Ethics* contains eight main sections that address the following areas:

- Section A: **The Counseling Relationship**
- Section B: **Confidentiality, Privileged Communication, and Privacy**
- Section C: **Professional Responsibility**
- Section D: **Relationships With Other Professionals**
- Section E: **Evaluation, Assessment, and Interpretation**
- Section F: **Supervision, Training, and Teaching**
- Section G: **Research and Publication**
- Section H: **Resolving Ethical Issues**

Each section of the *ACA Code of Ethics* begins with an **Introduction**. The introductions to each section discuss what counselors should aspire to with regard to ethical behavior and responsibility. The Introduction helps set the tone for that particular section and provides a starting point that invites reflection on the ethical mandates contained in each part of the *ACA Code of Ethics*.

When counselors are faced with ethical dilemmas that are difficult to resolve, they are expected to engage in a carefully considered ethical decision-making process. Reasonable differences of opinion can and do exist among counselors with respect to the ways in which values, ethical principles, and ethical standards would be applied when they conflict. While there is no specific ethical decision-making model that is most effective, counselors are expected to be familiar with a credible model of decision making that can bear public scrutiny and its application.

Through a chosen ethical decision-making process and evaluation of the context of the situation, counselors are empowered to make decisions that help expand the capacity of people to grow and develop.

A brief **Glossary** is given to provide readers with a concise description of some of the terms used in the *ACA Code of Ethics*.

# Section A

## The Counseling Relationship

### Introduction

Counselors encourage client growth and development in ways that foster the interest and welfare of clients and promote formation of healthy relationships. Counselors actively attempt to understand the diverse cultural backgrounds of the clients they serve. Counselors also explore their own cultural identities and how these affect their values and beliefs about the counseling process. Counselors are encouraged to contribute to society by devoting a portion of their professional activity to services for which there is little or no financial return (*pro bono publico*).

### A.1. Welfare of Those Served by Counselors

#### A.1.a. Primary Responsibility

The primary responsibility of counselors is to respect the dignity and to promote the welfare of clients.

#### A.1.b. Records

Counselors maintain records necessary for rendering professional services to their clients and as required by laws, regulations, or agency or institution procedures. Counselors include sufficient and timely documentation in their client records to facilitate the delivery and continuity of needed services. Counselors take reasonable steps to ensure that documentation in records accurately reflects client progress and services provided. If errors are made in client records, counselors take steps to properly note the correction of such errors according to agency or institutional policies.

(See A.12.g.7., B.6., B.6.g., G.2.j.)

#### A.1.c. Counseling Plans

Counselors and their clients work jointly in devising integrated counseling plans that offer reasonable promise of success and are consistent with abilities and circumstances of clients. Counselors and clients regularly review counseling plans to assess their continued viability and effectiveness, respecting the freedom of choice of clients.

(See A.2.a., A.2.d., A.12.g.)

#### A.1.d. Support Network Involvement

Counselors recognize that support networks hold various meanings in the lives of clients and consider enlisting the support, understanding, and involvement of others (e.g., religious/spiritual/community leaders, family members, friends) as positive resources, when appropriate, with client consent.

#### A.1.e. Employment Needs

Counselors work with their clients considering employment in jobs that are consistent with the overall abilities, vocational limitations, physical restrictions, general temperament, interest and aptitude patterns, social skills, education, general qualifications, and other relevant characteristics and needs of clients. When appropriate, counselors appropriately trained in career development will assist in the placement of clients in positions that are consistent with the interest, culture, and the welfare of clients, employers, and/or the public.

### A.2. Informed Consent in the Counseling Relationship

(See A.12.g., B.5., B.6.b., E.3., E.13.b., F.1.c., G.2.a.)

#### A.2.a. Informed Consent

Clients have the freedom to choose whether to enter into or remain in a counseling relationship and need adequate information about the counseling process and the counselor. Counselors have an obligation to review in writing and verbally with clients the rights and responsibilities of both the counselor and the client. Informed consent is an ongoing part of the counseling process, and counselors appropriately document discussions of informed consent throughout the counseling relationship.

#### A.2.b. Types of Information Needed

Counselors explicitly explain to clients the nature of all services provided. They inform clients about issues such as, but not limited to, the following: the purposes, goals, techniques, procedures, limitations, potential risks, and benefits of services; the counselor's qualifications, credentials, and relevant experience; continuation of services upon the incapacitation or death of a counselor; and other pertinent information. Counselors take steps to ensure that clients understand the implications of diagnosis, the intended use of tests and reports, fees, and billing arrangements. Clients have the right to confidentiality and to be provided with an explanation of its limitations (including how supervisors and/or treatment team professionals are

involved); to obtain clear information about their records; to participate in the ongoing counseling plans; and to refuse any services or modality change and to be advised of the consequences of such refusal.

#### A.2.c. Developmental and Cultural Sensitivity

Counselors communicate information in ways that are both developmentally and culturally appropriate. Counselors use clear and understandable language when discussing issues related to informed consent. When clients have difficulty understanding the language used by counselors, they provide necessary services (e.g., arranging for a qualified interpreter or translator) to ensure comprehension by clients. In collaboration with clients, counselors consider cultural implications of informed consent procedures and, where possible, counselors adjust their practices accordingly.

#### A.2.d. Inability to Give Consent

When counseling minors or persons unable to give voluntary consent, counselors seek the assent of clients to services, and include them in decision making as appropriate. Counselors recognize the need to balance the ethical rights of clients to make choices, their capacity to give consent or assent to receive services, and parental or familial legal rights and responsibilities to protect these clients and make decisions on their behalf.

### A.3. Clients Served by Others

When counselors learn that their clients are in a professional relationship with another mental health professional, they request release from clients to inform the other professionals and strive to establish positive and collaborative professional relationships.

### A.4. Avoiding Harm and Imposing Values

#### A.4.a. Avoiding Harm

Counselors act to avoid harming their clients, trainees, and research participants and to minimize or to remedy unavoidable or unanticipated harm.

#### A.4.b. Personal Values

Counselors are aware of their own values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and avoid imposing values that are inconsistent with counseling goals. Counselors respect the diversity of clients, trainees, and research participants.

### A.5. Roles and Relationships With Clients

(See F.3., F.10., G.3.)

#### **A.5.a. Current Clients**

Sexual or romantic counselor–client interactions or relationships with current clients, their romantic partners, or their family members are prohibited.

#### **A.5.b. Former Clients**

Sexual or romantic counselor–client interactions or relationships with former clients, their romantic partners, or their family members are prohibited for a period of 5 years following the last professional contact. Counselors, before engaging in sexual or romantic interactions or relationships with clients, their romantic partners, or client family members after 5 years following the last professional contact, demonstrate forethought and document (in written form) whether the interactions or relationship can be viewed as exploitive in some way and/or whether there is still potential to harm the former client; in cases of potential exploitation and/or harm, the counselor avoids entering such an interaction or relationship.

#### **A.5.c. Nonprofessional Interactions or Relationships (Other Than Sexual or Romantic Interactions or Relationships)**

Counselor–client nonprofessional relationships with clients, former clients, their romantic partners, or their family members should be avoided, except when the interaction is potentially beneficial to the client.

(See A.5.d.)

#### **A.5.d. Potentially Beneficial Interactions**

When a counselor–client nonprofessional interaction with a client or former client may be potentially beneficial to the client or former client, the counselor must document in case records, prior to the interaction (when feasible), the rationale for such an interaction, the potential benefit, and anticipated consequences for the client or former client and other individuals significantly involved with the client or former client. Such interactions should be initiated with appropriate client consent. Where unintentional harm occurs to the client or former client, or to an individual significantly involved with the client or former client, due to the nonprofessional interaction, the counselor must show evidence of an attempt to remedy such harm. Examples of potentially beneficial interactions include, but are not limited to, attending a formal ceremony (e.g., a wedding/commitment ceremony or graduation); purchasing a service or product provided by a client or former

client (excepting unrestricted bartering); hospital visits to an ill family member; mutual membership in a professional association, organization, or community. (See A.5.c.)

#### **A.5.e. Role Changes in the Professional Relationship**

When a counselor changes a role from the original or most recent contracted relationship, he or she obtains informed consent from the client and explains the right of the client to refuse services related to the change. Examples of role changes include

1. changing from individual to relationship or family counseling, or vice versa;
2. changing from a nonforensic evaluative role to a therapeutic role, or vice versa;
3. changing from a counselor to a researcher role (i.e., enlisting clients as research participants), or vice versa; and
4. changing from a counselor to a mediator role, or vice versa.

Clients must be fully informed of any anticipated consequences (e.g., financial, legal, personal, or therapeutic) of counselor role changes.

#### **A.6. Roles and Relationships at Individual, Group, Institutional, and Societal Levels**

##### **A.6.a. Advocacy**

When appropriate, counselors advocate at individual, group, institutional, and societal levels to examine potential barriers and obstacles that inhibit access and/or the growth and development of clients.

##### **A.6.b. Confidentiality and Advocacy**

Counselors obtain client consent prior to engaging in advocacy efforts on behalf of an identifiable client to improve the provision of services and to work toward removal of systemic barriers or obstacles that inhibit client access, growth, and development.

#### **A.7. Multiple Clients**

When a counselor agrees to provide counseling services to two or more persons who have a relationship, the counselor clarifies at the outset which person or persons are clients and the nature of the relationships the counselor will have with each involved person. If it becomes apparent that the counselor may be called upon to perform potentially conflicting roles, the counselor will

clarify, adjust, or withdraw from roles appropriately.

(See A.8.a., B.4.)

#### **A.8. Group Work**

(See B.4.a.)

##### **A.8.a. Screening**

Counselors screen prospective group counseling/therapy participants. To the extent possible, counselors select members whose needs and goals are compatible with goals of the group, who will not impede the group process, and whose well-being will not be jeopardized by the group experience.

##### **A.8.b. Protecting Clients**

In a group setting, counselors take reasonable precautions to protect clients from physical, emotional, or psychological trauma.

#### **A.9. End-of-Life Care for Terminally Ill Clients**

##### **A.9.a. Quality of Care**

Counselors strive to take measures that enable clients

1. to obtain high quality end-of-life care for their physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs;
2. to exercise the highest degree of self-determination possible;
3. to be given every opportunity possible to engage in informed decision making regarding their end-of-life care; and
4. to receive complete and adequate assessment regarding their ability to make competent, rational decisions on their own behalf from a mental health professional who is experienced in end-of-life care practice.

##### **A.9.b. Counselor Competence, Choice, and Referral**

Recognizing the personal, moral, and competence issues related to end-of-life decisions, counselors may choose to work or not work with terminally ill clients who wish to explore their end-of-life options. Counselors provide appropriate referral information to ensure that clients receive the necessary help.

##### **A.9.c. Confidentiality**

Counselors who provide services to terminally ill individuals who are considering hastening their own deaths have the option of breaking or not breaking confidentiality, depending on applicable laws and the specific circumstances of the situation and after seeking consultation or supervision from appropriate professional and legal parties. (See B.5.c., B.7.c.)

#### **A.10. Fees and Bartering**

##### **A.10.a. Accepting Fees From**



## **Agency Clients**

Counselors refuse a private fee or other remuneration for rendering services to persons who are entitled to such services through the counselor's employing agency or institution. The policies of a particular agency may make explicit provisions for agency clients to receive counseling services from members of its staff in private practice. In such instances, the clients must be informed of other options open to them should they seek private counseling services.

### **A.10.b. Establishing Fees**

In establishing fees for professional counseling services, counselors consider the financial status of clients and locality. In the event that the established fee structure is inappropriate for a client, counselors assist clients in attempting to find comparable services of acceptable cost.

### **A.10.c. Nonpayment of Fees**

If counselors intend to use collection agencies or take legal measures to collect fees from clients who do not pay for services as agreed upon, they first inform clients of intended actions and offer clients the opportunity to make payment.

### **A.10.d. Bartering**

Counselors may barter only if the relationship is not exploitive or harmful and does not place the counselor in an unfair advantage, if the client requests it, and if such arrangements are an accepted practice among professionals in the community. Counselors consider the cultural implications of bartering and discuss relevant concerns with clients and document such agreements in a clear written contract.

### **A.10.e. Receiving Gifts**

Counselors understand the challenges of accepting gifts from clients and recognize that in some cultures, small gifts are a token of respect and showing gratitude. When determining whether or not to accept a gift from clients, counselors take into account the therapeutic relationship, the monetary value of the gift, a client's motivation for giving the gift, and the counselor's motivation for wanting or declining the gift.

## **A.11. Termination and Referral**

### **A.11.a. Abandonment Prohibited**

Counselors do not abandon or neglect clients in counseling. Counselors assist in making appropriate arrangements for the continuation of treatment, when necessary, during interruptions such as vacations, illness, and following termination.

### **A.11.b. Inability to Assist Clients**

If counselors determine an inability to be of professional assistance to clients, they avoid entering or continuing counseling relationships. Counselors are knowledgeable about culturally and clinically appropriate referral resources and suggest these alternatives. If clients decline the suggested referrals, counselors should discontinue the relationship.

### **A.11.c. Appropriate Termination**

Counselors terminate a counseling relationship when it becomes reasonably apparent that the client no longer needs assistance, is not likely to benefit, or is being harmed by continued counseling. Counselors may terminate counseling when in jeopardy of harm by the client, or another person with whom the client has a relationship, or when clients do not pay fees as agreed upon. Counselors provide pretermination counseling and recommend other service providers when necessary.

### **A.11.d. Appropriate Transfer of Services**

When counselors transfer or refer clients to other practitioners, they ensure that appropriate clinical and administrative processes are completed and open communication is maintained with both clients and practitioners.

## **A.12. Technology Applications**

### **A.12.a. Benefits and Limitations**

Counselors inform clients of the benefits and limitations of using information technology applications in the counseling process and in business/billing procedures. Such technologies include but are not limited to computer hardware and software, telephones, the World Wide Web, the Internet, online assessment instruments and other communication devices.

### **A.12.b. Technology-Assisted Services**

When providing technology-assisted distance counseling services, counselors determine that clients are intellectually, emotionally, and physically capable of using the application and that the application is appropriate for the needs of clients.

### **A.12.c. Inappropriate Services**

When technology-assisted distance counseling services are deemed inappropriate by the counselor or client, counselors consider delivering services face to face.

### **A.12.d. Access**

Counselors provide reasonable access to computer applications when providing technology-assisted distance counseling services.

### **A.12.e. Laws and Statutes**

Counselors ensure that the use of technology does not violate the laws of any local, state, national, or international entity and observe all relevant statutes.

### **A.12.f. Assistance**

Counselors seek business, legal, and technical assistance when using technology applications, particularly when the use of such applications crosses state or national boundaries.

### **A.12.g. Technology and Informed Consent**

As part of the process of establishing informed consent, counselors do the following:

1. Address issues related to the difficulty of maintaining the confidentiality of electronically transmitted communications.
2. Inform clients of all colleagues, supervisors, and employees, such as Informational Technology (IT) administrators, who might have authorized or unauthorized access to electronic transmissions.
3. Urge clients to be aware of all authorized or unauthorized users including family members and fellow employees who have access to any technology clients may use in the counseling process.
4. Inform clients of pertinent legal rights and limitations governing the practice of a profession over state lines or international boundaries.
5. Use encrypted Web sites and e-mail communications to help ensure confidentiality when possible.
6. When the use of encryption is not possible, counselors notify clients of this fact and limit electronic transmissions to general communications that are not client specific.
7. Inform clients if and for how long archival storage of transaction records are maintained.
8. Discuss the possibility of technology failure and alternate methods of service delivery.
9. Inform clients of emergency procedures, such as calling 911 or a local crisis hotline, when the counselor is not available.
10. Discuss time zone differences, local customs, and cultural or language differences that might impact service delivery.
11. Inform clients when technology-assisted distance counseling services

are not covered by insurance.  
(See A.2.)

#### **A.12.h. Sites on the World Wide Web**

Counselors maintaining sites on the World Wide Web (the Internet) do the following:

1. Regularly check that electronic links are working and professionally appropriate.
2. Establish ways clients can contact the counselor in case of technology failure.
3. Provide electronic links to relevant state licensure and professional certification boards to protect consumer rights and facilitate addressing ethical concerns.
4. Establish a method for verifying client identity.
5. Obtain the written consent of the legal guardian or other authorized legal representative prior to rendering services in the event the client is a minor child, an adult who is legally incompetent, or an adult incapable of giving informed consent.
6. Strive to provide a site that is accessible to persons with disabilities.
7. Strive to provide translation capabilities for clients who have a different primary language while also addressing the imperfect nature of such translations.
8. Assist clients in determining the validity and reliability of information found on the World Wide Web and other technology applications.

## **Section B**

### **Confidentiality, Privileged Communication, and Privacy**

#### **Introduction**

Counselors recognize that trust is a cornerstone of the counseling relationship. Counselors aspire to earn the trust of clients by creating an ongoing partnership, establishing and upholding appropriate boundaries, and maintaining confidentiality. Counselors communicate the parameters of confidentiality in a culturally competent manner.

#### **B.1. Respecting Client Rights**

##### **B.1.a. Multicultural/Diversity Considerations**

Counselors maintain awareness and

sensitivity regarding cultural meanings of confidentiality and privacy.

Counselors respect differing views toward disclosure of information. Counselors hold ongoing discussions with clients as to how, when, and with whom information is to be shared.

##### **B.1.b. Respect for Privacy**

Counselors respect client rights to privacy. Counselors solicit private information from clients only when it is beneficial to the counseling process.

##### **B.1.c. Respect for Confidentiality**

Counselors do not share confidential information without client consent or without sound legal or ethical justification.

##### **B.1.d. Explanation of Limitations**

At initiation and throughout the counseling process, counselors inform clients of the limitations of confidentiality and seek to identify foreseeable situations in which confidentiality must be breached (See A.2.b.)

#### **B.2. Exceptions**

##### **B.2.a. Danger and Legal Requirements**

The general requirement that counselors keep information confidential does not apply when disclosure is required to protect clients or identified others from serious and foreseeable harm or when legal requirements demand that confidential information must be revealed. Counselors consult with other professionals when in doubt as to the validity of an exception. Additional considerations apply when addressing end-of-life issues.  
(See A.9.c.)

##### **B.2.b. Contagious, Life-Threatening Diseases**

When clients disclose that they have a disease commonly known to be both communicable and life threatening, counselors may be justified in disclosing information to identifiable third parties, if they are known to be at demonstrable and high risk of contracting the disease. Prior to making a disclosure, counselors confirm that there is such a diagnosis and assess the intent of clients to inform the third parties about their disease or to engage in any behaviors that may be harmful to an identifiable third party.

##### **B.2.c. Court-Ordered Disclosure**

When subpoenaed to release confidential or privileged information without a client's permission, counselors obtain written, informed consent from the client or take steps to prohibit the disclosure or have it limited as narrowly as possible

due to potential harm to the client or counseling relationship.

##### **B.2.d. Minimal Disclosure**

To the extent possible, clients are informed before confidential information is disclosed and are involved in the disclosure decision-making process. When circumstances require the disclosure of confidential information, only essential information is revealed.

#### **B.3. Information Shared With Others**

##### **B.3.a. Subordinates**

Counselors make every effort to ensure that privacy and confidentiality of clients are maintained by subordinates, including employees, supervisees, students, clerical assistants, and volunteers. (See F.1.c.) confidentiality and seek to identify foreseeable situations in which confidentiality

##### **B.3.b. Treatment Teams**

When client treatment involves a continued review or participation by a treatment team, the client will be informed of the team's existence and composition, information being shared, and the purposes of sharing such information.

##### **B.3.c. Confidential Settings**

Counselors discuss confidential information only in settings in which they can reasonably ensure client privacy.

##### **B.3.d. Third-Party Payers**

Counselors disclose information to third-party payers only when clients have authorized such disclosure.

##### **B.3.e. Transmitting Confidential Information**

Counselors take precautions to ensure the confidentiality of information transmitted through the use of computers, electronic mail, facsimile machines, telephones, voicemail, answering machines, and other electronic or computer technology.  
(See A.12.g.)

##### **B.3.f. Deceased Clients**

Counselors protect the confidentiality of deceased clients, consistent with legal requirements and agency or setting policies.

#### **B.4. Groups and Families**

##### **B.4.a. Group Work**

In group work, counselors clearly explain the importance and parameters of confidentiality for the specific group being entered.

##### **B.4.b. Couples and Family Counseling**

In couples and family counseling, counselors clearly define who is considered "the client" and discuss

expectations and limitations of confidentiality. Counselors seek agreement and document in writing such agreement among all involved parties having capacity to give consent concerning each individual's right to confidentiality and any obligation to preserve the confidentiality of information known.

## **B.5. Clients Lacking Capacity to Give Informed Consent**

### **B.5.a. Responsibility to Clients**

When counseling minor clients or adult clients who lack the capacity to give voluntary, informed consent, counselors protect the confidentiality of information received in the counseling relationship as specified by federal and state laws, written policies, and applicable ethical standards.

### **B.5.b. Responsibility to Parents and Legal Guardians**

Counselors inform parents and legal guardians about the role of counselors and the confidential nature of the counseling relationship. Counselors are sensitive to the cultural diversity of families and respect the inherent rights and responsibilities of parents/guardians over the welfare of their children/charges according to law. Counselors work to establish, as appropriate, collaborative relationships with parents/guardians to best serve clients.

### **B.5.c. Release of Confidential Information**

When counseling minor clients or adult clients who lack the capacity to give voluntary consent to release confidential information, counselors seek permission from an appropriate third party to disclose information. In such instances, counselors inform clients consistent with their level of understanding and take culturally appropriate measures to safeguard client confidentiality.

## **B.6. Records**

### **B.6.a. Confidentiality of Records**

Counselors ensure that records are kept in a secure location and that only authorized persons have access to records.

### **B.6.b. Permission to Record**

Counselors obtain permission from clients prior to recording sessions through electronic or other means.

### **B.6.c. Permission to Observe**

Counselors obtain permission from clients prior to observing counseling sessions, reviewing session transcripts, or viewing recordings of sessions with supervisors, faculty, peers, or others within the training environment.

### **B.6.d. Client Access**

Counselors provide reasonable access to records and copies of records when requested by competent clients. Counselors limit the access of clients to their records, or portions of their records, only when there is compelling evidence that such access would cause harm to the client. Counselors document the request of clients and the rationale for withholding some or all of the record in the files of clients. In situations involving multiple clients, counselors provide individual clients with only those parts of records that related directly to them and do not include confidential information related to any other client.

### **B.6.e. Assistance With Records**

When clients request access to their records, counselors provide assistance and consultation in interpreting counseling records.

### **B.6.f. Disclosure or Transfer**

Unless exceptions to confidentiality exist, counselors obtain written permission from clients to disclose or transfer records to legitimate third parties. Steps are taken to ensure that receivers of counseling records are sensitive to their confidential nature. (*See A.3., E.4.*)

### **B.6.g. Storage and Disposal After Termination**

Counselors store records following termination of services to ensure reasonable future access, maintain records in accordance with state and federal statutes governing records, and dispose of client records and other sensitive materials in a manner that protects client confidentiality. When records are of an artistic nature, counselors obtain client (or guardian) consent with regards to handling of such records or documents. (*See A.1.b.*)

### **B.6.h. Reasonable Precautions**

Counselors take reasonable precautions to protect client confidentiality in the event of the counselor's termination of practice, incapacity, or death. (*See C.2.h.*)

## **B.7. Research and Training**

### **B.7.a. Institutional Approval**

When institutional approval is required, counselors provide accurate information about their research proposals and obtain approval prior to conducting their research. They conduct research in accordance with the approved research protocol.

### **B.7.b. Adherence to Guidelines**

Counselors are responsible for understanding and adhering to state, federal, agency, or institutional policies or applicable guidelines regarding confidentiality in their research practices.

## **B.7.c. Confidentiality of Information Obtained in Research**

Violations of participant privacy and confidentiality are risks of participation in research involving human participants. Investigators maintain all research records in a secure manner. They explain to participants the risks of violations of privacy and confidentiality and disclose to participants any limits of confidentiality that reasonably can be expected. Regardless of the degree to which confidentiality will be maintained, investigators must disclose to participants any limits of confidentiality that reasonably can be expected. (*See G.2.e.*)

### **B.7.d. Disclosure of Research Information**

Counselors do not disclose confidential information that reasonably could lead to the identification of a research participant unless they have obtained the prior consent of the person. Use of data derived from counseling relationships for purposes of training, research, or publication is confined to content that is disguised to ensure the anonymity of the individuals involved. (*See G.2.a., G.2.d.*)

### **B.7.e. Agreement for Identification**

Identification of clients, students, or supervisees in a presentation or publication is permissible only when they have reviewed the material and agreed to its presentation or publication. (*See G.4.d.*)

## **B.8. Consultation**

### **B.8.a. Agreements**

When acting as consultants, counselors seek agreements among all parties involved concerning each individual's rights to confidentiality, the obligation of each individual to preserve confidential information, and the limits of confidentiality of information shared by others.

### **B.8.b. Respect for Privacy**

Information obtained in a consulting relationship is discussed for professional purposes only with persons directly involved with the case. Written and oral reports present only data germane to the purposes of the consultation, and every effort is made to protect client identity and to avoid undue invasion of privacy.

### **B.8.c. Disclosure of Confidential Information**

When consulting with colleagues, counselors do not disclose confidential information that reasonably could lead to the identification of a client or other person or organization with whom they have a confidential relationship unless they have obtained the prior consent of the person or organization or the

disclosure cannot be avoided. They disclose information only to the extent necessary to achieve the purposes of the consultation. (See D.2.d.)

# Section C

## Professional Responsibility

### Introduction

Counselors aspire to open, honest, and accurate communication in dealing with the public and other professionals. They practice in a nondiscriminatory manner within the boundaries of professional and personal competence and have a responsibility to abide by the *ACA Code of Ethics*. Counselors actively participate in local, state, and national associations that foster the development and improvement of counseling. Counselors advocate to promote change at the individual, group, institutional, and societal levels that improve the quality of life for individuals and groups and remove potential barriers to the provision or access of appropriate services being offered. Counselors have a responsibility to the public to engage in counseling practices that are based on rigorous research methodologies. In addition, counselors engage in self-care activities to maintain and promote their emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being to best meet their professional responsibilities.

### C.1. Knowledge of Standards

Counselors have a responsibility to read, understand, and follow the *ACA Code of Ethics* and adhere to applicable laws and regulations.

### C.2. Professional Competence

#### C.2.a. Boundaries of Competence

Counselors practice only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, state and national professional credentials, and appropriate professional experience. Counselors gain knowledge, personal awareness, sensitivity, and skills pertinent to working with a diverse client population. (See A.9.b., C.4.e., E.2., F.2., F.11.b.)

#### C.2.b. New Specialty Areas of Practice

Counselors practice in specialty areas new to them only after appropriate education, training, and supervised experience. While developing skills in

new specialty areas, counselors take steps to ensure the competence of their work and to protect others from possible harm. (See F.6.f.)

#### C.2.c. Qualified for Employment

Counselors accept employment only for positions for which they are qualified by education, training, supervised experience, state and national professional credentials, and appropriate professional experience. Counselors hire for professional counseling positions only individuals who are qualified and competent for those positions.

#### C.2.d. Monitor Effectiveness

Counselors continually monitor their effectiveness as professionals and take steps to improve when necessary. Counselors in private practice take reasonable steps to seek peer supervision as needed to evaluate their efficacy as counselors.

#### C.2.e. Consultation on Ethical Obligations

Counselors take reasonable steps to consult with other counselors or related professionals when they have questions regarding their ethical obligations or professional practice.

#### C.2.f. Continuing Education

Counselors recognize the need for continuing education to acquire and maintain a reasonable level of awareness of current scientific and professional information in their fields of activity. They take steps to maintain competence in the skills they use, are open to new procedures, and keep current with the diverse populations and specific populations with whom they work.

#### C.2.g. Impairment

Counselors are alert to the signs of impairment from their own physical, mental, or emotional problems and refrain from offering or providing professional services when such impairment is likely to harm a client or others. They seek assistance for problems that reach the level of professional impairment, and, if necessary, they limit, suspend, or terminate their professional responsibilities until such time it is determined that they may safely resume their work. Counselors assist colleagues or supervisors in recognizing their own professional impairment and provide consultation and assistance when warranted with colleagues or supervisors showing signs of impairment and intervene as appropriate to prevent imminent harm to clients. (See A.11.b., F.8.b.)

### C.2.h. Counselor Incapacitation or Termination of Practice

When counselors leave a practice, they follow a prepared plan for transfer of clients and files. Counselors prepare and disseminate to an identified colleague or "records custodian" a plan for the transfer of clients and files in the case of their incapacitation, death, or termination of practice.

### C.3. Advertising and Soliciting Clients

#### C.3.a. Accurate Advertising

When advertising or otherwise representing their services to the public, counselors identify their credentials in an accurate manner that is not false, misleading, deceptive, or fraudulent.

#### C.3.b. Testimonials

Counselors who use testimonials do not solicit them from current clients nor former clients nor any other persons who may be vulnerable to undue influence.

#### C.3.c. Statements by Others

Counselors make reasonable efforts to ensure that statements made by others about them or the profession of counseling are accurate.

#### C.3.d. Recruiting Through Employment

Counselors do not use their places of employment or institutional affiliation to recruit or gain clients, supervisees, or consultees for their private practices.

#### C.3.e. Products and Training Advertisements

Counselors who develop products related to their profession or conduct workshops or training events ensure that the advertisements concerning these products or events are accurate and disclose adequate information for consumers to make informed choices. (See C.6.d.)

#### C.3.f. Promoting to Those Served

Counselors do not use counseling, teaching, training, or supervisory relationships to promote their products or training events in a manner that is deceptive or would exert undue influence on individuals who may be vulnerable. However, counselor educators may adopt textbooks they have authored for instructional purposes.

### C.4. Professional Qualifications

#### C.4.a. Accurate Representation

Counselors claim or imply only professional qualifications actually completed and correct any known misrepresentations of their qualifications by others. Counselors truthfully represent the qualifications of their professional

colleagues. Counselors clearly distinguish between paid and volunteer work experience and accurately describe their continuing education and specialized training. (See C.2.a.)

#### **C.4.b. Credentials**

Counselors claim only licenses or certifications that are current and in good standing.

#### **C.4.c. Educational Degrees**

Counselors clearly differentiate between earned and honorary degrees.

#### **C.4.d. Implying Doctoral-Level Competence**

Counselors clearly state their highest earned degree in counseling or closely related field. Counselors do not imply doctoral-level competence when only possessing a master's degree in counseling or a related field by referring to themselves as "Dr." in a counseling context when their doctorate is not in counseling or related field.

#### **C.4.e. Program Accreditation Status**

Counselors clearly state the accreditation status of their degree programs at the time the degree was earned.

#### **C.4.f. Professional Membership**

Counselors clearly differentiate between current, active memberships and former memberships in associations. Members of the American Counseling Association must clearly differentiate between professional membership, which implies the possession of at least a master's degree in counseling, and regular membership, which is open to individuals whose interests and activities are consistent with those of ACA but are not qualified for professional membership.

### **C.5. Nondiscrimination**

Counselors do not condone or engage in discrimination based on age, culture, disability, ethnicity, race, religion/spirituality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status/partnership, language preference, socioeconomic status, or any basis proscribed by law. Counselors do not discriminate against clients, students, employees, supervisees, or research participants in a manner that has a negative impact on these persons.

### **C.6. Public Responsibility**

#### **C.6.a. Sexual Harassment**

Counselors do not engage in or condone sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as sexual solicitation, physical advances, or verbal or nonverbal conduct that is sexual in nature, that occurs in connection with professional activities or roles, and that either

1. is unwelcome, is offensive, or creates a hostile workplace or learning environment, and counselors know or are told this; or
2. is sufficiently severe or intense to be perceived as harassment to a reasonable person in the context in which the behavior occurred.

Sexual harassment can consist of a single intense or severe act or multiple persistent or pervasive acts.

#### **C.6.b. Reports to Third Parties**

Counselors are accurate, honest, and objective in reporting their professional activities and judgments to appropriate third parties, including courts, health insurance companies, those who are the recipients of evaluation reports, and others. (See B.3., E.4.)

#### **C.6.c. Media Presentations**

When counselors provide advice or comment by means of public lectures, demonstrations, radio or television programs, prerecorded tapes, technology-based applications, printed articles, mailed material, or other media, they take reasonable precautions to ensure that

1. the statements are based on appropriate professional counseling literature and practice,
2. the statements are otherwise consistent with the *ACA Code of Ethics*, and
3. the recipients of the information are not encouraged to infer that a professional counseling relationship has been established.

#### **C.6.d. Exploitation of Others**

Counselors do not exploit others in their professional relationships. (See C.3.e.)

#### **C.6.e. Scientific Bases for Treatment Modalities**

Counselors use techniques/ procedures/ modalities that are grounded in theory and/or have an empirical or scientific foundation. Counselors who do not must define the techniques/ procedures as "unproven" or developing" and explain the potential risks and ethical considerations of using such techniques/procedures and take steps to protect clients from possible harm. (See A.4.a., E.5.c., E.5.d.)

### **C.7. Responsibility to Other Professionals**

#### **C.7.a. Personal Public Statements**

When making personal statements in a public context, counselors clarify that they are speaking from their personal perspectives and that they are not speaking on behalf of all counselors or the profession.

# Section D

## Relationships With Other Professionals

### **Introduction**

Professional counselors recognize that the quality of their interactions with colleagues can influence the quality of services provided to clients. They work to become knowledgeable about colleagues within and outside the field of counseling. Counselors develop positive working relationships and systems of communication with colleagues to enhance services to clients.

### **D.1. Relationships With Colleagues, Employers, and Employees**

#### **D.1.a. Different Approaches**

Counselors are respectful of approaches to counseling services that differ from their own. Counselors are respectful of traditions and practices of other professional groups with which they work.

#### **D.1.b. Forming Relationships**

Counselors work to develop and strengthen interdisciplinary relations with colleagues from other disciplines to best serve clients.

#### **D.1.c. Interdisciplinary Teamwork**

Counselors who are members of interdisciplinary teams delivering multifaceted services to clients, keep the focus on how to best serve the clients. They participate in and contribute to decisions that affect the well-being of clients by drawing on the perspectives, values, and experiences of the counseling profession and those of colleagues from other disciplines. (See A.1.a.)

#### **D.1.d. Confidentiality**

When counselors are required by law, institutional policy, or extraordinary circumstances to serve in more than one role in judicial or administrative proceedings, they clarify role expectations and the parameters of confidentiality with their colleagues. (See B.1.c., B.1.d., B.2.c., B.2.d., B.3.b.)

#### **D.1.e. Establishing Professional and Ethical Obligations**

Counselors who are members of interdisciplinary teams clarify professional and ethical obligations of the team as a whole and of its individual members. When a team decision raises ethical concerns, counselors first attempt to resolve the concern within the team. If they cannot reach resolution among team

members, counselors pursue other avenues to address their concerns consistent with client well-being.

#### **D.1.f. Personnel Selection and Assignment**

Counselors select competent staff and assign responsibilities compatible with their skills and experiences.

#### **D.1.g. Employer Policies**

The acceptance of employment in an agency or institution implies that counselors are in agreement with its general policies and principles.

Counselors strive to reach agreement with employers as to acceptable standards of conduct that allow for changes in institutional policy conducive to the growth and development of clients.

#### **D.1.h. Negative Conditions**

Counselors alert their employers of inappropriate policies and practices.

They attempt to effect changes in such policies or procedures through constructive action within the organization. When such policies are potentially disruptive or damaging to clients or may limit the effectiveness of services provided and change cannot be effected, counselors take appropriate further action. Such action may include referral to appropriate certification, accreditation, or state licensure organizations, or voluntary termination of employment.

#### **D.1.i. Protection From Punitive Action**

Counselors take care not to harass or dismiss an employee who has acted in a responsible and ethical manner

### **D.2. Consultation**

#### **D.2.a. Consultant Competency**

Counselors take reasonable steps to ensure that they have the appropriate resources and competencies when providing consultation services.

Counselors provide appropriate referral resources when requested or needed. (See C.2.a.)

#### **D.2.b. Understanding Consultees**

When providing consultation, counselors attempt to develop with their consultees a clear understanding of problem definition, goals for change, and predicted consequences of interventions selected.

#### **D.2.c. Consultant Goals**

The consulting relationship is one in which consultee adaptability and growth toward self-direction are consistently encouraged and cultivated.

#### **D.2.d. Informed Consent in Consultation**

When providing consultation, counselors

have an obligation to review, in writing and verbally, the rights and responsibilities of both counselors and consultees. Counselors use clear and understandable language to inform all parties involved about the purpose of the services to be provided, relevant costs, potential risks and benefits, and the limits of confidentiality. Working in conjunction with the consultee, counselors attempt to develop a clear definition of the problem, goals for change, and predicted consequences of interventions that are culturally responsive and appropriate to the needs of consultees. (See A.2.a., A.2.b.)

## Section E

### Evaluation, Assessment, and Interpretation

#### **Introduction**

Counselors use assessment instruments as one component of the counseling process, taking into account the client personal and cultural context. Counselors promote the well-being of individual clients or groups of clients by developing and using appropriate educational, psychological, and career assessment instruments.

#### **E.1. General**

##### **E.1.a. Assessment**

The primary purpose of educational, psychological, and career assessment is to provide measurements that are valid and reliable in either comparative or absolute terms. These include, but are not limited to, measurements of ability, personality, interest, intelligence, achievement, and performance. Counselors recognize the need to interpret the statements in this section as applying to both quantitative and qualitative assessments.

##### **E.1.b. Client Welfare**

Counselors do not misuse assessment results and interpretations, and they take reasonable steps to prevent others from misusing the information these techniques provide. They respect the client's right to know the results, the interpretations made, and the bases for counselors' conclusions and recommendations.

#### **E.2. Competence to Use and Interpret Assessment Instruments**

##### **E.2.a. Limits of Competence**

Counselors utilize only those testing and assessment services for which they have been trained and are competent. Counselors using technology assisted test interpretations are trained in the construct being measured and the specific instrument being used prior to using its technology based application. Counselors take reasonable measures to ensure the proper use of psychological and career assessment techniques by persons under their supervision. (See A.12.)

##### **E.2.b. Appropriate Use**

Counselors are responsible for the appropriate application, scoring, interpretation, and use of assessment instruments relevant to the needs of the client, whether they score and interpret such assessments themselves or use technology or other services.

##### **E.2.c. Decisions Based on Results**

Counselors responsible for decisions involving individuals or policies that are based on assessment results have a thorough understanding of educational, psychological, and career measurement, including validation criteria, assessment research, and guidelines for assessment development and use.

#### **E.3. Informed Consent in Assessment**

##### **E.3.a. Explanation to Clients**

Prior to assessment, counselors explain the nature and purposes of assessment and the specific use of results by potential recipients. The explanation will be given in the language of the client (or other legally authorized person on behalf of the client), unless an explicit exception has been agreed upon in advance. Counselors consider the client's personal or cultural context, the level of the client's understanding of the results, and the impact of the results on the client. (See A.2., A.12.g., F.1.c.)

##### **E.3.b. Recipients of Results**

Counselors consider the examinee's welfare, explicit understandings, and prior agreements in determining who receives the assessment results. Counselors include accurate and appropriate interpretations with any release of individual or group assessment results. (See B.2.c., B.5.)

#### **E.4. Release of Data to Qualified Professionals**

Counselors release assessment data in which the client is identified only with the consent of the client or the client's legal representative. Such data are released only to persons recognized by

counselors as qualified to interpret the data. (See B.1., B.3., B.6.b.)

## **E.5. Diagnosis of Mental Disorders**

### **E.5.a. Proper Diagnosis**

Counselors take special care to provide proper diagnosis of mental disorders. Assessment techniques (including personal interview) used to determine client care (e.g., locus of treatment, type of treatment, or recommended follow-up) are carefully selected and appropriately used.

### **E.5.b. Cultural Sensitivity**

Counselors recognize that culture affects the manner in which clients' problems are defined. Clients' socioeconomic and cultural experiences are considered when diagnosing mental disorders. (See A.2.c.)

### **E.5.c. Historical and Social Prejudices in the Diagnosis of Pathology**

Counselors recognize historical and social prejudices in the misdiagnosis and pathologizing of certain individuals and groups and the role of mental health professionals in perpetuating these prejudices through diagnosis and treatment.

### **E.5.d. Refraining From Diagnosis**

Counselors may refrain from making and/or reporting a diagnosis if they believe it would cause harm to the client or others.

## **E.6. Instrument Selection**

### **E.6.a. Appropriateness of Instruments**

Counselors carefully consider the validity, reliability, psychometric limitations, and appropriateness of instruments when selecting assessments.

### **E.6.b. Referral Information**

If a client is referred to a third party for assessment, the counselor provides specific referral questions and sufficient objective data about the client to ensure that appropriate assessment instruments are utilized. (See A.9.b., B.3.)

### **E.6.c. Culturally Diverse Populations**

Counselors are cautious when selecting assessments for culturally diverse populations to avoid the use of instruments that lack appropriate psychometric properties for the client population. (See A.2.c., E.5.b.)

## **E.7. Conditions of Assessment Administration**

### **Administration**

(See A.12.b., A.12.d.)

### **E.7.a. Administration Conditions**

Counselors administer assessments

under the same conditions that were established in their standardization.

When assessments are not administered under standard conditions, as may be necessary to accommodate clients with disabilities, or when unusual behavior or irregularities occur during the administration, those conditions are noted in interpretation, and the results may be designated as invalid or of questionable validity.

### **E.7.b. Technological Administration**

Counselors ensure that administration programs function properly and provide clients with accurate results when technological or other electronic methods are used for assessment administration.

### **E.7.c. Unsupervised Assessments**

Unless the assessment instrument is designed, intended, and validated for self-administration and/or scoring, counselors do not permit inadequately supervised use.

### **E.7.d. Disclosure of Favorable Conditions**

Prior to administration of assessments, conditions that produce most favorable assessment results are made known to the examinee.

## **E.8. Multiculturalism and Diversity in Assessment**

Counselors use with caution assessment techniques that were normed on populations other than that of the client. Counselors recognize the effects of age, color, culture, disability, ethnic group, gender, race, language preference, religion, spirituality, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status on test administration and interpretation, and place test results in proper perspective with other relevant factors. (See A.2.c., E.5.b.)

## **E.9. Scoring and Interpretation of Assessments**

### **E.9.a. Reporting**

In reporting assessment results, counselors indicate reservations that exist regarding validity or reliability due to circumstances of the assessment or the inappropriateness of the norms for the person tested.

### **E.9.b. Research Instruments**

Counselors exercise caution when interpreting the results of research instruments not having sufficient technical data to support respondent results. The specific purposes for the use of such instruments are stated explicitly to the examinee.

### **E.9.c. Assessment Services**

Counselors who provide assessment, scoring and interpretation services to support the assessment process confirm the validity of such interpretations. They accurately describe the purpose, norms, validity, reliability, and applications of the procedures and any special qualifications applicable to their use. The public offering of an automated test interpretations service is considered a professional-to-professional consultation. The formal responsibility of the consultant is to the consultee, but the ultimate and overriding responsibility is to the client. (See D.2.)

## **E.10. Assessment Security**

Counselors maintain the integrity and security of tests and other assessment techniques consistent with legal and contractual obligations. Counselors do not appropriate, reproduce, or modify published assessments or parts thereof without acknowledgment and permission from the publisher.

## **E.11. Obsolete Assessments and Outdated Results**

Counselors do not use data or results from assessments that are obsolete or outdated for the current purpose. Counselors make every effort to prevent the misuse of obsolete measures and assessment data by others.

## **E.12. Assessment Construction**

Counselors use established scientific procedures, relevant standards, and current professional knowledge for assessment design in the development, publication, and utilization of educational and psychological assessment techniques.

## **E.13. Forensic Evaluation: Evaluation for Legal Proceedings**

### **E.13.a. Primary Obligations**

When providing forensic evaluations, the primary obligation of counselors is to produce objective findings that can be substantiated based on information and techniques appropriate to the evaluation, which may include examination of the individual and/or review of records. Counselors are entitled to form professional opinions based on their professional knowledge and expertise that can be supported by the data gathered in evaluations. Counselors will define the limits of their reports or testimony, especially when an examination of the individual has not been conducted.

### **E.13.b. Consent for Evaluation**

Individuals being evaluated are informed in writing that the relationship is for the purposes of an evaluation and is not counseling in nature, and entities or individuals who will receive the evaluation report are identified. Written consent to be evaluated is obtained from those being evaluated unless a court orders evaluations to be conducted without the written consent of individuals being evaluated. When children or vulnerable adults are being evaluated, informed written consent is obtained from a parent or guardian.

### **E.13.c. Client Evaluation Prohibited**

Counselors do not evaluate individuals for forensic purposes they currently counsel or individuals they have counseled in the past. Counselors do not accept as counseling clients individuals they are evaluating or individuals they have evaluated in the past for forensic purposes.

### **E.13.d. Avoid Potentially Harmful Relationships**

Counselors who provide forensic evaluations avoid potentially harmful professional or personal relationships with family members, romantic partners, and close friends of individuals they are evaluating or have evaluated in the past.

## Section F

### Supervision, Training, and Teaching

#### **Introduction**

Counselors aspire to foster meaningful and respectful professional relationships and to maintain appropriate boundaries with supervisees and students. Counselors have theoretical and pedagogical foundations for their work and aim to be fair, accurate, and honest in their assessments of counselors-in-training.

### **F.1. Counselor Supervision and Client Welfare**

#### **F.1.a. Client Welfare**

A primary obligation of counseling supervisors is to monitor the services provided by other counselors or counselors-in-training. Counseling supervisors monitor client welfare and supervisee clinical performance and professional development. To fulfill these obligations, supervisors meet regularly with supervisees to review case notes, samples of clinical work, or live observations. Supervisees have a

responsibility to understand and follow the *ACA Code of Ethics*.

#### **F.1.b. Counselor Credentials**

Counseling supervisors work to ensure that clients are aware of the qualifications of the supervisees who render services to the clients. (See A.2.b.)

#### **F.1.c. Informed Consent and Client Rights**

Supervisors make supervisees aware of client rights including the protection of client privacy and confidentiality in the counseling relationship. Supervisees provide clients with professional disclosure information and inform them of how the supervision process influences the limits of confidentiality. Supervisees make clients aware of who will have access to records of the counseling relationship and how these records will be used. (See A.2.b., B.1.d.)

### **F.2. Counselor Supervision Competence**

#### **F.2.a. Supervisor Preparation**

Prior to offering clinical supervision services, counselors are trained in supervision methods and techniques. Counselors who offer clinical supervision services regularly pursue continuing education activities including both counseling and supervision topics and skills. (See C.2.a., C.2.f.)

#### **F.2.b. Multiculturalism and Diversity in Supervision**

Counseling supervisors are aware of and address the role of multiculturalism/diversity in the supervisory relationship.

### **F.3. Supervisory Relationships**

#### **F.3.a. Relationship Boundaries With Supervisees**

Counseling supervisors clearly define and maintain ethical professional, personal, and social relationships with their supervisees. Counseling supervisors avoid nonprofessional relationships with current supervisees. If supervisors must assume other professional roles (e.g., clinical and administrative supervisor, instructor) with supervisees, they work to minimize potential conflicts and explain to supervisees the expectations and responsibilities associated with each role. They do not engage in any form of nonprofessional interaction that may compromise the supervisory relationship.

#### **F.3.b. Sexual Relationships**

Sexual or romantic interactions or relationships with current supervisees are prohibited.

#### **F.3.c. Sexual Harassment**

Counseling supervisors do not condone or subject supervisees to sexual harassment. (See C.6.a.)

#### **F.3.d. Close Relatives and Friends**

Counseling supervisors avoid accepting close relatives, romantic partners, or friends as supervisees.

#### **F.3.e. Potentially Beneficial Relationships**

Counseling supervisors are aware of the power differential in their relationships with supervisees. If they believe nonprofessional relationships with a supervisee may be potentially beneficial to the supervisee, they take precautions similar to those taken by counselors when working with clients. Examples of potentially beneficial interactions or relationships include attending a formal ceremony; hospital visits; providing support during a stressful event; or mutual membership in a professional association, organization, or community. Counseling supervisors engage in open discussions with supervisees when they consider entering into relationships with them outside of their roles as clinical and/or administrative supervisors. Before engaging in nonprofessional relationships, supervisors discuss with supervisees and document the rationale for such interactions, potential benefits or drawbacks, and anticipated consequences for the supervisee. Supervisors clarify the specific nature and limitations of the additional role(s) they will have with the supervisee.

### **F.4. Supervisor Responsibilities**

#### **F.4.a. Informed Consent for Supervision**

Supervisors are responsible for incorporating into their supervision the principles of informed consent and participation. Supervisors inform supervisees of the policies and procedures to which they are to adhere and the mechanisms for due process appeal of individual supervisory actions.

#### **F.4.b. Emergencies and Absences**

Supervisors establish and communicate to supervisees procedures for contacting them or, in their absence, alternative on-call supervisors to assist in handling crises.

#### **F.4.c. Standards for Supervisees**

Supervisors make their supervisees aware of professional and ethical standards and legal responsibilities. Supervisors of postdegree counselors encourage these counselors to adhere to professional standards of practice. (See C.1.)

#### **F.4.d. Termination of the**



## **Supervisory Relationship**

Supervisors or supervisees have the right to terminate the supervisory relationship with adequate notice. Reasons for withdrawal are provided to the other party. When cultural, clinical, or professional issues are crucial to the viability of the supervisory relationship, both parties make efforts to resolve differences. When termination is warranted, supervisors make appropriate referrals to possible alternative supervisors.

## **F.5. Counseling Supervision Evaluation, Remediation, and Endorsement**

### **F.5.a. Evaluation**

Supervisors document and provide supervisees with ongoing performance appraisal and evaluation feedback and schedule periodic formal evaluative sessions throughout the supervisory relationship.

### **F.5.b. Limitations**

Through ongoing evaluation and appraisal, supervisors are aware of the limitations of supervisees that might impede performance. Supervisors assist supervisees in securing remedial assistance when needed. They recommend dismissal from training programs, applied counseling settings, or state or voluntary professional credentialing processes when those supervisees are unable to provide competent professional services. Supervisors seek consultation and document their decisions to dismiss or refer supervisees for assistance. They ensure that supervisees are aware of options available to them to address such decisions. (*See C.2.g.*)

### **F.5.c. Counseling for Supervisees**

If supervisees request counseling, supervisors provide them with acceptable referrals. Counselors do not provide counseling services to supervisees. Supervisors address interpersonal competencies in terms of the impact of these issues on clients, the supervisory relationship, and professional functioning. (*See F.3.a.*)

### **F.5.d. Endorsement**

Supervisors endorse supervisees for certification, licensure, employment, or completion of an academic or training program only when they believe supervisees are qualified for the endorsement. Regardless of qualifications, supervisors do not endorse supervisees whom they believe to be impaired in any way that would interfere

with the performance of the duties associated with the endorsement.

## **F.6. Responsibilities of Counselor Educators**

### **F.6.a. Counselor Educators**

Counselor educators who are responsible for developing, implementing, and supervising educational programs are skilled as teachers and practitioners. They are knowledgeable regarding the ethical, legal, and regulatory aspects of the profession, are skilled in applying that knowledge, and make students and supervisees aware of their responsibilities. Counselor educators conduct counselor education and training programs in an ethical manner and serve as role models for professional behavior. (*See C.1., C.2.a., C.2.c.*)

### **F.6.b. Infusing Multiculturalism and Diversity**

Counselor educators infuse material related to multiculturalism and diversity into all courses and workshops for the development of professional counselors.

### **F.6.c. Integration of Study and Practice**

Counselor educators establish education and training programs that integrate academic study and supervised practice.

### **F.6.d. Teaching Ethics**

Counselor educators make students and supervisees aware of the ethical responsibilities and standards of the profession and the ethical responsibilities of students to the profession. Counselor educators infuse ethical considerations throughout the curriculum. (*See C.1.*)

### **F.6.e. Peer Relationships**

Counselor educators make every effort to ensure that the rights of peers are not compromised when students or supervisees lead counseling groups or provide clinical supervision. Counselor educators take steps to ensure that students and supervisees understand they have the same ethical obligations as counselor educators, trainers, and supervisors.

### **F.6.f. Innovative Theories and Techniques**

When counselor educators teach counseling techniques/procedures that are innovative, without an empirical foundation, or without a well-grounded theoretical foundation, they define the counseling techniques/procedures as “unproven” or “developing” and explain to students the potential risks and ethical considerations of using such techniques or procedures.

### **F.6.g. Field Placements**

Counselor educators develop clear policies within their training programs regarding field placement and other clinical experiences. Counselor educators provide clearly stated roles and responsibilities for the student or supervisee, the site supervisor, and the program supervisor. They confirm that site supervisors are qualified to provide supervision and inform site supervisors of their professional and ethical responsibilities in this role.

### **F.6.h. Professional Disclosure**

Before initiating counseling services, counselors-in-training disclose their status as students and explain how this status affects the limits of confidentiality. Counselor educators ensure that the clients at field placements are aware of the services rendered and the qualifications of the students and supervisees rendering those services. Students and supervisees obtain client permission before they use any information concerning the counseling relationship in the training process. (*See A.2.b.*)

## **F.7. Student Welfare**

### **F.7.a. Orientation**

Counselor educators recognize that orientation is a developmental process that continues throughout the educational and clinical training of students. Counseling faculty provide prospective students with information about the counselor education program’s expectations:

1. the type and level of skill and knowledge acquisition required for successful completion of the training;
2. program training goals, objectives, and mission, and subject matter to be covered;
3. bases for evaluation;
4. training components that encourage self-growth or self-disclosure as part of the training process;
5. the type of supervision settings and requirements of the sites for required clinical field experiences;
6. student and supervisee evaluation and dismissal policies and procedures; and
7. up-to-date employment prospects for graduates.

### **F.7.b. Self-Growth Experiences**

Counselor education programs delineate requirements for self-disclosure or self-growth experiences in their admission and program materials. Counselor educators use professional judgment when designing training experiences they conduct that require student and supervisee self-growth or self-disclosure.

Students and supervisees are made aware of the ramifications their self-disclosure may have when counselors whose primary role as teacher, trainer, or supervisor requires acting on ethical obligations to the profession. Evaluative components of experiential training experiences explicitly delineate predetermined academic standards that are separate and do not depend on the student's level of self-disclosure. Counselor educators may require trainees to seek professional help to address any personal concerns that may be affecting their competency.

## **F.8. Student Responsibilities**

### **F.8.a. Standards for Students**

Counselors-in-training have a responsibility to understand and follow the *ACA Code of Ethics* and adhere to applicable laws, regulatory policies, and rules and policies governing professional staff behavior at the agency or placement setting. Students have the same obligation to clients as those required of professional counselors. (*See C.1., H.1.*)

### **F.8.b. Impairment**

Counselors-in-training refrain from offering or providing counseling services when their physical, mental, or emotional problems are likely to harm a client or others. They are alert to the signs of impairment, seek assistance for problems, and notify their program supervisors when they are aware that they are unable to effectively provide services. In addition, they seek appropriate professional services for themselves to remediate the problems that are interfering with their ability to provide services to others.

(*See A.1., C.2.d., C.2.g.*)

## **F.9. Evaluation and**

### **Remediation of Students**

#### **F.9.a. Evaluation**

Counselors clearly state to students, prior to and throughout the training program, the levels of competency expected, appraisal methods, and timing of evaluations for both didactic and clinical competencies. Counselor educators provide students with ongoing performance appraisal and evaluation feedback throughout the training program.

#### **F.9.b. Limitations**

Counselor educators, throughout ongoing evaluation and appraisal, are aware of and address the inability of some students to achieve counseling competencies that might impede performance. Counselor educators

1. assist students in securing remedial assistance when needed,

2. seek professional consultation and document their decision to dismiss or refer students for assistance, and  
3. ensure that students have recourse in a timely manner to address decisions to require them to seek assistance or to dismiss them and provide students with due process according to institutional policies and procedures. (*See C.2.g.*)

### **F.9.c. Counseling for Students**

If students request counseling or if counseling services are required as part of a remediation process, counselor educators provide acceptable referrals.

## **F.10. Roles and Relationships Between Counselor Educators and Students**

### **F.10.a. Sexual or Romantic Relationships**

Sexual or romantic interactions or relationships with current students are prohibited.

### **F.10.b. Sexual Harassment**

Counselor educators do not condone or subject students to sexual harassment. (*See C.6.a.*)

### **F.10.c. Relationships With Former Students**

Counselor educators are aware of the power differential in the relationship between faculty and students. Faculty members foster open discussions with former students when considering engaging in a social, sexual, or other intimate relationship. Faculty members discuss with the former student how their former relationship may affect the change in relationship.

### **F.10.d. Nonprofessional Relationships**

Counselor educators avoid nonprofessional or ongoing professional relationships with students in which there is a risk of potential harm to the student or that may compromise the training experience or grades assigned. In addition, counselor educators do not accept any form of professional services, fees, commissions, reimbursement, or remuneration from a site for student or supervisee placement.

### **F.10.e. Counseling Services**

Counselor educators do not serve as counselors to current students unless this is a brief role associated with a training experience.

### **F.10.f. Potentially Beneficial Relationships**

Counselor educators are aware of the power differential in the relationship between faculty and students. If they believe a nonprofessional relationship

with a student may be potentially beneficial to the student, they take precautions similar to those taken by counselors when working with clients. Examples of potentially beneficial interactions or relationships include, but are not limited to, attending a formal ceremony; hospital visits; providing support during a stressful event; or mutual membership in a professional association, organization, or community. Counselor educators engage in open discussions with students when they consider entering into relationships with students outside of their roles as teachers and supervisors. They discuss with students the rationale for such interactions, the potential benefits and drawbacks, and the anticipated consequences for the student. Educators clarify the specific nature and limitations of the additional role(s) they will have with the student prior to engaging in a nonprofessional relationship. Non-professional relationships with students should be time-limited and initiated with student consent.

## **F.11. Multiculturalism and Diversity Competence in Counselor Education and Training Programs**

### **F.11.a. Faculty Diversity**

Counselor educators are committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty.

### **F.11.b. Student Diversity**

Counselor educators actively attempt to recruit and retain a diverse student body. Counselor educators demonstrate commitment to multicultural/diversity competence by recognizing and valuing diverse cultures and types of abilities students bring to the training experience. Counselor educators provide appropriate accommodations that enhance and support diverse student well-being and academic performance.

### **F.11.c. Multiculturalism and Diversity Competence**

Counselor educators actively infuse multicultural and diversity competency in their training and supervision practices. They actively train students to gain awareness, knowledge, and skills in the competencies of multicultural practice. Counselor educators include case examples, role-plays, discussion questions, and other classroom activities that promote and represent various cultural perspectives.

# Section G

## Research and Publication

### Introduction

Counselors who conduct research are encouraged to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession and promote a clearer understanding of the conditions that lead to a healthy and more just society. Counselors support efforts of researchers by participating fully and willingly whenever possible. Counselors minimize bias and respect diversity in designing and implementing research programs.

### G.1. Research

#### Responsibilities

##### G.1.a. Use of Human Research Participants

Counselors plan, design, conduct, and report research in a manner that is consistent with pertinent ethical principles, federal and state laws, host institutional regulations, and scientific standards governing research with human research participants.

##### G.1.b. Deviation From Standard Practice

Counselors seek consultation and observe stringent safeguards to protect the rights of research participants when a research problem suggests a deviation from standard or acceptable practices.

##### G.1.c. Independent Researchers

When independent researchers do not have access to an Institutional Review Board (IRB), they should consult with researchers who are familiar with IRB procedures to provide appropriate safeguards.

##### G.1.d. Precautions to Avoid Injury

Counselors who conduct research with human participants are responsible for the welfare of participants throughout the research process and should take reasonable precautions to avoid causing injurious psychological, emotional, physical, or social effects to participants.

##### G.1.e. Principal Researcher Responsibility

The ultimate responsibility for ethical research practice lies with the principal researcher. All others involved in the research activities share ethical obligations and responsibility for their own actions.

##### G.1.f. Minimal Interference

Counselors take reasonable precautions to avoid causing disruptions in the lives

of research participants that could be caused by their involvement in research.

##### G.1.g. Multiculturalism and Diversity Considerations in Research

When appropriate to research goals, counselors are sensitive to incorporating research procedures that take into account cultural considerations. They seek consultation when appropriate.

### G.2. Rights of Research Participants

(See A.2, A.7.)

#### G.2.a. Informed Consent in Research

Individuals have the right to consent to become research participants. In seeking consent, counselors use language that

1. accurately explains the purpose and procedures to be followed,
2. identifies any procedures that are experimental or relatively untried,
3. describes any attendant discomforts and risks,
4. describes any benefits or changes in individuals or organizations that might be reasonably expected,
5. discloses appropriate alternative procedures that would be advantageous for participants,
6. offers to answer any inquiries concerning the procedures,
7. describes any limitations on confidentiality,
8. describes the format and potential target audiences for the dissemination of research findings, and
9. instructs participants that they are free to withdraw their consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time without penalty.

#### G.2.b. Deception

Counselors do not conduct research involving deception unless alternative procedures are not feasible and the prospective value of the research justifies the deception. If such deception has the potential to cause physical or emotional harm to research participants, the research is not conducted, regardless of prospective value. When the methodological requirements of a study necessitate concealment or deception, the investigator explains the reasons for this action as soon as possible during the debriefing.

#### G.2.c. Student/Supervisee Participation

Researchers who involve students or supervisees in research make clear to them that the decision regarding whether or not to participate in research activities does not affect one's academic standing or supervisory relationship. Students or

supervisees who choose not to participate in educational research are provided with an appropriate alternative to fulfill their academic or clinical requirements.

#### G.2.d. Client Participation

Counselors conducting research involving clients make clear in the informed consent process that clients are free to choose whether or not to participate in research activities.

Counselors take necessary precautions to protect clients from adverse consequences of declining or withdrawing from participation.

#### G.2.e. Confidentiality of Information

Information obtained about research participants during the course of an investigation is confidential. When the possibility exists that others may obtain access to such information, ethical research practice requires that the possibility, together with the plans for protecting confidentiality, be explained to participants as a part of the procedure for obtaining informed consent.

#### G.2.f. Persons Not Capable of Giving Informed Consent

When a person is not capable of giving informed consent, counselors provide an appropriate explanation to, obtain agreement for participation from, and obtain the appropriate consent of a legally authorized person.

#### G.2.g. Commitments to Participants

Counselors take reasonable measures to honor all commitments to research participants. (See A.2.c.)

#### G.2.h. Explanations After Data Collection

After data are collected, counselors provide participants with full clarification of the nature of the study to remove any misconceptions participants might have regarding the research. Where scientific or human values justify delaying or withholding information, counselors take reasonable measures to avoid causing harm.

#### G.2.i. Informing Sponsors

Counselors inform sponsors, institutions, and publication channels regarding research procedures and outcomes. Counselors ensure that appropriate bodies and authorities are given pertinent information and acknowledgement.

#### G.2.j. Disposal of Research Documents and Records

Within a reasonable period of time following the completion of a research project or study, counselors take steps to destroy records or documents (audio, video, digital, and written) containing

confidential data or information that identifies research participants. When records are of an artistic nature, researchers obtain participant consent with regard to handling of such records or documents. (See B.4.a, B.4.g.)

### **G.3. Relationships With Research Participants (When Research Involves Intensive or Extended Interactions)**

#### **G.3.a. Nonprofessional Relationships**

Nonprofessional relationships with research participants should be avoided.

#### **G.3.b. Relationships With Research Participants**

Sexual or romantic counselor–research participant interactions or relationships with current research participants are prohibited.

#### **G.3.c. Sexual Harassment and Research Participants**

Researchers do not condone or subject research participants to sexual harassment.

#### **G.3.d. Potentially Beneficial Interactions**

When a nonprofessional interaction between the researcher and the research participant may be potentially beneficial, the researcher must document, prior to the interaction (when feasible), the rationale for such an interaction, the potential benefit, and anticipated consequences for the research participant. Such interactions should be initiated with appropriate consent of the research participant. Where unintentional harm occurs to the research participant due to the nonprofessional interaction, the researcher must show evidence of an attempt to remedy such harm.

### **G.4. Reporting Results**

#### **G.4.a. Accurate Results**

Counselors plan, conduct, and report research accurately. They provide thorough discussions of the limitations of their data and alternative hypotheses. Counselors do not engage in misleading or fraudulent research, distort data, misrepresent data, or deliberately bias their results. They explicitly mention all variables and conditions known to the investigator that may have affected the outcome of a study or the interpretation of data. They describe the extent to which results are applicable for diverse populations.

#### **G.4.b. Obligation to Report Unfavorable Results**

Counselors report the results of any research of professional value. Results that reflect unfavorably on institutions, programs, services, prevailing opinions, or vested interests are not withheld.

#### **G.4.c. Reporting Errors**

If counselors discover significant errors in their published research, they take reasonable steps to correct such errors in a correction erratum, or through other appropriate publication means.

#### **G.4.d. Identity of Participants**

Counselors who supply data, aid in the research of another person, report research results, or make original data available take due care to disguise the identity of respective participants in the absence of specific authorization from the participants to do otherwise. In situations where participants self-identify their involvement in research studies, researchers take active steps to ensure that data is adapted/changed to protect the identity and welfare of all parties and that discussion of results does not cause harm to participants.

#### **G.4.e. Replication Studies**

Counselors are obligated to make available sufficient original research data to qualified professionals who may wish to replicate the study.

### **G.5. Publication**

#### **G.5.a. Recognizing Contributions**

When conducting and reporting research counselors are familiar with and give recognition to previous work on the topic, observe copyright laws, and give full credit to those to whom credit is due.

#### **G.5.b. Plagiarism**

Counselors do not plagiarize, that is, they do not present another person's work as their own work.

#### **G.5.c. Review/Republication of Data or Ideas**

Counselors fully acknowledge and make editorial reviewers aware of prior publication of ideas or data where such ideas or data are submitted for review or publication.

#### **G.5.d. Contributors**

Counselors give credit through joint authorship, acknowledgment, footnote statements, or other appropriate means to those who have contributed significantly to research or concept development in accordance with such contributions. The principal contributor is listed first and minor technical or professional contributions are acknowledged in notes or introductory statements.

#### **G.5.e. Agreement of Contributors**

Counselors who conduct joint research with colleagues or students/supervisees establish agreements in advance regarding allocation of tasks, publication credit, and types of acknowledgement that will be received.

#### **G.5.f. Student Research**

For articles that are substantially based on students course papers, projects, dissertations or theses, and on which students have been the primary contributors, they are listed as principal authors.

#### **G.5.g. Duplicate Submission**

Counselors submit manuscripts for consideration to only one journal at a time. Manuscripts that are published in whole or in substantial part in another journal or published work are not submitted for publication without acknowledgment and permission from the previous publication.

#### **G.5.h. Professional Review**

Counselors who review material submitted for publication, research, or other scholarly purposes respect the confidentiality and proprietary rights of those who submitted it. Counselors use care to make publication decisions based on valid and defensible standards. Counselors review article submissions in a timely manner and based on their scope and competency in research methodologies. Counselors who serve as reviewers at the request of editors or publishers make every effort to only review materials that are within their scope of competency and use care to avoid personal biases.

## **Section H**

### **Resolving Ethical Issues**

#### **Introduction**

Counselors behave in a legal, ethical, and moral manner in the conduct of their professional work. They are aware that client protection and trust in the profession depend on a high level of professional conduct. They hold other counselors to the same standards and are willing to take appropriate action to ensure that these standards are upheld. Counselors strive to resolve ethical dilemmas with direct and open communication among all parties involved and seek consultation with colleagues and supervisors when necessary. Counselors incorporate ethical practice into their daily professional work. They engage in ongoing

professional development regarding current topics in ethical and legal issues in counseling.

## **H.1. Standards and the Law**

(See F.9.a.)

### **H.1.a. Knowledge**

Counselors understand the *ACA Code of Ethics* and other applicable ethics codes from other professional organizations or from certification and licensure bodies of which they are members. Lack of knowledge or misunderstanding of an ethical responsibility is not a defense against a charge of unethical conduct.

### **H.1.b. Conflicts Between Ethics and Laws**

If ethical responsibilities conflict with law, regulations, or other governing legal authority, counselors make known their commitment to the *ACA Code of Ethics* and take steps to resolve the conflict. If the conflict cannot be resolved by such means, counselors may adhere to the requirements of law, regulations, or other governing legal authority.

## **H.2. Suspected Violations**

### **H.2.a. Ethical Behavior Expected**

Counselors expect colleagues to adhere to the *ACA Code of Ethics*. When counselors possess knowledge that raises doubts as to whether another counselor is acting in an ethical manner, they take appropriate action. (See H.2.b., H.2.c.)

### **H.2.b. Informal Resolution**

When counselors have reason to believe that another counselor is violating or has violated an ethical standard, they attempt first to resolve the issue informally with the other counselor if feasible, provided such action does not violate confidentiality rights that may be involved.

### **H.2.c. Reporting Ethical Violations**

If an apparent violation has substantially harmed, or is likely to substantially harm a person or organization and is not appropriate for informal resolution or is not resolved properly, counselors take further action appropriate to the situation. Such action might include referral to state or national committees on professional ethics, voluntary national certification bodies, state licensing boards, or to the appropriate institutional authorities. This standard does not apply when an intervention would violate confidentiality rights or when counselors have been retained to review the work of another counselor whose professional conduct is in question.

### **H.2.d. Consultation**

When uncertain as to whether a particular situation or course of action may be in violation of the *ACA Code of Ethics*,

counselors consult with other counselors who are knowledgeable about ethics and the *ACA Code of Ethics*, with colleagues, or with appropriate authorities

### **H.2.e. Organizational Conflicts**

If the demands of an organization with which counselors are affiliated pose a conflict with the *ACA Code of Ethics*, counselors specify the nature of such conflicts and express to their supervisors or other responsible officials their commitment to the *ACA Code of Ethics*. When possible, counselors work toward change within the organization to allow full adherence to the *ACA Code of Ethics*. In doing so, they address any confidentiality issues.

### **H.2.f. Unwarranted Complaints**

Counselors do not initiate, participate in, or encourage the filing of ethics complaints that are made with reckless disregard or willful ignorance of facts that would disprove the allegation.

### **H.2.g. Unfair Discrimination Against Complainants and Respondents**

Counselors do not deny persons employment, advancement, admission to academic or other programs, tenure, or promotion based solely upon their having made or their being the subject of an ethics complaint. This does not preclude taking action based upon the outcome of such proceedings or considering other appropriate information.

## **H.3. Cooperation With Ethics Committees**

Counselors assist in the process of enforcing the *ACA Code of Ethics*. Counselors cooperate with investigations, proceedings, and requirements of the ACA Ethics Committee or ethics committees of other duly constituted associations or boards having jurisdiction over those charged with a violation. Counselors are familiar with the *ACA Policy and Procedures for Processing Complaints of Ethical Violations* and use it as a reference for assisting in the enforcement of the *ACA Code of Ethics*.

# Glossary of Terms

**Advocacy** – promotion of the well-being of individuals and groups, and the counseling profession within systems and organizations. Advocacy seeks to remove barriers and obstacles that inhibit access, growth, and development.

**Assent** – to demonstrate agreement, when a person is otherwise not capable or competent to give formal consent (e.g., informed consent) to a counseling service or plan.

**Client** – an individual seeking or referred to the professional services of a counselor for help with problem resolution or decision making.

**Counselor** – a professional (or a student who is a counselor-in-training) engaged in a counseling practice or other counseling-related services. Counselors fulfill many roles and responsibilities such as counselor educators, researchers, supervisors, practitioners, and consultants.

**Counselor Educator** – a professional counselor engaged primarily in developing, implementing, and supervising the educational preparation of counselors-in-training.

**Counselor Supervisor** – a professional counselor who engages in a formal relationship with a practicing counselor or counselor-in-training for the purpose of overseeing that individual's counseling work or clinical skill development.

**Culture** – membership in a socially constructed way of living, which incorporates collective values, beliefs, norms, boundaries, and lifestyles that are co-created with others who share similar worldviews comprising biological, psychosocial, historical, psychological, and other factors.

**Diversity** – the similarities and differences that occur within and across cultures, and the intersection of cultural and social identities.

**Documents** – any written, digital, audio, visual, or artistic recording of the work within the counseling relationship between counselor and client.

**Examinee** – a recipient of any professional counseling service that includes educational, psychological, and career appraisal utilizing qualitative or quantitative techniques.

**Forensic Evaluation** – any formal assessment conducted for court or other legal proceedings.

**Multicultural/Diversity Competence** – a capacity whereby counselors possess cultural and diversity awareness and knowledge about self and others, and how this awareness and knowledge is applied effectively in practice with clients and client groups.

**Multicultural/Diversity Counseling** – counseling that recognizes diversity and embraces approaches that support the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of individuals within their historical, cultural, economic, political, and psychosocial contexts.

**Student** – an individual engaged in formal educational preparation as a counselor-in-training.

**Supervisee** – a professional counselor or counselor-in-training whose counseling work or clinical skill development is being overseen in a formal supervisory relationship by a qualified trained professional.

**Supervisor** – counselors who are trained to oversee the professional clinical work of counselors and counselors-in-training.

**Teaching** – all activities engaged in as part of a formal educational program designed to lead to a graduate degree in counseling.

**Training** – the instruction and practice of skills related to the counseling profession. Training contributes to the ongoing proficiency of students and professional counselors.