

Ethics 101: Competencies for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Counselors

**Elluminate Online Session
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Objectives

- Participants will be able to:
 - Define ethics
 - Identify Dual Relationships
 - Discuss Duty to Warn
 - Discuss Unhealthy Relationships
 - Identify the therapists role in ethics

Integrity Hook

- Do you honor your clinical conversations or are they just empty and meaningless stories you continue to make up to discuss in certain social settings?



Competence

- Public client trust is embedded with a perception of competence.
 - Special expertise
 - Competence
 - Not found in the general public
 - Advance training
 - Special skill set



The Code of Ethics

■ Stresses

- Certified/Licensed Counselors engage in professional activity
- Areas for which they clearly have the ability, knowledge, training and experience.
- Counselors must accurately represent their competence, education, training, and experience to clients or potential clients at all times

Defining Ethics

- Ethics refers to the principles of proper professional conduct concerning the rights and duties of the counselor him/herself, his clients, and his/her fellow practitioners
- In this technological information era, there has been astronomical growth in ethical issues in all facets of daily life.
 - Increased technological sophistication
 - Increase in life span
 - Increase in cell phone communication
 - Increase in blackberry, I-phones, etc

These and others factors have lead to a growth in ethical problems.

Ethics

- Ethics (Gk) means character and refers to the philosophical study of morality. Ethics defines what is good for both society and the individual.
 - Formal systematic study of moral beliefs
 - Rules
 - Principles
 - Codes of conduct
 - “Right “ course of action

Morality

- Morality(Latin) means “mores,” meaning customs and describes one’s personal commitment to values, and expectations
 - Adherence
 - Informal personal values



Principles and Ideals

- Create Trust
- Confidence
- Cooperation
- Respectfulness
- Self awareness

Standards and Rules

➤ Dogma

➤ Stigma

➤ Rigidity

➤ Judging
Integrity

Builds Barriers

Separations

Suspicion

Destroys

Right and Wrong

- Defense
- Something is wrong paradigm



Something Is Missing

- Build Integrity
- Create Trust
- Enhances a Sense of Self Respect



Ethical Competencies

Dual Relationships refers to a situation when professionals assume two or multiple roles simultaneously or sequentially with a person seeking help. Herlihy and Corey (1992)

Can be a significant ethical challenge for all therapists.

Problematic for Addiction and other Counselors

Occurrence of Dual Relationships

- At the beginning of the relationship
- During the middle phase of the relationship
- They may develop after the determination of counseling

Problematic Relationships

- Dual Relationships tend to impair the counselor's judgment
- The Potential exists for conflicts of interest
- There is the danger of exploiting the clients because the counselor holds more powerful position than the client
- Boundaries become blurred and distort the professional nature of the therapeutic relationship(Pope and Vasques (1991)).

Lovesickness: Therapists who fall in Love with Clients

- Emotional Dependence
- Intrusive thinking, whereby the thought of the other is almost a constant phenomenon
- Physical sensations like buoyancy or pounding pulse
- A sense of incompleteness, of feeling less than whole, when away from the loved one
- An altered state of consciousness that fosters impaired judgment on the part of the therapist when in the presence of the loved one (Twemlow and Gabbard (1989))

Recovering Counselors

- A critical statistic
- 58% of it 1994 membership (NAADAC)
 - Recovering from a substance addictions
 - High percentage
 - Implications for clear guidelines
 - Fertile ground for dual relationships

Problematic and Unethical

➤ Avoidability

Dural Relationships in Small communities
Rule rather than the exception



Refusals

- Refusing Treatment
- Refusing to treat clients With whom one has another relationship
- Does refusing prevent individuals in need from receiving care

Meetings and Associations

- Counselors attend Alcoholics Anonymous Meetings
- Former Clients attend AA Meetings
- Such occurrences practically unavoidable in small communities



Power

- Professionals have power
- Power perceived as being held by the counselor
- Therapeutic relationships may end but
- The power differential remains indefinitely

Court System

- Conditions of probation
- Conditions of parole
- Conditions of incarceration
- Conditions of other violations



Sexual and Nonsexual Dual Relationships

- Codes that prohibit the counselor from having a sexual relationship with a current client.
 - American Counseling Association
 - National Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors to name a few

Examples of Dual Relationships

- Acting in the role of teacher and therapist
- Acting in the role of therapist and supervisor
- Acting in the role of minister and therapist
- Bartering for goods or therapeutic services
- Borrowing money from a client
- Becoming emotionally or sexually involved with a former client.

Sexual Boundaries

- Personality Disorders
- Character Disorders
- Impulsive Character Disorders
- Sociopathic or Narcissistic Character Disorder
- Psychotic or Borderline Personality

Ethics of Technology

- Use of Blackberry in clinical work
- Using desk or laptop computers in documenting client histories
- Discussing client histories on cell phones in the market place or on public transportation

Informed Consent

- Clients have the freedom to choose whether to enter into or remain in a counseling relationship.
- Clients need adequate information about the counseling process and the counselor

Duty to Protect/Warn

- Many therapists get involved in legal matters for failing to adequately protect clients against violent acts.
- The duty to protect others from violence as articulated in the *Tarasoff v Regents of University of California*.

The Tarasoff Act

- Therapists can be held liable for the death or injury of a person if, during the consultation, the therapist's client threatens to kill or harm that person.
- If the therapist fails to notify the proper authorities and/or warn the threatened person or his or her family in the event that the harm is foreseeable and certain.

Intellectually and Ethically Honest

- Incorporate ethical considerations on a broader scale
- Practice Integrity, honor your codes
- Protect confidentiality
- Avoid social relationships and social conversations, i.e. gossip
- Practice discernment, exercise caution and deliberation before taking action