

The Code Of Ethics For Group Counselors

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Counseling is a professional relationship that is focused on empowering individuals, groups, and families to accomplish wellness, mental health, career goals, and mental health. Ethics are the essential parameters used by professionals to get fair with the profession as well as clients. Many bodies have their ethical guidelines for working with groups. These bodies maintain rigorous standards related to training, clinical practices, and education. Counselors are committed to increasing their knowledge and showing their commitment to their profession and themselves. Ethical guidelines are followed by counselors who believe in the worth and the dignity of their fellow beings and so make an effort to promote human wellbeing.

Group counselors have significant obligations to safeguard the information provided by individuals in counseling and educational settings. So they have the professional disclosure statement that includes information related to confidentiality along with some exceptions, information on the purpose, type, goals, and nature of groups, theoretical framework, and the role of group leaders and members. The code of Ethics, for counselors to work in group settings, assists members in making thorough ethical decisions, defining ethical behaviors to the mission of the Association, and educating students and the public.

Issues Of Confidentiality

All clients, either individuals or groups of mental health, have a right that is bounded by some limitations and expectations; this concept is referred to as confidentiality. According to the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA), when mental health professionals work with groups or families, they safeguard the rights of all members. Counselors are bound by the Code of Ethics to make it clear to all the group members that each member of the group, as well as family, has individual rights, and when they see individually, then confidentiality will be maintained within the legal limits (AMHCA. A.2). According to the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) group workers have to follow a professional disclosure statement including guidelines related to confidentiality and its exceptions, goals of the group, information on the nature of privacy, theoretical orientation, roles of the members of the group, group member' and leader's responsibilities, group services that can be given, qualification of group workers for conduction of specific groups, professional affiliations, and specific licenses (A.6). According to American Counseling Association (ACA), the counselor has to explain the parameters and importance of confidentiality (B.4.a). Moreover, in family and couple counseling, the counselor has to clarify the position of 'the client' and explain all the limitations and legal expectations related to confidentiality (B.4.b).

The Role Of The Counselor

According to AMHCA, the role of a mental health counselor includes the commitment to understanding the behavior of their client, valuing objectivity, maintaining integrity, and maintaining high standards of counseling services. The first essential responsibility of these counselors is to respect the dignity of the client while promoting the welfare of the client. Secondly, mental health counselors have defined rules and regulations related to the counselor-client relationship. (A.1).

According to ASGW, group workers are aware of their roles; besides, they also have the understanding of and are involved in the application of these and others Code of Ethics and their roles (A. 1). Furthermore, the role of group workers is creating a general conceptual framework and a valid rationale that have to be practiced and used with the groups later on. They are also bound to limit their practice to their specialized area of training (A. 2).

ACA, similar to AMHCA, has clarified the major responsibility of its counselors to respect the integrity of group members and to enhance their well-being (A.1.a). They also have to create and maintain the proper and timely documentation of appropriate professional services. This documentation must carry all the relevant information of group members along with their progress and all the services provided to them (A.1.b). The role of the counselor also includes devising counseling programs that are efficient for the counselors to evaluate their continuous capability and efficiency, valuing the freedom of choice of group members. (A.1.c). Counselors have to be aware of the support networks that hold several meanings in the lives of their group members. They further have to consider reporting that support, understanding, and participation of others as positive assets with the client's informed consent (A.2.d).

Assessment Procedures And Screening

According to AMHC, mental health counselors use psychological, educational, diagnostic, career assessment tests, and other diagnostic assessment techniques to determine clients' needs related to the context. These standardized assessment tools are valid and reliable, with specified norms related to age, gender, race, and client demographics. Assessments carried out by counselors apply to academic, professional, or training relationships and are carried out in the appropriate environment (D). On the other hand, ACA focuses on the assessment of the career, educational, mental, and psychological health of group clients. Both quantitative and qualitative assessment is carried out depending on the needs of clients (E.1.a). AGSW focuses on assessing their skills and knowledge, theoretical orientation, and values of themselves and how these beliefs, skills, and experiences influence the diverse group members. Group workers also assess the needs, competence, and values of group members (A. 3). AMHCA provides a guideline related to screening of prospective group participants by mental health counselors (B.3.a). Counselors select and screen participants whose goals are compatible with that of the group and whose well-being is not threatened due to group experience (ACA, A.9.a).

Training And Supervision

AMHCA bound the counselors to provide and apply only those skills and procedures for which they are trained and properly qualified (C.1.b). Moreover, they are given training by mental health professionals to get up-to-date training and to use assessment questionnaires effectively (D.3.a). According to ACA, counseling supervisors supervise the services provided by supervisees to their clients. They also monitor the well-being of clients and the performance of supervisees (F.1.a). AGSW, on the other hand, focuses on providing training and consultation to organizations through their group workers. They offer consultation and professional expertise for their group clients (C. 4).

Group Member Preparation And Group Dynamics

According to ASGW, group workers are bound to screen the potential group members to identify and select them. Informed consent is needed, and they are informed orally and in written format, including the professional disclosure statement; disclosure of information to others; expectations to group participation; the purpose and goals of the group; documentation requirements; policies governing substance use; role expectations of members and leader(s); policies related to group entry and exit; policies and procedures governing mandated groups; procedures for consultation; implications of out-of-group contact or involvement among members; time parameters; issues related to fee; and possible impacts of group participation (A. 7). Group workers have essential and required knowledge of groups and group dynamics and have potential to perform core competencies. They further collect understanding, self-awareness, skills, and assistance related to working in a diverse group (ASGW, B. 2).

References

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