



Ann Arbor Consultation Services

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Ethics Overview

Ethical principles of therapy and psychiatry

AACS has a general code of ethics; your therapist or psychiatry practitioner also has a professional code of ethics. Ethical standards are very important for a number of reasons. Below are some basic principles. The list is **not** all-inclusive, and please be aware sometimes principles can conflict with one another. Your clinician or recipient rights advisor can discuss further; in addition, each profession (social work, psychology, psychiatry) has a state board and a national association that can assist with ethics questions. If you feel a clinician is not acting ethically, please discuss with someone who can help, such as your recipient rights advisor.

Being trustworthy: honouring the trust placed in the practitioner (also referred to as fidelity)

At AACS, we strive to act in accordance with the trust placed in us by ensuring clients' expectations are ones that have reasonable prospects of being met; honor agreements and promises; respecting confidentiality.

Autonomy: respect for the client's right to be self-governing

At AACS this includes seeking freely given and adequately informed consent; emphasizing the value of voluntary participation in the services being offered; engage in explicit contracting in advance of any commitment by clients; protecting privacy; protecting confidentiality; informing clients in advance of foreseeable conflicts of interest or as soon as possible after such conflicts become apparent.

Beneficence: a commitment to promoting the client's well-being

This includes working strictly within one's limits of competence and providing services on the basis of adequate training or experience. This requires systematic monitoring of practice and outcomes by the best available means. We use regular and on-going consultation and supervision to enhance the quality of the services provided and to commit to updating practice by continuing professional development. We have an obligation to act in the best interests of our clients and this may become paramount when working with clients whose capacity for autonomy is diminished because of extreme distress, serious disturbance or other significant personal constraints.

Non-maleficence: a commitment to avoiding harm to the client

This involves avoiding sexual, financial, emotional or any other form of client exploitation; avoiding incompetence or malpractice; not providing services when unfit to do so due to illness, personal circumstances or intoxication. We also have personal and professional responsibility to challenge, where appropriate, the incompetence or malpractice of others; and to contribute to any investigation and/or adjudication concerning professional practice which falls below that of a reasonably competent practitioner and/or risks bringing discredit upon our profession.

Justice: the fair and impartial treatment of all clients and the provision of adequate services

We strive to be just and fair to all clients and respecting human rights and dignity. We are alert to potential conflicts between legal and ethical obligations. We determine impartially the provision of services for clients and the allocation of services between clients. We avoid discrimination against people or groups.

Self-respect: fostering the practitioner's self-knowledge and care for self

The principle of self-respect means that the practitioner appropriately applies all the above principles as entitlements for self. This includes seeking counseling or therapy and other opportunities for personal development as required. There is an ethical responsibility to use supervision for appropriate personal and professional support and development, and to seek training and other opportunities for continuing professional development. Guarding against financial liabilities arising from work undertaken usually requires obtaining appropriate insurance. The principle of self-respect encourages active engagement in life-enhancing activities and relationships that are independent of relationships in counseling or psychotherapy.

TIP SHEET: ETHICS

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