

THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS OF
FEE-BASED PRACTICING PASTORAL COUNSELORS

CODE OF ETHICS

The relevant code of ethics as defined by the Board shall consist of the following principles.

PRINCIPLE I - PROLOGUE

North Carolina Certified Fee-Based Practicing Pastoral Counselors and Fee-Based Pastoral Counseling Associates are committed to various theologies, traditions and values of their respective faith communities and to the dignity and worth of each individual. They are dedicated to advancing the welfare of those who seek their assistance and to the maintenance of high standards of professional conduct and competence. They are accountable for their ministry whatever its setting. This accountability is expressed in relationships to clients, colleagues, students, faith communities and through the acceptance and practice of the principles and procedures of this Code of Ethics.

The following foundational premises uphold these standards:

- A. To maintain responsible association with the faith group in which we have ecclesiastical standing.
- B. To remain abreast of new developments in the field through both educational activities and clinical experience. We agree at all levels of certification to continue post-graduate education and professional growth, including supervision and consultation.
- C. To seek out and engage in collegial relationships, recognizing that isolation can lead to a loss of perspective and judgement.
- D. To manage our personal lives in a healthful fashion and to seek appropriate assistance for our own personal problems or conflicts.
- E. To diagnose or provide treatment only for those problems or issues that are within the reasonable boundaries of our competence.
- F. To establish and maintain appropriate professional relationship boundaries.

PRINCIPLE II - PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

In all professional matters N.C. Certified Pastoral Counselors maintain practices that protect the public and advance the profession.

- A. We use our knowledge and professional associations for the benefit of the people we serve and not to secure unfair personal advantage.
- B. We clearly represent our level of certification and limit our practice to that level.
- C. Fees and financial arrangements, as with all contractual matters, are always discussed without hesitation or equivocation at the onset and are established in a straight-forward, professional manner.
- D. We are prepared to render service to individuals and communities in crisis without regard to financial remuneration when necessary.
- E. We neither receive nor pay a commission for referral of a client.
- F. We conduct the fiscal affairs of our practice with due regard to recognized business and accounting procedures.

- G. Upon the transfer of a pastoral counseling practice or the sale of real, personal, tangible or intangible property or assets used in such practice, the privacy and well being of the client shall be of primary concern.
 - 1. Client names and records shall be excluded from the transfer or sale.
 - 2. Any fees paid shall be for services rendered, consultation, equipment, real estate, and the name and logo of the practice.
- H. We are careful to represent facts truthfully to clients, referral sources and third party payors regarding credentials and services rendered. We shall correct any misrepresentation of our professional qualifications or affiliations.
- I. We do not malign colleagues or other professionals.

PRINCIPLE III - CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

It is the responsibility of State Certified Pastoral Counselors to maintain relationships with clients on a professional basis.

- A. We do not abandon or neglect clients. If we are unable, or unwilling for appropriate reasons to provide professional help or continue a professional relationship, every reasonable effort is made to arrange for continuation of treatment with another professional.
- B. We make only realistic statements regarding the pastoral counseling process and its outcome.
- C. We show sensitive regard for the moral, social and religious standards of clients and communities. We avoid imposing our beliefs on others, although we may express them when appropriate in the pastoral counseling process.
- D. Counseling relationships are continued only so long as it is reasonably clear that the clients are benefiting from the relationship.
- E. We recognize the trust placed in and unique power of the therapeutic relationship. While acknowledging the complexity of some pastoral relationships, we avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of clients. We avoid those dual relationships with clients (e.g., business or close personal relationships), which could impair our professional judgement, compromise the integrity of the treatment and/or use the relationship for our own gain.
- F. We do not engage in harassment, abusive words or actions, or exploitative coercion of clients or former clients.
- G. All forms of sexual behavior or harassment with clients are unethical, even when a client invites or consents to such behavior or involvement. Sexual behavior is defined as, but not limited to, all forms of overt and covert seductive speech, gestures and behavior as well as physical contact of a sexual nature; harassment is defined as but not limited to, repeated comments, gestures or physical contacts of a sexual nature.
- H. We recognize that the therapist/client relationship involves a power imbalance, the residual effects of which are operative following the termination of the therapy relationship. Therefore, all sexual behavior or harassment as defined in Principle III, G with former clients is unethical.

PRINCIPLE IV - CONFIDENTIALITY

As State Certified Pastoral Counselors we respect the integrity and protect the welfare of all persons with whom we are working and have an obligation to safeguard information about them that has been obtained in the course of the counseling process.

- A. All records kept on a client are stored or disposed of in a manner that assures security and confidentiality.
- B. We treat all communications from clients with professional confidence.

- C. Except in those situations where the identity of the client is necessary to the understanding of the case, we use only the first names of our clients when engaged in supervision or consultation. It is our responsibility to convey the importance of confidentiality to the supervisor/consultant; this is particularly important when the supervision is shared by other professionals, as in a supervisory group.
- D. We do not disclose client confidences to anyone, except: as mandated by law; to prevent a clear and immediate danger to someone; in the course of a civil, criminal or disciplinary action arising from the counseling where the pastoral counselor is a defendant; for purposes of supervision or consultation; or by previously obtained written permission. In cases involving more than one person (as client) written permission must be obtained from all legally accountable persons who have been present during the counseling before any disclosure can be made.
- E. We obtain informed written consent of clients before audio and/or video tape recording or permitting third party observation of their sessions.
- F. We do not use these standards of confidentiality to avoid intervention when it is necessary: e.g., when there is evidence of abuse of minors, the elderly, the disabled, the physically or mentally incompetent.
- G. When current or former clients are referred to in a publication, while teaching or in a public presentation, their identity is thoroughly disguised.

PRINCIPLE V - SUPERVISEE, STUDENT & EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS

As State Certified Pastoral Counselors we have an ethical concern for the integrity and welfare of our supervisees, students and employees. These relationships are maintained on a professional and confidential basis. We recognize our influential position with regard to both current and former supervisees, students and employees, and avoid exploiting their trust and dependency. We make every effort to avoid dual relationships with such persons that could impair our judgement or increase the risk of personal and/or financial exploitation.

- A. We do not engage in ongoing counseling relationships with current supervisees, students and employees.
- B. We do not engage in sexual or other harassment of supervisees, students, employees, research subjects or colleagues.
- C. All forms of sexual behavior, as defined in Principle III, G, with our supervisees, students, research subjects and employees (except in employee situations involving domestic partners) are unethical.
- D. We advise our students, supervisees, and employees against offering or engaging in, or holding themselves out as competent to engage in, professional services beyond their training, level of experience and competence.
- E. We do not harass or dismiss an employee who has acted in a reasonable, responsible and ethical manner to protect, or intervene on behalf of, a client or other member of the public or another employee.

PRINCIPLE VI - INTERPROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

As State Certified Pastoral Counselors we relate to and cooperate with other professional persons in our community and beyond. We are part of a network of health care professionals and are expected to develop and maintain interdisciplinary and interprofessional relationships.

- A. We do not offer ongoing clinical services to persons currently receiving treatment from another professional without prior knowledge of and in consultation with the other professional, with the clients' informed consent. Soliciting such clients is unethical.
- B. We exercise care and interprofessional courtesy when approached for services by persons who claim or appear to have inappropriately terminated treatment with another professional.

PRINCIPLE VII - ADVERTISING

Any advertising by or for a State Certified Pastoral Counselor including announcements, public statements and promotional activities, is undertaken with the purpose of helping the public make informed judgments and choices.

- A. We do not misrepresent our professional qualifications, affiliations and functions, or falsely imply sponsorship or certification by any organization.
- B. We may use the following information to describe ourselves and the services we provide: Name; highest relevant academic degree earned from an accredited institution; date, type and level of state certification clearly stated; address and telephone number; office hours; a brief review of services offered, e.g., individual, couple and group counseling; fee information; languages spoken; and policy regarding third party payments. Additional relevant information may be provided if it is legitimate, reasonable, free of deception and not otherwise prohibited by these principles.
- C. Announcements, brochures and newsletters promoting our services describe them with accuracy and dignity, devoid of all claims or evaluation. We may send them to professional persons, religious institutions, other agencies and to prospective individual clients.
- D. We do not make public statements which contain any of the following:
 - 1. A false, fraudulent, misleading, deceptive or unfair statement.
 - 2. A misrepresentation of fact or a statement likely to mislead or deceive because in context it makes only a partial disclosure of relevant facts.
 - 3. A testimonial from a client regarding the quality of services or products.
 - 4. A statement intended or likely to create false or unjustified expectations of favorable results.
 - 5. A statement implying unusual, unique, or one-of-a-kind abilities, including misrepresentation through sensationalism, exaggeration or superficiality.
 - 6. A statement intended or likely to exploit a client's fears, anxieties or emotions.
 - 7. A statement concerning the comparative desirability of offered services.
 - 8. A statement of direct solicitation of individual clients.
- E. We do not compensate in any way a representative of the press, radio, television or other communication medium for the purpose of professional publicity and news items. A paid advertisement must be identified as such, unless it is contextually apparent that it is a paid advertisement. We are responsible for the content of such advertisement. Any advertisement to the public by radio or television is to be pre-recorded, approved by us and a recording of the actual transmission retained in our possession.
- F. Advertisements or announcements by us of workshops, clinics, seminars, growth groups or similar services or endeavors are to give a clear statement of purpose and a clear description of the experiences to be provided. The education, training and experience of the provider(s) involved are to be appropriately specified.
- G. Advertisements or announcements soliciting research participants, in which clinical or other professional services are offered as an inducement, make clear the nature of the services as well as the cost and other obligations or risks to be accepted by participants in the research.