

5300.0350 CODE OF ETHICS.

Subpart 1. **Scope.** The code of ethics applies to all licensees and applicants who practice marriage and family therapy and applies to their conduct during the period of education and training required for licensure.

Subp. 2. **Purpose.** The code of ethics constitutes the standards against which the professional conduct of a marriage and family therapist is measured.

Subp. 3. **Violations.** A violation of the code of ethics is unprofessional or unethical conduct and is a sufficient reason for disciplinary action or denial of licensure.

Subp. 4. **Integrity.** A marriage and family therapist must act in accordance with the highest standards of professional integrity and competence. A marriage and family therapist must be honest in dealing with clients, students, trainees, colleagues, and the public.

A. A therapist must not perform, nor pretend to be able to perform, professional services beyond the therapist's field or fields of competence.

B. A therapist must not permit a trainee or intern under the therapist's supervision to perform, nor pretend to be competent to perform, professional services beyond the trainee's or intern's level of training.

C. A therapist must recognize the potentially influential position the therapist may have with respect to students, interns, employees, and supervisees, and must avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of these persons. A therapist must make every effort to avoid dual relationships that could impair the therapist's professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation. Sexual contact between the therapist and students, employees, independent contractors, colleagues, or supervisees is prohibited for two years after the date that the relationship is terminated, whether or not the party is informed that the relationship is terminated. Sexual contact after two years with a former student, intern, employee, or supervisee is prohibited:

(1) if the former student, intern, employee, or supervisee was emotionally dependent upon the therapist; or

(2) if the sexual contact occurred by means of therapeutic deception.

D. A therapist must not engage in sexual contact or other harassment, therapeutic deception, or exploitation of students, trainees, interns, employees, independent contractors, colleagues, research subjects, or actual or potential witnesses or complainants in ethical proceedings.

E. A therapist must not use or exploit the professional relationship with a student, trainee, intern, employee, independent contractor, colleague, research subject, or actual or potential witness or complainant in ethical proceedings in any manner for the therapist's emotional, financial, sexual, religious, political, or personal advantage or benefit.

F. A therapist must recognize that there are other professional, technical, and administrative resources available to clients. The therapist must make referrals to those resources when it is in the best interest of clients to be provided with alternative or complementary services. The therapist must make a reasonably prompt referral when requested to do so by the client, without consideration of limitation of third-party payors.

G. A therapist must not offer, nor accept, payment for referrals.

H. A therapist must not knowingly offer services to a client who is in treatment with another professional without consultation among the parties involved. If a client refuses to allow consultation, the therapist should delay the administration of service until the client gives consent to consultation. The exception to the consultation requirement would be if the client reports ethical violations by the other professional.

I. A therapist must understand the areas of competence of related professions and act with due regard for the need, special competencies and obligations of their colleagues in other allied professions, and must not disparage the qualifications of any colleague.

J. A therapist must seek appropriate professional assistance for the therapist's own personal problems or conflicts that are likely to impair the therapist's work performance and clinical judgment.

K. A therapist must not practice under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance not prescribed by a physician.

L. A therapist must not allow an individual or agency that is paying for the professional services of a client to exert undue influence over the therapist's evaluation or treatment of the client.

M. A therapist must file a complaint with the board when the therapist has reason to believe that another therapist is or has been engaged in conduct which violates this part according to Minnesota Statutes, section 148B.07, subdivision 4.

N. A therapist must not engage in any conduct likely to deceive or defraud the public or the board.

O. A therapist must not advertise in a way that is false, fraudulent, or misleading to the public.

P. A therapist shall use only academic degrees from regionally accredited institutions that are related to the practice of marriage and family therapy in any situation or circumstance related to the practice of marriage and family therapy. Those therapists holding current Minnesota mental health professional licenses issued by other Minnesota licensing boards may also use degrees and titles directly related to these licenses as permitted by the other boards when the other licensure is cited with the marriage and family licensure.

Q. A therapist must correct, wherever possible, false, misleading, or inaccurate information and representations made by others concerning the therapist's qualifications, services, or products.

R. A therapist must make certain that the qualifications of a person in a therapist's employ is a student, independent contractor, or an intern represented in a manner that is not false, misleading, or deceptive.

S. A therapist must not engage in any unprofessional conduct. Unprofessional conduct is any conduct violating this part or violating those standards of professional behavior that have become established by consensus of the expert opinion of marriage and family therapists as reasonably necessary for the protection of the public interest.

Subp. 5. **Relations to clients.** A marriage and family therapist's primary professional responsibility is to the client. A marriage and family therapist must make every reasonable effort to advance the welfare and best interests of families and individuals. A marriage and family therapist must respect the rights of those persons seeking assistance and make reasonable efforts to ensure that the therapist's services are used appropriately. A marriage therapist is bound by these ethics primarily. These ethics supersede any policies of an employer or contractor that may be contrary to the ethics in this part.

A. Once a client has been accepted into therapy, a therapist must not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, national origin, religion, physical disability, political affiliation, or social or economic status. In addition, a therapist must not discriminate on the basis of affectional preference, or choice of lifestyle. When unable to offer services for any reason, a therapist shall make an appropriate referral.

B. A therapist must recognize the potentially influential position the therapist may have with respect to clients, and must avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of clients. A therapist must make every effort to avoid dual relationships with clients that could impair the therapist's professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation.

C. A therapist must be careful to truthfully represent to clients facts regarding services rendered.

D. A therapist must recognize the importance of clear understandings on financial matters with clients. Arrangements for fees and payments must be made at the beginning of the therapeutic relationship.

E. A therapist must not engage in sexual contact or other physical intimacies with a client. Sexual contact with a former client is prohibited for two years after termination of services whether informed or not that the relationship is terminated. Sexual contact after two years with a former client is prohibited:

- (1) if the former client was emotionally dependent upon the therapist; or

(2) if the sexual contact occurred by means of therapeutic deception.

F. A therapist must not engage in sexual or other harassment of a client, nor in any verbal or physical behavior that is sexually seductive or sexually demeaning to the client. For purposes of this item, sexual harassment has the meaning given it in Minnesota Statutes, section 363A.03, subdivision 43.

G. A therapist must not use or exploit the professional relationship with a client in any manner for the therapist's emotional, financial, sexual, religious, political, or personal advantage or benefit.

H. A therapist must not use any confidence of a client to the client's disadvantage.

I. A therapist must terminate a client relationship when it is reasonably clear that the treatment no longer serves the client's needs or interests.

J. A therapist must not provide services to a client when the therapist's objectivity or effectiveness is impaired. Whenever a therapist's objectivity or effectiveness becomes impaired during a professional relationship with a client, the therapist must notify the client orally and in writing that the therapist can no longer see the client professionally and must assist the client in obtaining services from another professional.

K. A therapist must respect the right of a client to make decisions and must help the client understand the consequences of the decisions. A therapist must advise a client that a decision on marital status is the responsibility of the client.

L. A therapist must inform a client of a divergence of interests, values, attitudes, or biases between a client and the therapist that is sufficient to impair their professional relationship. Either the client or the therapist may terminate the relationship.

M. In the course of professional practice, a therapist must not violate any law concerning the reporting of abuse of children under Minnesota Statutes, section 626.556 and vulnerable adults under Minnesota Statutes, section 626.557.

N. A therapist must display prominently on the premises of the therapist's professional practice or make available as a handout the bill of rights of clients, including a statement that consumers of marriage and family therapy services offered by marriage and family therapists licensed by the State of Minnesota have the right:

(1) to expect that a therapist has met the minimal qualifications of training and experience required by state law;

(2) to examine public records maintained by the Board of Marriage and Family Therapy which contain the credentials of a therapist;

(3) to obtain a copy of the code of ethics from the State Register and Public Documents Division, Department of Administration, 117 University Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55155;

(4) to report complaints to the Board of Marriage and Family Therapy, University Park Plaza Building, 2829 University Avenue SE, Suite 330, Minneapolis, MN 55414-3222;

(5) to be informed of the cost of professional services before receiving the services;

(6) to privacy as defined by rule and law;

(7) to be free from being the object of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, or other unlawful category while receiving services;

(8) to have access to their records as provided in Minnesota Statutes, section 144.292; and

(9) to be free from exploitation for the benefit or advantage of a therapist.

O. A therapist must, upon request from the client, provide information regarding the procedure for filing a complaint with the board.

Subp. 6. **Confidentiality and keeping of records.** A marriage and family therapist must hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional services. A marriage and family therapist must safeguard client confidences as permitted by law and rule.

A. A therapist, and employees and professional associates of the therapist, must not disclose any private information that the therapist, employee, or associate may have acquired in rendering services except as provided in Minnesota Statutes, sections 148B.11, subdivision 3, and 148B.39. All other private information must be disclosed only with the informed consent of the client.

B. A therapist must be responsible for informing clients of the limits of confidentiality.

C. For purposes of safeguarding confidentiality, when seeing a couple or a family, a therapist must define who the "client" is as soon as it is possible to determine the client. For example, the therapist must define whether the couple or family, as a unit, is the client or whether the individuals who make up the couple or family are the clients.

D. When seeing a couple or a family, a therapist must inform the client, at the beginning of the relationship, what the therapist's procedures are for handling confidences from individual members of the family and for protecting individuals' privacy while safeguarding the integrity of the therapy process.

E. Whenever marriage and family therapy services are requested or paid for by one client for another, the therapist must inform both clients of the therapist's responsibility to treat any information gained in the course of rendering the services as private information.

F. A therapist must limit access to client records and must inform every individual associated with the agency or facility of the therapist, such as a staff member, student, or volunteer, that access to client records must be limited to only the therapist with whom the client has a professional relationship, an individual associated with the agency or facility whose duties require access, and an individual authorized to have access by the informed written consent of the client.

G. A therapist must continue to maintain as private information the records of a client after the professional relationship between the therapist and the client has ceased. The therapist must store and dispose of records in ways that maintain confidentiality.

H. A therapist must disclose to the board and its agents client records that the board and its agents consider to be germane to a disciplinary proceeding.

I. A therapist must obtain written, informed consent from each client before electronically recording sessions with that client or before permitting third-party supervisory observation of their sessions. The consent form should specify the purpose and proposed audience for the recording.

J. A therapist must disguise adequately the identity of a client when using material derived from a counseling relationship for purposes of training, research, professional meetings, or publications.

K. A client who is the recipient of marriage and family therapy services has the right to access the records related to the service maintained by the licensee on that client, as provided in Minnesota Statutes, section 144.292, provided the records are not classified as confidential under Minnesota Statutes, section 13.84. A marriage and family therapist must maintain an accurate record for each client. Each record must minimally contain:

- (1) a client personal data record which shall include the presenting problem;
- (2) a treatment plan with a diagnosis and justification for it and treatment goals;
- (3) an accurate chronological listing of all client contacts and a summary of each;
- (4) records of any consultation or supervision received in relation to the client;
- (5) a termination statement indicating the date and reason for termination, the client's condition at the time, and any recommendations made to the client;

(6) copies of all client authorization for release of information and any other legal forms pertaining to the client; and

(7) a chronological listing of all fees or charges for services related to the client and to whom the fees were charged. This record may be kept separate from the client's clinical file.

Subp. 7. **Research.** A marriage and family therapist must conduct research activities with full respect for the rights and dignity of participants and with full concern for their welfare according to the requirements of the "Ethical Principles of Psychologists, General Principle 9: Research with Human Participants," American Psychological Association, as amended June 2, 1989. These requirements are incorporated by reference and are not subject to frequent change. The requirements were published in "American Psychologist" March 1990, Volume 45, Number 3, pages 390-395. They are available through the Minitex interlibrary loan system. Participation in research is voluntary.

Statutory Authority: *MS s 148B.31; 148B.37; 214.06*

History: *15 SR 1782; 23 SR 1540; L 2005 c 56 s 2; L 2007 c 147 art 10 s 15*

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