

CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES (2005)

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL GUIDELINES

PREAMBLE

The Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS) presents the following Ethics Standards as a set of ideals for the conduct of its individual members. The Standards derive from the CAPS Statement of Faith, found in Article 11 of the CAPS Constitution and By-Laws:

The basis of this organization is belief in God, the Father, who creates and sustains us; Jesus Christ, the Son, who redeems and rules us; and the Holy Spirit, who guides us personally and professionally, through God's inspired Word, the Bible, our infallible guide of faith and conduct, and through the communion of Christians.

The Standards are aimed at helping each member apply the message of the Christian faith to his or her professional or pastoral service. As Christian leaders, we are called to be ethical, not as a legalistic obligation, but as part of an ever deepening intimate and covenantal relationship with God in Christ. The following general principles exemplify the foundation upon which the specific Standards are based.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

1. We believe that humanity is created in the image of God. That image is reflected, in part, in our relational nature with its associated promises and perils (Genesis 1 and 2).
2. However, we now exist as a fallen race, subject to hurts, conflicts, and sin (Romans 3:23). Difficulties, trials, tribulations, and dilemmas are, therefore, normal and to be expected in a world that is not as it was originally created to be (Psalms 37:7; John 16:33; Romans 2:9).
3. We are to actively demonstrate the lordship of Christ in our lives by servant-like leadership, a sense of community, and a lifestyle that reflects the will, justice, mercy, and righteousness of God (Matthew 20:25-28; John 12:26; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Peter 4:8-11, Micah 6:8).
4. Sanctification through the indwelling Holy Spirit is accomplished, in part, by the growth and maturity brought about by the conflicts, problems, trials, tribulations, and discipline that we experience (2 Corinthians 7:8-13a; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; James 1:2-4). Consistent with this growth process, we are to endeavor to become persons of increasing character and virtue.
5. We are to support and encourage each other (John 13:35; 15:17; Ephesians 4:32). When necessary, we are to admonish and confront each other, especially those Christians in positions of leadership and trust. However, such confrontation is to be constructive rather than judgmental, done in love, and with caution about our own shortcomings (Proverbs 27:5; Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1).
6. We are to reach out to others with love, concern, and mercy (Matthew 25:31-40; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Hebrews 13:16).
7. As CAPS members and as Christian professionals, we are called to a position of responsibility and to honor those who have placed their trust in us (Luke 17: 1-38, 1 Cor. 4: 2).

ENFORCEABILITY AND DISCIPLINE

The Standards are intended as aspirational principles. CAPS does not serve as an investigational or enforcement agency. However, I understand that if my professional license or certification has been revoked by any other professional organization or state board, then I may lose my membership status with CAPS. Such a decision will be made by a majority vote of the CAPS Board of Directors.

ETHICS PRINCIPLES

1. Personal Commitment as a Christian

- 1.1 I agree with the CAPS Statement of Faith as stated in the Constitution and Bylaws.
- 1.2 I commit my service, whether as professional or layperson, to God as a special calling.
- 1.3 I pledge to integrate all that I do with Christian values, principles, and standards.
- 1.4 I commit myself to Christ as Lord and Savior. Thus, direction and wisdom from God will be sought while accepting responsibility for my own actions and statements.

2. Competence

2.1 Limits of Competence

- a. CAPS members do not provide services, including therapy, teaching, or research, unless they have the appropriate educational background, additional training, supervised experience, consultation, study, or professional experience.
- b. CAPS members are sensitive to the unique needs of special populations and assure that they have relevant training.
- c. CAPS members seek appropriate additional training when planning to engage in the provision of services in areas that are new to them. In emerging areas of practice or research, CAPS members take reasonable steps to ensure their competence and minimize the risk of harm to others.

2.2 Continuing Education

CAPS members pursue continuing education and training opportunities in order to maintain their competence.

2.3 Personal Difficulties

CAPS members refrain from professional activities that might be compromised by personal problems and conflicts.

3. Confidentiality

- a. CAPS members maintain the confidentiality of information that is provided to them in a professional setting, consistent with the limits of applicable laws and regulations.
- b. Limits of confidentiality are explained to recipients prior to providing services.

c. Information may be disclosed with the appropriate consent of the client or of his or her legally authorized representative.

4. Counseling and Psychotherapy

4.1 Informed Consent

a. CAPS members obtain informed consent for services as early as possible in the treatment process and continue to remain sensitive to issues requiring informed consent as treatment proceeds. Informed consent includes explanation of the nature and anticipated course of therapy, fees, involvement of third parties, and limits of confidentiality. Care is taken to allow patients to ask questions and receive answers in order to best assure that they understand the nature of treatment.

b. In proposing treatment for which established techniques and procedures have not been developed, CAPS members inform clients of the novel nature of the treatment, possible risks involved, alternative treatments, and assure that participation is voluntary. Included among the aforementioned treatments are some explicitly Christian interventions. With all explicitly Christian treatments, CAPS members respect the client's autonomy in choosing whether to participate in a particular treatment and are sensitive to the fact that not all clients will be receptive to these interventions.

c. Supervisors assure that trainees inform clients of their training status, that they are being supervised, the name of the supervisor, and that appropriate consent from clients has been obtained.

4.2 Fees and Financial Arrangements

Fees and financial arrangements are disclosed and discussed as early as possible in the initiation of treatment. Fees are based on services provided to clients and are not paid in return for a referral.

4.3 Barter

Barter/non-monetary remuneration for services is discouraged, as is acceptance of gifts of significant monetary value.

4.4 Billing

CAPS members strive for fair and honest reporting of services and fees to third party payers.

4.5 Documentation

CAPS members create and maintain appropriate documentation of treatment, consistent with applicable laws.

4.6 Treatment of Couples/Families

When treating couples or families, CAPS members take steps to clarify which of the individuals are clients and the relationship the counselor will have with each person. Limits of confidentiality are discussed, the counselor's role is clarified, and the probable uses of the services provided or information obtained is explained. If it appears that conflicting roles may develop (such as a witness for one party in a divorce proceeding), CAPS members take steps to clarify or withdraw from roles as necessary.

4.7 Group Therapy

CAPS members describe the responsibilities of group members and the limits of confidentiality at the onset of treatment.

4.8 Provision of Services to Those in Treatment with Another Therapist

CAPS members do not solicit clients who are in treatment with other therapists. In those instances where a potential client might initiate a request for treatment from a CAPS member while receiving services from others, the member discusses the relevant clinical issues with the client and consults with the other provider if appropriate.

4.9 Sexual Intimacies with Clients

In keeping with the biblical foundation of the CAPS mission, CAPS members do not engage in sexual intimacies with current or former clients. Utmost care is taken to maintain the appropriate social, financial, and physical boundaries of therapy and to avoid any appearance of inappropriate behavior.

4.10 Termination of Treatment

- a. CAPS members terminate treatment when it becomes reasonably clear that clients have accomplished treatment goals, are not benefiting from, or are being harmed by treatment.
- b. If termination is necessary before the completion of treatment, CAPS members take appropriate steps to suggest alternative sources of care. Treatment does not have to continue, however, under threat from a client or related party.

4.11 Multiple Relationships

- a. CAPS members recognize that dual or multiple relationships occur when a psychologist is in a professional role with a person at the same time that he or she is in another role with the same person, or is in a relationship with a person closely associated with the person with whom the psychologist has the professional relationship, or promises to enter into a conflicting relationship in the future.
- b. CAPS members avoid multiple relationships if they could reasonably be expected to impair their objectivity, competence, or effectiveness in performing their duties or otherwise risk exploitation or harm to the person with whom the professional relationship exists.
- c. Multiple relationships that would not reasonably be expected to cause impairment or risk exploitation or harm are not unethical.
- d. If a CAPS member finds that, due to unforeseen factors, a potentially harmful multiple relationship has arisen, he or she takes reasonable steps to resolve it with due regard for the best interests of the affected person.
- e. CAPS members avoid engaging in professional activities that would create a conflict of interest with a client or recipients of services.

4.12 Non-discrimination

- a. CAPS members do not condone or engage in any discrimination based on age, color, culture, disability, ethnic group, gender, race, marital status or socioeconomic status. When there is a conflict

between the client's goals, identity and/or values and those of the CAPS member/counselor, a referral to an appropriate colleague must be arranged.

5. Assessment and Testing

5.1 Basis for Judgment

a. CAPS members who conduct assessments must be properly trained and competent in the use of those assessment instruments. They base their opinions and judgments on information and techniques sufficient to substantiate their conclusions, mindful of the risks of unwarranted inference or speculation. If direct examination of the individual(s) to be assessed is unwarranted or impossible, CAPS members appropriately qualify and limit their conclusions.

b. CAPS members are careful to assure that the instruments and techniques they employ are appropriate for the population and situation for which they are to be used. Limitations on the appropriateness of the techniques or instruments are described.

c. CAPS members do not base their findings on obsolete tests or outdated results.

5.2 Informed Consent for Assessment

a. CAPS members obtain client consent for participation in the assessment process after explaining the nature and purpose of the assessment, fees, third party involvements, and limits of confidentiality. This clause does not apply in situations where consent is implied or mandated by law or regulation.

b. Test data and results are released to clients or third parties upon receipt of appropriate authorization from the client, unless such release would be harmful to the client. However, CAPS members make every effort to protect copyrighted test material. Nothing in this clause shall prevent a CAPS member from releasing/withholding data in a fashion consistent with law or court order.

The term test data refers to raw and scaled scores, client/patient responses to test questions or stimuli, and psychologists' notes and recordings concerning client/patient statements and behavior during an examination.

5.3 Interpretation of Data

In interpreting the results of tests and assessments, CAPS members consider various factors (such as the limits of automated interpretations, demographic factors, situational considerations, and cultural differences) that might affect the findings.

5.4 Providing Results to Clients

Reasonable efforts are made to provide the results of assessments to clients, unless the nature of the relationship precludes such an interpretation (for example in an employment screening or forensic evaluation), and this has been explained to the client in advance.

5.5 Testing by Unqualified Persons

CAPS members do not encourage the use of assessment instruments by unqualified persons.

5.6 Test Scoring and Interpretation Services

CAPS members who offer assessment or scoring services to other professionals accurately describe the nature and psychometric properties of their instruments, in order to ensure that the services are appropriate for the population and purposes selected.

5.7 Test Development

CAPS members who are involved in the development of tests and assessment techniques use appropriate psychometric procedures, consistent with current scientific and professional knowledge.

6. Education and Training

6.1 Program Design and Description

- a. CAPS members who are responsible for education and training programs work to ensure that programs provide appropriate knowledge and experiences for the purposes for which they are designed, including licensure, certification, or other program goals.
- b. Current and accurate program descriptions are readily available.
- c. Course syllabi accurately describe subject matter, evaluations, and other course experiences.
- d. CAPS members establish procedures for providing timely and specific feedback to students and supervisees. Students or supervisees are informed of these procedures at the beginning of coursework or supervision

6.2 Student Disclosure of Personal Information

- a. CAPS members do not require students or supervisees to disclose personal information that is ordinarily considered confidential unless this requirement is clearly stated in admissions and program materials or the information is reasonably related to training and professional competence.
- b. If individual or group therapy is a program requirement, students are offered the option of selecting practitioners who are unaffiliated with the program. Faculty members do not provide therapeutic services to their students.

6.3 Sexual Relationships with Students or Supervisees

CAPS members do not engage in sexual relationships with students or supervisees

7.1 Informed Consent; institutional approval

- a. CAPS members obtain appropriate informed consent from participants prior to initiating a research protocol. Consent is secured before creating audio or video records such as sound recordings, videotapes, or photographs unless the research is reasonably judged to be harmless.
- b. CAPS members do not offer excessive or inappropriate financial or other inducements for research participants.
- c. When required, CAPS members provide accurate information about research proposals to Institutional Review Boards or other appropriate bodies in order to obtain approval before initiating research projects.

7.2 Student Participation

Students are given the choice of alternative activities to earn course credit, if they choose not to participate in research that is required or provides extra credit for a course.

7.3 Deception; debriefing

- a. Deception is used in research only in cases where other techniques are not available, the findings are judged to be of significant scientific value, and the research is not expected to be harmful.
- b. CAPS members offer research participants the opportunity to obtain information about the results of the study, when appropriate, and offer participants any services necessary to minimize risk or harm that may arise through participation in the research.

7.4 Animal Studies

CAPS members who engage in research using animals ensure that the animals are treated humanely.

7.5 Reporting Results

- a. CAPS members do not fabricate data and take reasonable steps to correct errors in published data, if discovered.
- b. CAPS members do not plagiarize another's work.
- c. CAPS members take authorship credit only for research that they have actually performed or to which they have substantially contributed. Students are generally listed as the principle author of publications based on the doctoral dissertation. CAPS members do not publish as original data information that has been previously published.

7.6 Sharing Research Data

- a. When necessary for verification, CAPS members share their data with other researchers for verification and replication purposes. Reasonable charges may be assessed.
- b. CAPS members who review manuscripts submitted for publication respect the confidentiality of the manuscript and any proprietary rights.

8. Advertising and Public Statements

- a. CAPS members do not make public statements that are false, deceptive, or fraudulent.
- b. They do not misrepresent their training, credentials, affiliations, nature of services, fees, or research.
- c. CAPS members do not misrepresent psychological research in public statements.
- d. CAPS members do not solicit testimonials from current clients.

9. Resolving Ethical Issues

9.1 Informal Resolution

When CAPS members believe that they have identified a possible violation of the Ethics Code, they attempt to resolve the issue informally through direct contact with the member (consistent with the

Biblical imperative) or a responsible contact with a third party. CAPS does not investigate or adjudicate complaints and has no authority to sanction members. CAPS members may consider bringing serious issues to the attention of other organizations that may investigate the complaint as a matter of violation of that organization's ethics code or of law.

9.2 Improper Complaints

CAPS members do not file or encourage the filing of complaints in another venue if they are frivolous or intended chiefly to harm or harass the respondent. Rather, CAPS members attempt to engage in the constructive resolution of conflicts in a spirit of respect and compassion consistent with Biblical principles of conflict resolution.

Permission for reprint granted: Bill Buhrow, Psy.D., President, CAPS International 3-12-15

<http://caps.net/about-us/statement-of-ethical-guidelines>