BC ASSOCIATION of CLINICAL COUNSELLORS

STANDARDS OF CLINICAL PRACTICE Virtual Practice and Digital Technologies

Effective November 1, 2023

OVERVIEW: STANDARDS OF CLINICAL PRACTICE

STANDARD 1: CLIENT-CENTERED CARE AND CONSENT

The Clinical Counsellor ensures that every aspect of care is centered around the client's immediate and ongoing needs and goals.

STANDARD 2: COMPETENCE AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The Clinical Counsellor develops and maintains their competence, applies clinically indicated and/or evidence-informed methods, critical thinking and clinical and professional judgment, and engages in quality improvement to best serve clients and protect the public.

STANDARD 3: PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY AND COMMUNICATION

The Clinical Counsellor meets the ethical and legal requirements of professional practice and demonstrates responsible caring, honesty, integrity and respect for all persons and peoples. The Clinical Counsellor is truthful, accurate, and clear in all communications, respecting and supporting a client's, or potential client's, ability to make informed judgements and choices, and addresses misrepresentations appropriately.

STANDARD 4: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ANTI-RACISM

The Clinical Counsellor demonstrates cultural humility, which begins with a self-examination of values, assumptions, beliefs, and privileges embedded in their own knowledge and practice, and consideration of how this may impact therapeutic relationships with all clients. In collaboration with the client, the Clinical Counsellor facilitates safer health care experiences where clients' physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social, and cultural needs can be met.

STANDARD 5: INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY, CULTURAL HUMILITY, AND ANTI-RACISM

The Clinical Counsellor strives to be well-versed in the unique issues caused by structural and systemic racism and the impact-on Indigenous clients. The Clinical Counsellor works to ensure they address systemic issues within the practice environment while creating a culturally informed, collaborative, and safer clinical experience for clients. Clinical Counsellors ensure they practice with cultural humility and awareness of systemic racism ensuring Indigenous clients get access to relevant, culturally informed, anti-racist care.

STANDARD 6: CLINICAL AND COUNSELLING ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

The Clinical Counsellor, within their individual range of competencies, training, and experience, conducts clinical or assessments and prepares clear, concise, accurate, and timely reports appropriate to the needs of the client and the recipient.

STANDARD 7: VIRTUAL PRACTICE AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

The Clinical Counsellor integrates technology and provides services via remote (virtual) means in a manner that does not compromise quality or integrity of professional service and is in the client's best interests.

STANDARD 8: RELATIONSHIPS, BOUNDARIES AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Clinical Counsellor manages relationships intentionally, maintains appropriate professional boundaries, and recognizes, prevents, and takes action to resolve conflicts of interest—direct, potential, or perceived.

STANDARD 9: SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

The Clinical Counsellor refrains from all activities that would create the potential for sexual misconduct, including activities that exploit the power imbalance and/or trust required of the therapeutic relationship.

STANDARD 10: PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The Clinical Counsellor respects clients' rights to the privacy and confidentiality of their personal information. All clinical content communicated through the course of care by both parties, including information contained in the clinical record is considered to be protected client information. Clinical Counsellors protect all communicated and stored client information and comply with relevant legislation, ethical guidelines and regulatory standards related to privacy and confidentiality at all times.

STANDARD 11: MARKETING, ADVERTISING AND FEES FOR SERVICE

The Clinical Counsellor is truthful, accurate, and clear in all communications, and considers approaches to advertising and marketing activities that are in the best interests of clients and potential clients, and that respect and support the ability to make informed judgements and choices.

STANDARD 12: DOCUMENTATION AND RECORD KEEPING

The Clinical Counsellor maintains and secures client and financial records with the highest integrity, adhering to BCACC bylaws and applicable legislative and regulatory requirements.

STANDARD 13: ETHICAL CONDUCT

The Clinical Counsellor adheres to the ethical principles contained within the BCACC Code of Ethical Conduct and demonstrates ethical behaviour in all professional activities, recognizing the variable nature of ethical concerns and engaging in self-reflective, respectful, and caring practices to protect the inherent worth and wellbeing of all their clients.

STANDARD 7: VIRTUAL PRACTICE AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

The Clinical Counsellor integrates technology and provides services via remote (virtual) means in a manner that does not compromise quality or integrity of professional service and is in the client's best interests.

Expected Outcome:

The client can expect their Clinical Counsellor makes every effort to ensure the use of technology will not negatively impact the safety or the quality of care the client receives.

Criteria

The Clinical Counsellor:

7.1 Maintains compliance with all laws, Bylaws, Standards, and the BCACC Code of Ethical Conduct in the use of varying forms of technology for professional virtual practice.

7.2 Ensures and maintains appropriate training, education, and experience to provide virtual services, using technology competently and securely.

7.3 Obtains appropriate licensure and meets applicable legal and regulatory obligations to provide virtual services to clients who primarily reside in other jurisdictions.

7.4 Assesses if virtual practice is appropriate for the client's best interest and/or for the service provided.

7.5 Carefully considers increased risks of providing virtual services to anonymous clients.

7.6 Obtains express and informed consent for the provision of virtual services, including the:
- a. Tools used for the service,
- b. Requirements to take up the service (e.g., phone, internet access, other specifications for privacy and security for effective use of the virtual service), and
- c. Potential risks with using the service.

7.7 Engages in risk management activities to ensure the technology used to provide service, the physical environment from which virtual services are provided, and the client's physical safety during virtual services are secure.

7.8 Ensures any website or technological interface used as part of virtual practice:
- a. Complies with BCACC's Bylaws, Code of Ethical Conduct, and Standards of Practice relating to advertising.
- b. Identifies the full name and registration and/or license number of any Clinical Counsellor who interacts with a client through the interface.
- c. Complies with applicable Standards of Practice related to privacy, confidentiality, record keeping, and fees for service.
- d. Meets other relevant legislated requirements.

7.9 Refrains from providing clinical assessment, or clinical information on publicly accessible websites, blogs, forums, or other communications platforms, such as social networking sites.

Related BCACC Documents

- Remote Counselling and Privacy Law

Related Standards of Clinical Practice

- Standard 1: Client-Centered Care and Consent
- Standard 3: Professional Integrity and Communication
- Standard 4: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism
- Standard 5: Indigenous Cultural Safety, Cultural Humility, and Anti-Racism
- Standard 10: Privacy and Confidentiality
- Standard 11: Marketing, Advertising, and Fees for Service
- Standard 12: Documentation and Record Keeping

Glossary Definitions

Assessment: Refers to the variety of methods used for the purpose of collecting information relevant to evaluating the clients' experiences, struggles, functioning and impact on their day-to-day relationships and informing the course of care.

Express consent: Consent given directly and explicitly, regardless of consent implied by context or behavioural norms.

Reasonable: That which any other Clinical Counsellor with similar education, experience and/or training would do in a similar situation.

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Effective date: November 1, 2023
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