

BC ASSOCIATION

of **CLINICAL
COUNSELLORS**



STANDARDS OF CLINICAL PRACTICE Sexual Misconduct

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 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, interpersonal nature, and/or trust required of the therapeutic relationship.

Expected Outcome:

The client can expect their Clinical Counsellor will provide a safe counselling and therapeutic environment based on trust, respect for individual dignity, and a principal focus on the client's best interest.

Criteria

The Clinical Counsellor:

- 9.1 Recognizes the therapeutic relationship is built on a relationship of trust and has an inherent power imbalance, taking steps to safeguard against misuse or abuse.
- 9.2 Refrains from providing professional services to persons with whom a current or previous sexual relationship exists.
- 9.3 Refrains from committing acts of sexual misconduct and engaging in sexual behaviour or sexual relationships of any nature with past or present clients and current supervisees, interns, and students or those with close personal relationships with the aforementioned.
- 9.4 Refrains from committing acts of sexual misconduct and engaging in sexual behaviour or sexual relationships of any nature with those with whom a power imbalance may exist or for whom the Clinical Counsellor is directly or indirectly responsible for mentoring, teaching, supervising, or evaluating.
- 9.5 Refrains from committing acts of sexual misconduct that cause harm to the client even if not expressly described or prohibited within laws, Bylaws, Standards, and Code of Ethical Conduct of the clinical counselling profession.
- 9.6 Manages consensual sexual behaviour or sexual relationships carefully with those for whom a prior direct or indirect mentoring, teaching, supervising, or evaluating relationship exists, safeguarding against any past or remaining power imbalances when entering into a relationship of this nature. The Clinical Counsellor seeks guidance from the BCACC, or appropriate regulatory body, professional colleagues, clinical supervisors, or appropriate legal counsel, as required.

Related BCACC Documents

- Code of Ethical Conduct

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

Glossary Definitions

Consensual: undertaken with the willing agreement (informed consent) of all parties.

Health care professional: Member of a regulated health profession or occupation.

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

Sexual misconduct: Engaging in sexual intercourse or physical act of a sexual nature, touches the client or person, directly or indirectly, if the touching is of a sexual nature, attempts the aforementioned or manipulates or exploits for sexual purposes, including offering or accepting services in exchange for acts of a sexual nature, whether or not the services are health services; harasses, if the harassment is of a sexual nature; engages in communication of a sexual nature including requesting communication or sharing media containing sexual content; if the person engaged is a client or person other than a spouse or if the person is other than a client and has not consented .

Supervisee: Any person who performs a counselling service under the supervision of a Clinical Supervisor.

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Effective date: November 1, 2023
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