

BC ASSOCIATION

of **CLINICAL
COUNSELLORS**



STANDARDS OF CLINICAL PRACTICE

Competence and Quality Improvement

Effective January 3, 2025



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

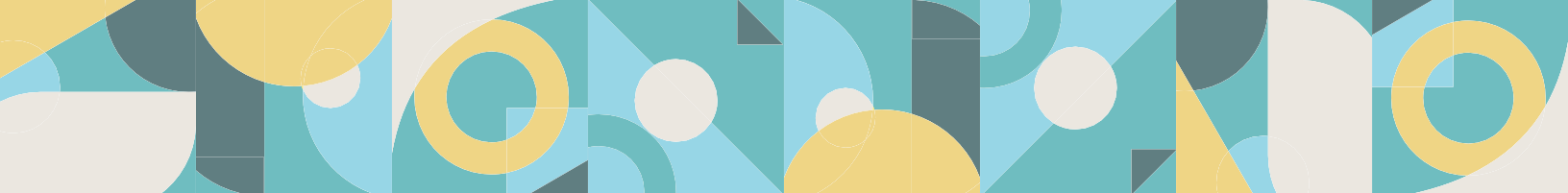
The Clinical Counsellor, within their individual range of competencies, training, and experience, conducts clinical or counselling assessments and prepares clear, concise, accurate, and timely reports appropriate to the needs of the client and the recipient.

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 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.

Expected Outcome:

To ensure a client-centered practice, the client can expect their Clinical Counsellor to:

- be competent in all areas of practice for which care is provided,
- engage in clinically indicated and/or evidence-informed clinical counselling services, and
- engage in quality improvement activities.

Criteria

The Clinical Counsellor:

- 2.1 Accepts responsibility for the development and maintenance of ongoing professional development activities through engagement in quality improvement activities.
- 2.2 Develops, maintains, and grows knowledge, skills, and competence in existing and emerging areas of practice through multiple means, including professional development activities that meet the continuing competence requirements of the BCACC.
- 2.3 Obtains appropriate training and access clinical supervision with an experienced supervisor, when possible, to develop or strengthen competency in a new or emerging professional service.
- 2.4 Maintains up-to-date knowledge of legislation, standards, policies, and third-party agreements pertaining to the delivery of clinical counselling services.
- 2.5 Solicits and collects feedback from clients, colleagues, and supervisors, as appropriate, and engages in self-reflection to identify areas for quality improvement.
- 2.6 Assesses client feedback, adverse events, and service gaps, and takes immediate action to facilitate safer, client-centered care and continuous quality improvement.
- 2.7 Recognizes when education, training, and experience are insufficient to provide competent, appropriate, and high-quality care and/or supervision and engages in the necessary education and supervision to support ongoing professional development goals for the benefit of client care.
- 2.8 Performs professional activities only if sufficiently educated, trained and experienced to do so, having obtained and maintained the necessary knowledge, skills, judgment, and supervision to perform those activities safely, competently, and ethically.
- 2.9 Consults with other counsellors and/or health professionals and seeks clinical supervision when issues outside the Clinical Counsellor's areas of competence arise.

- 
- 2.10 Evaluates professional practice activities using a variety of evaluation methods, including client feedback and clinical supervision and applies clinical and professional judgment to modify approaches to best serve the client needs.
 - 2.11 Engages in self-reflection, including through a relationship with a clinical supervisor when possible, and the process of supervision and consultation, to identify strengths and challenges, clinical and professional attitudes, competency gaps, and learning needs.
 - 2.12 Maintains personal and psychological fitness to practice by proactively engaging in self-care.
 - 2.13 Practices clinical counselling only if competence is unimpaired and benefits of counselling are uncompromised, or else limits, suspends, or ceases services.
 - 2.14 Obtains client consent to exchange relevant client information with other Clinical Counsellors, other regulated health care professionals, students, supervisees, and those in the clients' circle of care to enhance effective collaboration, ensure continuity of care, and/or to share in clinical consultation supervision sessions.
 - 2.15 Refers client(s) to other Clinical Counsellors or other health professionals, and/or assists client(s) in finding necessary professional help and/or resources when competence or quality of care is compromised.
 - 2.16 Incorporates policies, procedures, and strategies related to quality improvement and risk/harm assessment, mitigation, and management into practice, and informs all relevant health care professionals, students and supervisees involved.
 - 2.17 Ensures all relevant health care professionals, students, and supervisees involved in client care are informed about policies, procedures, and requirements for quality improvement and risk/harm assessment, mitigation, and management.
 - 2.18 Assumes responsibility for the professional activities and actions of students and supervisees within the practicum/internship setting.
 - 2.19 Facilitates and/or provides access to appropriate and suitable training in ethical responsibilities and competencies for students and supervisees.

Related BCACC Documents

- Code of Ethical Conduct
- Standards for Clinical Counselling Reports
- Entry to Practice Competency Profile

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 6: Clinical and Counselling Assessment and Reporting

Glossary Definitions

Appropriate and suitable training: Clinical Counsellors, students and interns attend and demonstrate learning from relevant and appropriate professional development and educational activities that results in increased proficiency in carrying out clinical and professional activities related to their role.

Assessment: Refers to the variety of evaluation methods used for the purpose of collecting information relevant to determining a course of care with the client.

Case consultation: A process similar to clinical supervision in many ways but differing in two important aspects: (1) The power differential is no longer in play, so the evaluation component is not a requirement. (2) The people seeking consultations are practicing clinicians seeking some level of advanced clinical knowledge or experience to augment their practice.

It is a voluntary relationship between colleagues in which one is a more experienced practitioner, and in which information and strategies are shared with no obligation on the clinician seeking consultation to implement the information or strategy as shared.

Circle of care: Parties involved to provide comprehensive clinical, and therapeutic support to a client whom the client has consented to collect, use, or disclose personal health information and/or has consented to including in the informed consent process.

Clinical supervision: A planned, goal-directed systemic activity that takes place on a regular basis between a more experienced and trained clinical supervisor and a supervisee.

Continuity of care: Ongoing supported appropriate access and quality care over time for the client, provided by relevant professionals in the circle of care.

Evidence-informed: Using an established body of data and evidence to inform clinical determinations within the course of care.

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

Professional development activities: Relevant activities that contribute to the professional growth and development of the practitioner.

Quality improvement: A problem-solving framework that supports the Clinical Counsellor in elevating practice, personal, or professional development.

Self-reflection: Reflection is a metacognitive process undertaken before, during, and after situations with the purpose of developing greater understanding of both the self and the situation so that future encounters are informed/improved/changed from previous encounters.

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

Third party: Person or organization that is involved in the Clinical Counsellor's provision of services to the client and may provide personal information to the Clinical Counsellor but is not a client.

Copyright © BCACC/June 2023
Effective date: November 1, 2023
Revisions effective: January 3, 2025
109-1034 Johnson St
Victoria, BC V8V 3N7
Canada

www.bcacc.ca