

# **CODE OF ETHICS**



**FOR MEMBERS OF**

**THE ONTARIO ASSOCIATION  
OF  
CONSULTANTS, COUNSELLORS,  
PSYCHOMETRISTS AND PSYCHOTHERAPISTS**

**2012**

# CONTENTS

When Principles Conflict.....	2
The Ethical Decision-Making Process.....	3
Uses of the Code .....	3
Responsibility of the Individual Member .....	3
Relationship of Code to Personal Behaviour .....	4
Relationship of Code to Provincial Regulatory Bodies.....	4
Principle I: Respect for the Dignity of Persons .....	4
Principle II: Responsible Caring .....	6
Principle III: Integrity in Relationships .....	9
Principle IV: Responsibility to Society .....	11
OACCPP Ethical Principles and Values .....	14

**THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR MEMBERS OF  
THE ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CONSULTANTS, COUNSELLORS,  
PSYCHOMETRISTS AND PSYCHOTHERAPISTS**

The OACCPP Code of Ethics consists of the following set of four **Ethical Principles:**

**I Respect for the Dignity of Persons**

- respect, rights, autonomy, consent, privacy, confidentiality, protection

**II Responsible Caring**

- maximize benefits - beneficence, minimize or do no harm – non-maleficence

**III Integrity in Relationships**

- fidelity, honour, accuracy, authenticity

**IV Responsibility to Society**

- values, contributions

## When Principles Conflict

All four principles are to be taken into account and balanced in ethical decision making. However, there are circumstances in which ethical principles will conflict and it will not be possible to give each principle equal weight. The complexity of ethical conflicts precludes a firm ordering of the principles. However, the four principles have been ordered according to the weight each generally should be given when they conflict, namely:

**Principle I: Respect for the Dignity of Persons**

This principle, with its emphasis on moral rights, generally should be given the highest weight, except in circumstances in which there is a clear and imminent danger to the physical safety of any person.

**Principle II: Responsible Caring**

This principle generally should be given the second highest weight. Responsible caring requires competence and should be carried out only in ways that respect the dignity of persons.

**Principle III: Integrity in Relationships**

This principle generally should be given the third highest weight. Members are expected to demonstrate the highest integrity in all of their relationships. However, in rare circumstances, values such as openness and straightforwardness might need to be subordinated to the values contained in the Principles of Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Responsible Caring.

**Principle IV: Responsibility to Society**

This principle generally should be given the lowest weight of the four principles when it conflicts with one or more of them. Although it is necessary and important to consider responsibility to society in every ethical decision, adherence to this principle must be subject to and guided by Respect for the Dignity of Persons, Responsible Caring, and Integrity in Relationships. When a person's welfare appears to conflict with benefits to society, it is often possible to find ways of working for the benefit of society that do not violate respect and responsible caring for the person. However, if this is not possible, the dignity and well-being of a person should not be sacrificed to a vision of the greater good of society, and greater weight must be given to respect and responsible caring for the person.

Even with the above ordering of the principles, members will be faced with ethical dilemmas that are difficult to resolve. In these circumstances, members are expected to engage in an ethical decision-making process that is explicit enough to bear public scrutiny. In some cases, resolution might be a matter of personal conscience. However, decisions of personal conscience are also expected to be the result of a decision-making process that is based on a reasonably coherent set of ethical principles and that can bear public scrutiny. If the member can demonstrate that every reasonable effort was made to apply the ethical principles of this Code and resolution of the conflict has had to depend on the personal conscience of the member, such a member would be deemed to have followed this Code. Members are encouraged to use the chart of OACCPP Ethical Principles and Values to aid in identifying the relevant principles and values affected by their decision.

## The Ethical Decision-Making Process

The ethical decision-making process might occur very rapidly, leading to an easy resolution of an ethical issue. This is particularly true of issues for which clear-cut guidelines or standards exist and for which there is no conflict between principles. On the other hand, some ethical issues (particularly those in which ethical principles conflict) are not easily resolved, might be emotionally distressful, and might require time-consuming deliberation.

The following basic steps typify approaches to ethical decision making:

1. Identification of the individuals and groups potentially affected by the decision.
2. Identification of ethically relevant issues and practices, including the interests, rights, and any relevant characteristics of the individuals and groups involved and of the system or circumstances in which the ethical problem arose.
3. Consideration of how personal biases, stresses, or self-interest might influence the development of or choice between courses of action.
4. Development of alternative courses of action.
5. Analysis of likely short-term, ongoing, and long-term risks and benefits of each course of action on the individual(s)/group(s) involved or likely to be affected (e.g., client, client's family or employees, employing institution, students, colleagues, society, self).
6. Choice of course of action after conscientious application of existing principles, values, and standards.
7. Action, with a commitment to assume responsibility for the consequences of the action.
8. Evaluation of the results of the course of action.
9. Assumption of responsibility for consequences of action, including correction of negative consequences, if any, or re-engaging in the decision-making process if the ethical issue is not resolved.
10. Appropriate action, as warranted and feasible, to prevent future occurrences of the dilemma (e.g., communication and problem solving with colleagues; changes in procedures and practices).

Members engaged in time-consuming deliberation are encouraged and expected to consult with parties affected by the ethical problem, when appropriate, and with colleagues and/or advisory bodies when such persons can add knowledge or objectivity to the decision-making process. Although the decision for action remains with the individual member, the seeking and consideration of such assistance reflects an ethical approach to ethical decision making.

## Uses of the Code

This Code is intended to guide members in their everyday conduct, thinking, and planning, and in the resolution of ethical dilemmas; that is, it advocates the practice of both proactive and reactive ethics. It also is intended to serve as a guide for the development of Standards of Practice. A third use of the Code is to assist in the adjudication of complaints against members.

## Responsibility of the Individual Member

The Associations' responsibility to society commits the Association and its members to act as a moral community that develops its ethical awareness and sensitivity, educates new members in the ethics of the discipline, manages its affairs and its members in an ethical manner, is as self-correcting as possible, and is accountable both internally and externally. However, responsibility for ethical action depends foremost on the integrity of each individual member; that is, on each member's commitment to behave as ethically as possible in every situation. Acceptance to membership in OACCPP commits members:

1. To adhere to the Association's Code in all current activities as a psychotherapist, psychometrist, counsellor, or consultant.
2. To apply conscientiously the ethical principles and values of the Code to new and emerging areas of activity.
3. To assess and discuss ethical issues and practices with colleagues on a regular basis.
4. To bring to the attention of the Association ethical issues that require clarification or the development of new guidelines or standards.
5. To bring concerns about possible unethical actions by a member directly to the member when the action appears to be primarily a lack of sensitivity, knowledge, or experience, and attempt to reach an agreement on the issue and, if needed, on the appropriate action to be taken.

6. To bring concerns about possible unethical actions of a more serious nature (e.g., actions that have caused or could cause serious harm, or actions that are considered misconduct in the jurisdiction) to the person(s) or body(ies) best suited to investigating the situation and to stopping or offsetting the harm.
7. To consider seriously others' concerns about one's own possibly unethical actions and attempt to reach an agreement on the issue and, if needed, take appropriate action.
8. In bringing or in responding to concerns about possible unethical actions, not to be vexatious or malicious.
9. To cooperate with duly constituted committees of the Association that are concerned with ethics and ethical conduct.

## Relationship of Code to Personal Behaviour

This Code is intended to guide and regulate only those activities a member engages in by virtue of being a psychotherapist, psychometrist, counsellor, or consultant. There is no intention to guide or regulate a member's activities outside of this context. Personal behaviour becomes a concern of the discipline only if it is of such a nature that it undermines public trust in the discipline as a whole or if it raises questions about the member's ability to carry out appropriately his or her responsibilities as a psychotherapist, psychometrist, counsellor, or consultant.

## Relationship of Code to Provincial Regulatory Bodies

In exercising its responsibility to articulate ethical principles, values, and standards for those who wish to become and remain members in good standing, the association recognizes the multiple memberships that some members have (both regulatory and voluntary). The Code has attempted to encompass and incorporate those ethical principles most prevalent in a number of associations and Colleges related to mental health services, thereby minimizing the possibility of variance with provincial/territorial regulations and guidelines. Members are expected to respect the requirements of their regulatory bodies. Such requirements might define particular behaviours that constitute misconduct, are reportable to the regulatory body, and/or are subject to discipline.

## Principle I: Respect for the Dignity of Persons

### Values Statement

Fundamental is the principle of respect for the dignity of persons. All persons have the right to have their innate worth as human beings appreciated and this worth is not dependent upon their culture, nationality, ethnicity, colour, race, religion, sex, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or mental abilities, age, socio-economic status, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition, or status.

Although members have a responsibility to respect the dignity of all persons with whom they come in contact, their greatest responsibility is toward the most vulnerable, such as clients. This responsibility is almost always greater than their responsibility to those indirectly involved (e.g., employers, third party payers, the general public). Adherence to the concept of moral rights (privacy, self-determination, personal liberty) is an essential component of respect for the dignity of persons. As such, members have a responsibility to develop and follow procedures for informed consent, confidentiality, and fair treatment that are consistent with those rights.

As individual rights exist within the context of the rights of others and of responsible caring (see Principle II), there might be circumstances in which the possibility of serious detrimental consequences to themselves or others, a diminished capacity to be autonomous, or a court order, would disallow some aspects of the rights to privacy, self-determination, and personal liberty. Indeed, such circumstances might be serious enough to create a duty to warn or protect others. However, members still have a responsibility to respect the rights of the person(s) involved to the greatest extent possible under the circumstances, and to do what is necessary and reasonable to reduce the need for future disallowances.

Members recognize that, although all persons possess moral rights, the manner in which such rights are promoted, protected, and exercised varies across communities and cultures. Members acknowledge and respect such differences, while guarding against clear violations of moral rights.

### Ethical Standards

In adhering to the Principle of Respect for the Dignity of Persons, members would:

General respect:

- Demonstrate appropriate respect for the knowledge, insight, experience, and areas of expertise of others.
- Not engage publicly (e.g., in public statements, presentations, reports, or with clients or colleagues) in demeaning descriptions of others, including jokes based on culture, nationality, ethnicity, colour, race, religion, sex, gender, or sexual orientation, or other remarks, which reflect adversely on the dignity of others.
- Strive to use language that conveys respect for the dignity of persons in all written or oral communication.
- Abstain from all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment. Accord harassment complainants and respondents dignity and respect.

General rights:

- Avoid or refuse to participate in practices disrespectful of the legal, civil, or moral rights of others.
- Refuse to advise, train, or give information to anyone who, in the member's judgment, may use the knowledge or skills to infringe on human rights.
- Respect the right of individuals to safeguard their own dignity.

Non-discrimination:

- Not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of unjust discrimination.
- Act to prevent or correct practices that are unjustly discriminatory.
- Seek to practise in such a way that contributes to the fair distribution of benefits to individuals and groups and does not unfairly exclude those who are vulnerable or might be disadvantaged.

Fair treatment:

- Work and act in a spirit of fair treatment to others.
- Respect the dignity and needs of clients in establishing fees.

Informed consent:

- Seek respect and integrate as much as possible the opinions and wishes of clients regarding decisions that affect them.
- Obtain informed consent from all independent and partially dependent persons and substitute decision makers for any mental health services provided to them except in circumstances of urgent need (e.g., suicidal gesture).
- Act in accordance with prevailing legislation regarding consent.

Freedom of consent:

- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that consent is not given under conditions of coercion, undue pressure, or undue reward.
- Respect the right of individuals to withdraw consent, discontinue participation or service at any time, and be responsive to non-verbal indications of a desire to discontinue if the individual has difficulty with verbally communicating such a desire (e.g., young children, verbally challenged persons) or, due to culture is unlikely to communicate such a desire orally.

Protection for vulnerable persons:

- Seek to use methods that maximize the understanding and ability to consent of persons of diminished capacity to give informed consent, and that reduce the need for a substitute decision maker. Carry out informed consent processes with those persons who are legally responsible or appointed to give informed consent on behalf of persons not competent to consent on their own behalf, seeking to ensure respect for any previously expressed preferences of persons not competent to consent. Seek willing and adequately informed participation from any person of diminished capacity to give informed consent, and proceed without this assent only if the service is considered to be of direct benefit to that person.

Privacy:

- Act in accordance with prevailing privacy legislation and provincial/territorial statutes.
- Create, maintain, disseminate, store, retain, and dispose of records relating to their practice in accordance with law.
- Seek and collect only information that is germane to the purpose(s) for which consent has been obtained.
- Record only that private information necessary for the provision of continuous, coordinated service or that is required or justified by law.
- Collect, store, handle, and transfer all private information, whether written or unwritten (e.g., communication during service provision, written records, e-mail or fax communication, computer files, video-tapes), in a way that attends to the needs for privacy and security. This would include having adequate plans for records in circumstances of one's own serious illness, termination of employment, or death.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that records over which they have control remain personally identifiable only as long as necessary in the interests of those to whom they refer or as required or justified by law (e.g., the possible need to defend oneself against future allegations), and render anonymous or destroy any records under their control that no longer need to be personally identifiable.

#### Confidentiality:

- Discuss with persons and organizations with whom they establish a professional relationship matters regarding limits on confidentiality.
- Attempt to maintain clear boundaries between individual clients and their family members or close friends.
- Be careful not to relay information about colleagues, clients, employees, supervisees, students, trainees, and members of organizations, gained in the process of professional activities and that the member has reason to believe is considered to be confidential by those persons, except as required or justified by law.
- Clarify what measures will be taken to protect confidentiality, and what responsibilities family, group, and community members have for the protection of each other's confidentiality, when engaged in services to individuals, families, groups, or communities.
- Share confidential information with others only with the informed consent of those involved, including circumstances in which steps are taken to disguise their identity, except as required or justified by law, or in circumstances of actual or possible serious physical harm or death.

#### Extended responsibility:

- Encourage others, in a manner consistent with this Code, to respect the dignity of persons and to expect respect for their own dignity.

## Principle II: Responsible Caring

### Values Statement

A basic ethical expectation of any profession is that its activities will benefit members of society or, at least, do no harm. Therefore, members demonstrate an active concern for the welfare of any individual, couple, family, group, or community with whom they relate in their practice. This concern includes both those directly involved and those indirectly involved in their activities. However, as with Principle I, members' greatest responsibility is to protect the welfare of those in the most vulnerable position. Normally, persons directly involved in their activities, such as clients, are in such a position. Members' responsibility to those indirectly involved (e.g., employers, third party payers, clients' family members, the general public) normally is secondary.

As persons usually consider their own welfare in their personal decision-making, obtaining informed consent (see Principle I) is one of the best methods for ensuring that their welfare will be protected. However, it is only when such consent is combined with the responsible caring of the member that there is considerable ethical protection of the welfare of the person(s) involved.

Responsible caring leads members to take care to discern the potential harm and benefits involved, to predict the

likelihood of their occurrence, to proceed only if the potential benefits outweigh the potential harms, to develop and use methods that will minimize harms and maximize benefits, and to take responsibility for correcting clearly harmful effects that have occurred as a direct result of their practice or business activities.

In order to carry out these steps, members recognize the need for competence and self-awareness. They engage only in those activities in which they have competence or for which they are receiving supervision. They also engage in self-reflection regarding how their own values, attitudes, experiences, and social context (e.g., culture, ethnicity, colour, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, age, and socio-economic status) influence their actions, interpretations, choices, and recommendations.

Responsible caring recognizes and respects (e.g., through obtaining informed consent) the ability of individuals, couples, families, groups, and communities to make decisions for themselves and to care for themselves and each other. It does not replace or undermine such ability, nor does it substitute one person's opinion about what is in the best interests of another person for that other person's competent decision making. However, members recognize that, as vulnerabilities increase or as power to control one's own life decreases, members have an increasing responsibility to protect the wellbeing of the individual, couple, family, group, or community involved. For this reason, as in Principle I, members consider it their responsibility to increase safeguards proportionate to the degree of dependency and the lack of voluntary initiation on the part of the persons involved. However, for Principle II, the safeguards are for the wellbeing of persons rather than for the rights of persons.

By virtue of the social contract inherent in the mental health professions, members have a higher duty of care to individuals in society than the general duty of care all individuals have to each other. However, members are entitled to protect their own basic wellbeing (e.g., physical safety, family relationships) in their work.

### **Ethical Standards**

In adhering to the Principle of Responsible Caring, members would:

General caring:

- Protect and promote the welfare of clients, employees, supervisees, students, trainees, colleagues, and others.
- Avoid doing harm to others.
- Accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions.
- Refuse to advise, train, or supply information to anyone who, in the member's judgment, will use the knowledge or skills to harm others.

Competence and self-knowledge:

- Offer or carry out (without supervision) only those activities for which they have established their competence to carry them out.
- Not delegate activities to persons not competent to carry them.
- Take immediate steps to obtain consultation or to refer a client to a colleague or other appropriate professional, whichever is more likely to result in providing the client with competent service, if it becomes apparent that a client's problems are beyond their training and competence.
- Keep themselves up to date with a broad range of relevant knowledge and practices, and their impact on persons and society, through the reading of relevant literature, peer consultation, and continuing education activities, in order that their service activities will benefit and not harm others.
- Evaluate how their own experiences, attitudes, culture, beliefs, values, social context, individual differences, specific training, and stresses influence their interactions with clients, and integrate this awareness into all efforts to benefit and not harm others.
- Seek appropriate help and/or discontinue professional activity for an appropriate period of time, if a physical or psychological condition or the influence of any substance reduces their ability to benefit and not harm others.
- Engage in self-care activities that help to avoid conditions (e.g., burnout, addictions) that could result in impaired judgement and interfere with their ability to benefit and not harm others.
- Ensure that they not exceed their level of competence in the administration and interpretation of tests.

Risk/benefit analysis:



- Assess the individuals, couples, families, groups, and communities involved in their activities adequately enough to ensure that they will be able to discern what will benefit and not harm the persons involved.
- Ensure that they are sufficiently sensitive to and knowledgeable about individual, couple, family, group, community, and cultural differences and vulnerabilities to discern what will benefit and not harm persons involved in their activities.

Maximize benefit:

- Provide services that are coordinated over time and with other service providers, in order to avoid duplication or working at cross purposes.
- Create and maintain records relating to their activities that are sufficient to support continuity and appropriate coordination of their activities with the activities of others.
- Make themselves aware of the knowledge and skills of other disciplines (e.g., law, psychology, social work, medicine) and advise the use of such knowledge and skills, where relevant to the benefit of others.
- Strive to provide and/or obtain the best possible service. This may include, but is not limited to: selecting interventions that are relevant to the needs and characteristics of the client and that have reasonable theoretical or empirically-supported efficacy in light of those needs and characteristics; consulting with, or including in service delivery, persons relevant to the culture or belief systems of those served; advocating on behalf of the client; and, recommending other professionals when appropriate.
- Facilitate the professional development of their employees, supervisees, students, and trainees by ensuring that these persons understand the values and ethical prescriptions of the practice, and by providing or arranging for adequate working conditions, timely evaluations, and constructive consultation and experience opportunities.

Minimize harm:

- Be acutely aware of their position of power and responsibility to all clients and, therefore, take care to ensure that clients are protected from any abuse of such power, during and after the provision of professional services.
- Establish and maintain clear and appropriate boundaries in professional relationships and all aspects of professional practice for the protection of clients. Boundary violations include sexual misconduct and misuse of and abuse of the member's power. Non-sexual boundary violations may include emotional, physical, social, and financial violations.
- Not encourage or engage in sexual intimacy with therapy clients, during therapy or for that period of time following therapy during which the power relationship reasonably could be expected to influence the client's personal decision-making.
- Not use their professional position of authority to coerce, improperly influence, harass, abuse, or exploit students, trainees, employees, or colleagues. Not encourage or engage in sexual intimacy with anyone with whom the member has an evaluative or other relationship of direct authority.
- Be careful not to engage in activities in a way that could place incidentally involved persons at risk.
- Be acutely aware of the need for discretion in the recording and communication of information, in order that the information not be misinterpreted or misused to the detriment of others. This includes, but is not limited to: avoiding conjecture; clearly labelling opinion; and, communicating information in language that can be understood clearly by the recipient of the information.
- Give reasonable assistance to secure needed services if personally unable to meet requests for such services.
- Provide a client, if appropriate and if desired by the client, with reasonable assistance to find a way to receive needed services in the event that third party payments are exhausted and the client cannot afford the fees involved.
- Maintain appropriate contact, support, and responsibility for caring until a colleague or other professional begins service, if referring a client to a colleague or other professional.
- Give reasonable notice and be reasonably assured that discontinuation will cause no harm to the client,

before discontinuing services.

Offset/correct harm:

- Terminate an activity when it is clear that the activity carries more than minimal risk of harm and is found to be more harmful than beneficial, or when the activity is no longer needed.
- Refuse to help individuals, couples, families, groups, or communities to carry out or submit to activities that, according to current knowledge, or legal or professional guidelines, would cause serious physical or psychological harm to themselves or others.
- Do everything reasonably possible to stop or offset the consequences of actions by others when these actions are likely to cause serious physical harm or death. This may include reporting to appropriate authorities (e.g., the police), an intended victim, or a family member or other support person who can intervene, and could be done even when a confidential relationship is involved.
- Act to stop or offset the consequences of seriously harmful activities being carried out by another member or other professional, when there is objective information about the activities and the harm. This may include reporting to the appropriate regulatory body, authority, or committee for action, depending on the member's judgment about the person(s) or body(ies) best suited to stop or offset the harm, and depending upon regulatory requirements and definitions of misconduct.
- Act also to stop or offset the consequences of harmful activities carried out by another member or other professional, when the harm is not serious or the activities appear to be primarily a lack of sensitivity, knowledge, or experience. This may include talking informally with the member or other professional, obtaining objective information and, if possible and relevant, the assurance that the harm will discontinue and be corrected. If in a vulnerable position (e.g., employee, trainee) with respect to the other member or professional, it may include asking persons in less vulnerable positions to participate in the meeting(s).
- Be open to the concerns of others about perceptions of harm that they as a member might be causing, stop activities that are causing harm, and not punish or seek punishment for those who raise such concerns in good faith.

Extended responsibility:

- Encourage others, in a manner consistent with this Code, to care responsibly.

## Principle III: Integrity in Relationships

### Values Statement

The relationships formed by members in the course of their work embody explicit and implicit mutual expectations of integrity. These expectations include accuracy and honesty; the maximization of objectivity and minimization of bias; straightforwardness and openness; the maximization of objectivity and minimization of bias; and, avoidance of conflicts of interest.

In addition to accuracy, honesty, and the obvious prohibitions of fraud or misrepresentation, meeting expectations of integrity is enhanced by self-knowledge and the use of critical analysis regarding personal values and self-interest. Members are not expected to be value-free or totally without self-interest in conducting their activities; however, they are expected to understand how their backgrounds, personal needs, and values interact with their activities, to be open and honest about the influence of such factors, and to be as objective and unbiased as possible under the circumstances.

The values of openness and straightforwardness exist within the context of Respect for the Dignity of Persons (Principle I) and Responsible Caring (Principle II). As such, there will be circumstances in which openness and straightforwardness will need to be tempered. Fully open and straightforward disclosure might not be needed or desired by others and, in some circumstances, might be a risk to their dignity or well being, or considered culturally inappropriate. In such circumstances, however, members have a responsibility to ensure that their decision not to be fully open or straightforward is justified by higher-order values and does not invalidate any informed consent procedures.

It is expected that members will act in the best interests of members of the public, therefore situations that present real or potential conflicts of interest are of concern. Conflict of interest situations are those that can lead to distorted

judgment and can motivate members to act in ways that meet their own personal, political, financial, or business interests at the expense of the best interests of members of the public. Although avoidance of all conflicts of interest and potential exploitation of others is not possible, some are of such a high risk to protecting the interests of members of the public and to maintaining the trust of the public, that they are considered never acceptable. The risk level of other conflicts of interest (e.g., dual or multiple relationships) might be partially dependent on cultural factors and the specific type of professional relationship (e.g., long-term psychotherapy vs. community development activities). It is the responsibility of members to avoid dual or multiple relationships and other conflicts of interest when appropriate and possible. When such situations cannot be avoided or are inappropriate to avoid, members have a responsibility to declare that they have a conflict of interest, to seek advice, and to establish safeguards to ensure that the best interests of members of the public are protected.

Integrity in relationships implies that members, as a matter of honesty, have a responsibility to maintain competence in any specialty area for which they declare competence, whether or not they are currently practising in that area.

### **Ethical Standards**

In adhering to the Principle of Integrity in Relationships, members would:

#### Accuracy/honesty:

- Not knowingly participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or misrepresentation.
- Accurately represent their own and their colleagues' credentials, qualifications, education, experience, competence, and affiliations, in all spoken, written, or printed communications, being careful not to use descriptions or information, which could be misinterpreted (e.g. citing membership in a voluntary association as a testament of competence).
- Carefully protect their own and their colleagues' credentials from being misrepresented by others, and act quickly to correct any such misrepresentation.
- Maintain competence in their declared area(s) of competence and in their current areas of activity.
- Accurately represent their activities, functions, contributions, and likely or actual outcomes of their activities in all spoken, written or printed communication. This includes, but is not limited to, advertisements of services and course and workshop descriptions.
- Ensure that their own and their colleagues' activities, functions, contributions, and likely or actual and outcomes of their activities are not misrepresented by others, and act quickly to correct any such misrepresentation.
- Take credit only for the work and ideas that they have actually done or generated, and give credit for work done or ideas contributed by others, in proportion to their contribution.
- Acknowledge the limitations of their own and their colleagues' knowledge, methods, findings, interventions, and views.

#### Objectivity/lack of bias:

- Evaluate how their personal experiences, attitudes, values, social context, individual differences, stresses, and specific training influence their activities and thinking, integrating this awareness into all attempts to be objective and unbiased in their services and other activities.
- Take care to communicate as completely and objectively as possible, and to clearly differentiate facts, opinions, theories, hypotheses, and ideas, when communicating knowledge, findings, and views.
- Present instructional information accurately, avoiding bias in the selection and presentation of information, and publicly acknowledge any personal values or bias that influence the selection and presentation of information.
- Refrain from entering into or promising someone a personal, professional, financial, or other relationship if it appears likely that such a relationship might impair objectivity.

#### Straightforwardness/openness:

- Be clear and straightforward about all information needed to establish informed consent or any other valid written or unwritten agreement (for example: fees, including any limitations imposed by third-party payers; relevant business policies and practices; mutual concerns; mutual responsibilities; ethical

responsibilities of members; purpose and nature of the relationship; alternatives; likely experiences; possible conflicts; possible outcomes; and, expectations for processing, using, and sharing any information generated).

- Provide suitable information, communicated in understandable language, about the results of assessments or evaluations to the persons involved.
- Fully explain reasons for their actions to persons who have been affected by their actions, if appropriate and if asked.
- Honour all promises and commitments included in any written or verbal agreement, unless serious and unexpected circumstances (e.g., illness) intervene. If such circumstances occur, then members would provide an honest explanation to other parties involved.
- Make clear whether they are acting as private citizens, as members of specific organizations or groups, or as representatives of OACCPP, when making statements or when involved in public activities.
- Make no attempt to conceal the status of a student or trainee and, if the individual is providing direct client service, ensure that the client is informed of that fact.

Avoidance of conflict:

- Not exploit any relationship established as a practitioner to further personal, political, or business interests at the expense of the best interests of their clients, students, employers, or others. This includes, but is not limited to: soliciting clients of one's employing agency for private practice; taking advantage of trust or dependency to encourage or engage in sexual intimacies (e.g., with clients, with clients' partners or relatives, with students or trainees); taking advantage of trust or dependency to frighten clients into receiving services; using information obtained in the course of a professional relationship; using the resources of one's employing institution for purposes not agreed to; giving or receiving kickbacks or bonuses for referrals; seeking or accepting loans or investments from clients; and, prejudicing others against a colleague for reasons of personal gain.
- Avoid dual or multiple relationships (e.g., with clients, employees, supervisees, students, or trainees) and other situations that might present a conflict of interest or that might reduce their ability to be objective and unbiased in their determinations of what might be in the best interests of others.
- Manage dual or multiple relationships that are unavoidable due to cultural norms or other circumstances in such a manner that bias, lack of objectivity, and risk of exploitation are minimized. This might include obtaining ongoing supervision or consultation for the duration of the dual or multiple relationship, or involving a third party in obtaining consent.
- Inform all parties, if a real or potential conflict of interest arises, of the need to resolve the situation in a manner that is consistent with Respect for the Dignity of Persons (Principle I) and Responsible Caring (Principle II), and take all reasonable steps to resolve the issue in such a manner.

Utilization of relevant information:

- Familiarize themselves with the OACCPP by-laws, this Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, and the Policy and Procedure Manual, and abide by them.
- Seek consultation from colleagues and/or appropriate groups and committees, and give due regard to their advice in arriving at a responsible decision, if faced with difficult situations.

Extended responsibility:

- Encourage other professionals, in a manner consistent with this Code, to relate with integrity.

## **Principle IV: Responsibility to Society**

### **Values Statement**

Members practise within the context of society and therefore have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all people in the community in which they live and work. In order to be responsible and accountable to society, and to contribute constructively to its ongoing development, members need to be willing to work in partnership with others, be self-reflective, and be open to external suggestions and feedback. They need to observe and interpret the

effects of societal structures and policies, and the process of change, and seek to increase the beneficial use of knowledge related to mental health.

### **Ethical Standards**

In adhering to the Principle of Responsibility to Society, members would:

Development of knowledge:

- Contribute to the mental health field and society's understanding of itself and human beings generally, through free enquiry and the acquisition, transmission, and expression of knowledge and ideas, unless such activities conflict with other basic ethical requirements.
- Not interfere with, or condone interference with, free enquiry, acquisition, transmission, and expression of knowledge and ideas, as long as there is no conflict with other basic ethical requirements.
- Keep informed of progress in their area(s) of practice, take this progress into account in their work, and try to make their own contributions to this progress.
- Beneficial activities Participate in and contribute to continuing education and the professional growth of self and colleagues.
- Assist in the development of those beginning to practice by helping them to acquire a full understanding of their ethical responsibilities, and the needed competencies of their chosen area(s), including an understanding of critical analysis.
- Participate in the process of critical evaluation of the mental health field's place in society, and in the development and implementation of structures and procedures that contribute to beneficial societal functioning and changes.
- Provide and/or contribute to a work environment that supports the respectful expression of ethical concern or dissent, and the constructive resolution of such concern or dissent.
- Engage in regular monitoring and assessment of their ethical practices and safeguards.
- Help develop, promote, and participate in accountability processes and procedures related to their work.
- Uphold the Association's responsibility to society by promoting and maintaining the highest standards.
- Contribute to the general welfare of society (e.g., improving accessibility of services, regardless of ability to pay) by offering a portion of their time to work for which they receive little or no financial return.
- Uphold the Association's responsibility to society by bringing incompetent or unethical behaviour to the attention of appropriate authorities, committees, or regulatory bodies, in a manner consistent with the ethical principles of this Code, if informal resolution or correction of the situation is not appropriate or possible.
- Enter only into agreements or contracts that allow them to act in accordance with the ethical principles and standards of this Code.
- Respect for society Acquire an adequate knowledge of the culture, social structure, and customs of a community before beginning any major work there.
- Convey respect for and abide by prevailing community mores, social customs, and cultural expectations in their professional activities, provided that this does not contravene any of the ethical principles of this Code.
- Uphold at all times the laws and regulations of society.

Development of society:

- Be sensitive to the needs, current issues, and problems of society, when determining services to be developed, content to be taught, information to be collected, or appropriate interpretation of results or findings.
- Promote social justice and advocate for social change. Be knowledgeable and sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and to forms of social injustice such as poverty, discrimination and imbalances of power that exist in the culture.
- Be especially careful to keep well informed of social issues through relevant reading, peer consultation, and continuing education, if their work is related to societal issues.

- Speak out, in a manner consistent with the four principles of this Code, if they possess expert knowledge that bears on important societal issues being studied or discussed.
- Exercise particular care when conveying information about vulnerable groups, ensuring that the information is not likely to be misinterpreted or misused in the development of social policy, attitudes, and practices (e.g., encouraging manipulation of vulnerable persons or reinforcing discrimination against any specific population).
- Speak out and/or act, in a manner consistent with the four principles of this Code, if the policies, practices, laws, or regulations of the social structure within which they work seriously ignore or contradict any of the principles of this Code.

Extended responsibility:

- Encourage others, in a manner consistent with this Code, to exercise responsibility to society.

## OACCPP ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

PRINCIPLE I RESPECT FOR THE DIGNITY OF PERSONS	PRINCIPLE II RESPONSIBLE CARING	PRINCIPLE III INTEGRITY IN RELATIONSHIPS	PRINCIPLE IV RESPONSIBILITY TO SOCIETY
General respect	General caring	Accuracy/honesty	Development of knowledge
General rights	Competence and self-knowledge	Objectivity/lack of bias	Beneficial activities
Non-discrimination	Risk/benefit analysis	Straightforwardness/openness	Respect for society
Fair treatment	Maximize benefit	Avoidance of conflict	Development of society
Informed consent	Minimize harm	Utilization of relevant information	Extended responsibility
Freedom of consent	Offset/correct harm	Extended responsibility	
Protection for vulnerable persons	Extended responsibility		
Privacy			
Confidentiality			
Extended responsibility			