BC ASSOCIATION of CLINICAL COUNSELLORS

STANDARDS OF CLINICAL PRACTICE: Ethical Conduct

Effective November 30, 2026

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, 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.



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Expected Outcome

The client can expect the Clinical Counsellor to uphold human rights and dignity in the provision of counselling/psychotherapy, deliver care and knowledge with integrity, and practice consistent ethical decision making to minimize (risk of) harm.

Criteria

The Clinical Counsellor:

Commitment to Ethical Conduct

13.1 Applies the BCACC Code of Ethical Conduct in professional settings.

13.2 Maintains and increases ethical understanding, knowledge, and awareness in all aspects of professional work.

13.3 Continuously and consistently reviews ethical aspects of practice and discusses new ethical issues and questions with a clinical supervisor, professional colleague, or peer supervisor; and, when clinically appropriate, brings ethical concerns or questions to the attention of the BCACC.

13.4 Recognizes the contextual nature of ethical decisions and consults with professional colleagues, clinical supervisor(s), the BCACC or appropriate regulatory body or appropriate legal counsel, when required.

13.5 Addresses perceived or actual unethical behaviour of colleagues in a manner that, where appropriate, emphasizes remedial clarification and education.

13.6 Accepts and considers feedback on issues of an ethical nature, adjusting practice as necessary and in the appropriate manner for resolution.

13.7 Cooperates with BCACC committees, groups, and regulatory staff involved with ethical considerations and decision-making.

Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples

13.8 Acts in the client's best interest, upholds their dignity and provides services in a respectful, honest, and fair manner.

13.9 Demonstrates understanding of the inherent and unique value of all persons, peoples, and environment(s) in counselling activities.

13.10 Upholds the rights of clients, peoples, and self.

13.11 Engages in respectful research and professional activities that are not harmful or exploitative, in compliance with ethical and legal requirements.

13.12 Protects against the use of psychological and therapeutic knowledge to infringe on the rights of others.

13.13 Works to minimize the impact on values and beliefs differences with client(s) through truthful communication and/or referral if those differences may impact the Clinical Counsellor's ability to be unbiased and/or the client(s)' therapeutic outcomes.

13.14 Engages in ongoing self-reflective and educational activities to assess personal bias including, but not limited to, social, cultural, spiritual, emotional, physical, and financial condition or status and any potential for these to have influence in the therapeutic relationship.

13.15 Works to minimize any effects that actual or perceived differences in personal characteristics with all persons, peoples, and others may cause in negatively colouring one's professional and clinical judgement of the client.

13.16 Works with clinical supervisors, colleagues and through professional development activities to recognize limitations and situations that may compromise or impair professional activities.

Responsible Caring

13.17 Provides competent care through client-centered practice and practice that is clinically indicated as beneficial and appropriate to the situation and/or the client.

13.18 Recognizes and manages risk of harm and engages in quality improvement in all professional activities.

13.19 Seeks to maximize potential for positive outcomes in interactions with clients.

Integrity in Relationships

13.20 Recognizes and manages potential for harm in relationships with clients.

13.21 Models respectful professional boundaries.

13.22 Demonstrates impartiality in professional relationships.

13.23 Abstains from acts of harassment in any form.

13.24 Discloses and manages information and actions that have potential to cause harm or may be perceived to affect client care, professional judgement, and/or trust in the profession.

Responsibility to Society

13.25 Applies ethical considerations for the protection of clients, peoples, self and others.

13.26 Promotes and advances ethical principles in research, professional (clinical), administrative, and educational activities.

13.27 Discloses financial interest in promoted products/ services

Related BCACC Documents

- Code of Ethical Conduct
- Bylaws
- Entry to Practice Competency Profile
- Guideline for Ethical Decision Making

- Guidelines for Ethics in Supervision & Teaching

Related Standards of Clinical Practice

All other Standards of Clinical Practice contain specific applications of Standard 13: Ethical Conduct, however the following are of specific value in reference to Criteria noted:

- Standard 1: Client-Centered Care and Consent
- Standard 2: Competence and Quality Improvement
- Standard 4: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism
- Standard 8: Relationships, Boundaries, and Conflict of Interest
- Standard 9: Sexual Misconduct
- Standard 14: Clinical Supervision
- Standard 15: Family Law Reports

Glossary Definitions

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

Referral: Written (or verbal) orders/requests for care from other health care professionals and/or services.

Risk of harm: Likelihood of negative impacts and events, whether physical or psychological in nature that negatively affects the client's health and/or quality of life.

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.

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109-1034 Johnson St
Victoria, BC V8V 3N7
Canada

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