

Ethical Decision Making

A rational-evaluative process

A feeling-intuitive process

Recognizing a problem

- Something doesn't make sense. Review information from your knowledge base, including relevant principles, professional codes, guidelines and laws.
- Seek advice from a supervisor or colleague.
- Something doesn't seem right; I don't know how to proceed. Acknowledge feelings of uncertainty about how to proceed in the situation.
- Identify what stands in the way of working through the problem, such as feelings about the nature of the issue, or about asking for help.

Defining the problem

- Describe the conflict and identify the players that are involved in the situation, including their special characteristics and interests.
- Identify what personal and cultural characteristics you bring to this decision and how these factors may influence your definition of the problem.
- Consider how the client defines the problem.
- If you are consulting with a third party, identify the personal characteristics and values that the consultant brings to the process.
- Analyze what your discomfort is about. What do your feelings tell you about the situation? What are you worried about?
- Ask how the client feels about the dilemma.
- Reflect on how the consultant's characteristics may affect you.

Developing and choosing a solution

- Develop alternative courses of action.
- Monitor your reactions to each alternative course of action.

These ethical standards clarify to present and future Career Development Practitioners, and to those served by them, the nature of ethical responsibilities.

Section A: Professional Competence and Conduct

1. Career development practitioners influence the development of the profession by continuous efforts to improve practices and services through evaluation, feedback, continuing education and professional development. The practitioner's career is exemplified by a commitment to lifelong learning.
2. Career development practitioners have a responsibility to the clients they are serving and to the organizations within which the services are being performed. Career development practitioners also strive to assist the respective agency, organization or institution in providing the highest caliber of professional services. The acceptance of employment in an organization implies that the career development practitioner is in agreement with the general policies and principles of the institution. Therefore, the work activities of the career development practitioner are in accord with the objectives of the institution. If, despite concerted efforts, the career development practitioner cannot reach agreement with the employer as to acceptable standards of conduct that allow for changes in organization policy that are conducive to the positive growth and development of clients, then terminating the affiliation should be seriously considered.
3. Career development practitioners accept only those positions in the delivery of professional services for which they are qualified.
4. Career development practitioners recognize their limitations and provide services or only use techniques for which they are qualified by training and/or supervised experience.
- 5.0 The professional relationship is based on trust and involves an unequal balance of power. Career development practitioners aspire to maintain awareness of the impact of their behaviour both during the professional relationship and afterward, and to avoid any action that uses that imbalance of power to meet personal needs at the expense of the client.
- 5.1 Sexual intimacy* with clients is unethical. Career development practitioners will not be sexually, physically, or romantically intimate with current clients. (** for the purposes of this Code of Ethics, sexual intimacy is defined as: all forms of overt and covert seductive speech, gestures and behaviour, as well as physical contact of a sexual nature.*)
- 5.2 Because romantic involvement/sexual intimacy with a former client is

potentially harmful to the client, career development practitioners do not engage in such activities with former clients except under circumstances which are demonstrably non exploitative of the client. Because the nature of relationships in the career development field may vary in duration, intensity and purpose (e.g. in-depth career counselling and support as contrasted with information-giving in a resource centre), no definitive guidelines can be made to cover all circumstances. However, if considering romantic or sexual involvement, the following factors need to be taken into consideration:

1. the amount of time that has passed since the professional relationship terminated,
2. the nature and duration of the professional relationship,
3. the circumstances of termination,
4. the client's personal history,
5. the client's current mental health,
6. the likelihood of adverse impact on the client,
7. any statement or action by the practitioner during the course of the professional relationship suggesting or inviting the possibility of sexual or romantic relationship with the client.

The career development practitioner who engages in such activities bears the burden of demonstrating that there has been no exploitation.

- 5.3 Career development practitioners do not condone or engage in sexual harassment which is defined as suggestive, deliberate or repeated comments, gestures, or physical contact of a sexual or romantic nature.
- 5.4 Since dual relationships have the potential of impairing the practitioner's objectivity and harming clients, entering into dual relationships with clients and former clients must be avoided wherever possible. Career development practitioners have a responsibility to understand the risks of dual relationships, and in situations in which they cannot be avoided (e.g. small communities) the practitioner bears the responsibility of:
- Ensuring that the needs and welfare of the client are primary
 - Obtaining supervision or consultation as necessary
 - Discussing and negotiating the situation with the client
- 5.5 The career development practitioner will not appropriate the concepts, ideas, products, inventions or intellectual property of the client for personal advantage or financial opportunity or gain.
- 5.6 Upon discovery of a conflict of interest situation the career development practitioner will immediately declare such to the client and refer the client to another practitioner.

6. Career development practitioners avoid bringing their personal or work issues into the career development relationship.
- 7.0 Career development practitioners respect the individual rights and personal dignity of the client through the demonstration of unbiased and non-discriminatory behaviour (i.e. biases based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, or sexual preference).
 - 7.1 Career development practitioners actively attempt to understand the diverse cultural backgrounds of the clients with whom they work. This includes, but is not limited to, learning how the practitioner's own cultural/ethnic/racial identity impacts on their values and beliefs as well as developing sensitivity pertinent to the client populations served and incorporating culturally relevant techniques into their practice.
8. Career development practitioners are accountable at all times for their behaviour. They must be aware that all actions and behaviours of the practitioner reflect on professional integrity and, when inappropriate, can damage the public trust in the career development profession. To protect public confidence in the career development profession, career development practitioners avoid public behaviour that is clearly in violation of accepted moral and legal standards.
9. Career development practitioners have a social responsibility because their recommendations and actions may alter the lives of others. Career development practitioners remain fully cognizant of their impact and are alert to personal, social, organizational, financial or political situations or pressures which might lead to misuse of their influence.

Section B: Career Development Practitioner/Client Relationships

1. The career development practitioner's primary obligation is to respect the client's integrity and safety and to promote the welfare of the client(s) whether they are assisted individually or in a group relationship. In a group setting, the practitioner is also responsible for taking reasonable precautions to protect individuals from physical and/or psychological trauma resulting from interactions within the group.
2. The practitioner must inform the client of the purposes, goals, techniques, rules of procedure, and limitations that may affect the helping relationship, including respecting confidentiality, fees and fee collection arrangements, and record-keeping, at or before the time that the relationship is entered. Every effort should be made to ensure the client's informed consent.

3. When the practitioner agrees to provide services to a client at the request of a third party, the practitioner assumes the responsibility of clarifying the nature of the relationships to all parties concerned.
4. The helping relationship and information resulting therefrom must be kept confidential, consistent with the obligations of the practitioner and the employment setting. In a group setting, the practitioner establishes a norm of confidentiality regarding all group participants' disclosures.
5. If the practitioner determines an inability to be of assistance to the client, the practitioner either avoids entering into the helping relationship or immediately terminates that relationship. In either event, the practitioner suggests appropriate referral alternatives.
6. The practitioner is bound to withdraw from a helping relationship which is determined to be in violation of ethical standards.

Section C: Measurement/Assessment/Interpretation

1. Assessment results constitute only one of a variety of pertinent sources of information for making career-related decisions. The primary purpose of career-related assessments is to provide descriptive measures that are objective and interpretable in either comparative or absolute terms. The practitioner must recognize the need to interpret the statements that follow as applying to the whole range of appraisal techniques including test and non-test data.
2. Different inventories and test instruments demand different levels of competence for administration, scoring and interpretation. Practitioners must recognize the limits of their competence and perform only those functions for which they are prepared and qualified, and in certain circumstances either licensed or certified. Administration and/or interpretation of certain instruments may require the supervision of licensed or credentialed personnel.
3. The practitioner must provide specific orientation or information to the client prior to and following the assessment administration so that the results may be placed in proper perspective with other relevant factors. In doing so, the practitioner must recognize the effects of socio-economic, ethnic and cultural factors on results.
4. The purpose of the assessment and the explicit use of the results must be made known to the client prior to the administration of the assessment. The practitioner must ensure that instrument limitations are not exceeded.

5. Practitioners assisting with career-related decisions based on the use of tests should have an understanding of educational and psychological measurement terms, norm-referenced versus criteria-referenced tests, validation criteria and norm groups.
6. The practitioner must be fully cognizant of the appropriateness of the assessments, taking into consideration that general and specific validity, reliability and related issues may be questioned legally as well as ethically when assessments are used for career decisions.
7. The practitioner must guard against the appropriation, reproduction, or modification of published tests or parts thereof without acknowledgment of and permission from the previous publisher.

Section D: Technology

1. When computer applications are used as a component of services, the practitioner assesses whether: the client is intellectually, emotionally and physically capable of using the computer application; the client has the necessary skills to operate the computer application; the computer application is appropriate for the needs of the client; the client understands the purpose of the operation of the computer application. The practitioner provides follow-up of client use of a computer application in order to both correct any possible problems (misconceptions and inappropriate use) and assess subsequent needs.
2. In purchasing and utilizing computer applications as part of their services, practitioners consider whether clients from various ethnic, racial, religious, disability and socio-economic groups have equal access and that the content of available computer applications does not discriminate against such groups.
3. In certain circumstances (e.g. geographical isolation) the only services available to clients may be a combination of electronic and voice contact. In these situations the helping relationship is primary and all other stated standards regarding professional competence and conduct and practitioner/client relationships apply. The practitioner advises clients of the limitations of such services and potential security of information risks. In cases where fax or Internet are the primary vehicles for the provision of career services, the practitioner will make every attempt to supplement this technology with alternative methods of contact such as live interaction, telephone or video conferencing when appropriate, available or if requested.

Section E: Professional Relationships

1. A career development practitioner will seek to work with other professions in a cooperative manner for the good of the client and the benefit of the general public.
2. Ethical behaviour among professional associates, both members of the Alliance and non-members, is to be expected at all times. Members are obligated, in circumstances where information is possessed that raises doubts as to the ethical behaviour of colleagues, whether career development practitioners or not, to take action that attempts to rectify these conditions.
3. Career development practitioners understand the areas of competence of related professions. They make full use of the professional, technical and administrative resources that serve the best interests of clients.
4. Career development practitioners consult with other professionals as required (while protecting client identity) and notify clients of this practice.

Section F: Public Statements and Marketing

1. Public statements, announcements of services, advertising and promotional activities of career development practitioners are aimed at helping people to make informed choices and decisions. Career development practitioners accurately represent their professional qualifications, affiliations and functions as well as those of the organizations or institutions with which they or the statements may be associated. Career development practitioners are responsible for correcting any misrepresentations or misunderstanding of their qualifications, affiliations or functions by others.
2. Practitioners, in providing information to the public, peers, superiors or subordinates, have a responsibility to ensure that the information is accurate, unbiased and contains factual data. The presentation of this information should be conducted in an ethical and professional manner.
3. Products or services provided by a career development practitioner by means of classroom instruction, public lectures, demonstrations, written articles, radio or television programs or other types of media must meet the criteria cited in these standards.
4. Members do not present their affiliation with any organization in such a way that would imply inaccurate sponsorship or certification by that organization.

Section G: Research

1. Career development practitioners involved in research carry out the investigation with respect and concern for the dignity and welfare of the people who participate and with awareness of federal and provincial regulations and professional standards governing research with human participants.
2. Subject participation in research must be voluntary. Involuntary participation is appropriate only when it can be demonstrated that participation will have no harmful effects on subjects.
3. Subjects should be informed of the purpose of the research except when withholding information from them is essential to the research study. In this latter case corrective action is to be taken by the member as soon as possible following the investigation. Practitioners abide by the following basic elements of informed consent:
 - an explanation of the procedures to be followed
 - a description of the attendant discomforts and risks
 - a description of the benefits to be expected
 - an offer to answer any inquiries concerning the procedures
 - an instruction that subjects are free to withdraw their consent and discontinue participation in the project or activity at any time.
4. In reporting the data results of the research to others, members must disguise the identity of subjects unless otherwise authorized by the subjects.
5. Members are obligated to give due credit to those who have contributed significantly to the research and/or publication in accordance with their contributions.
6. Members have the obligation to make available original research data to qualified others who may want to replicate or verify the study.

Section H: Legal

1. The practitioner will maintain confidentiality in storage of records.
2. The practitioner will maintain confidentiality in computer record storage.
3. The practitioner will provide full disclosure of any potential conflict of interest in the course of their practice to their management, professional bodies and/or other appropriate authorities.

4. The practitioner will not release assessment results or other reports without the client's prior knowledge and permission. Any request from the client to review the report and/or exclude certain information must be respected.
5. Where conditions exist that indicate there is a clear and imminent danger to the client or others, the practitioner will report this fact to the appropriate responsible authority and/or take such other emergency measure as the situation demands. Ideally, this will be done with the client's consent but if necessary, without.
6. The practitioner will offer no payment to employees of sponsoring organizations for referrals or funding, or accept rebates, allowances or inappropriate gifts from clients.
7. The practitioner will comply with all laws, statutes and regulations affecting employment and business practices and relations.

Acknowledgments

Reference documents, statements, and sources for the development of Ontario Alliance of Career Development Practitioners Ethical Standards:

- American Personnel and Guidance Association
- American Psychological Association
- Canadian Counselling Association
- Canadian Psychological Association
- International Association of Career Management Professionals
- Nationally Certified Career Development Facilitators
- Ontario Board of Examiners in Psychology
- Ontario School Counsellors Association
- Ontario Society of Psychotherapists
- National Board for Certified Counsellors
- American Psychological Association
- Client Rights in Psychotherapy & Counselling: A Handbook of Client Rights & Therapist Responsibility, Client Rights Project, Toronto, 1998.
- "A Feminist Model for Ethical Decision-Making", Marcia Hill, Kristin Glaser & Judy Harden.

Glossary of Terms

Accountability: Liable to being required to explain or account for actions taken or not

taken

- Assessment Instruments:** Commonly thought of as “tests”, they are instruments which measure qualities thought to be relevant to various aspects of career counselling, such as interests, aptitudes, personality, skills, etc. Many instruments can be administered to groups as well as individuals.
- Bartering:** Trading goods or services instead of the exchange of money.
- Blind Study:** A procedure used in research studies where the research subject is not made aware of the experimental condition or service they are receiving (or in which they are participating).
- Client:** The person(s) or organization for whom professional services are provided.
- Confidentiality:** Protecting and not revealing all aspects of identifying client information.
- Conflict of interest:** A situation where the personal, financial or other interests of the career development practitioner could compromise the interests of the client or organization for whom the practitioner is providing service.
- Consult:** To seek advice or information from another individual. An occasion where advice is given or views are exchanged.
- Continuing education:** Ongoing formal educational training in college or university, or specific skill development in selected areas.
- Culturally relevant techniques:** Using methods and approaches which are appropriate, meaningful and relevant to a client's cultural perspectives.
- Dependency:** Continuing over-reliance on the practitioner for emotional or decision making support.
- Discriminate:** Making distinctions on the basis of class or category without regard to individual merit or ability. Showing preference or prejudice.

Dual relationships:	Relationships which involve the career development practitioner in more than one clear role with a client or potential client. Some examples include: a friend who requires professional career assistance; an active client who joins a committee on which you sit.
Evaluation:	To examine, appraise and judge the quality or relevance of services provided.
Exploitation:	Using a client, or client resources to one's own benefit; putting one's own interests first.
Fair market value:	The price of a service at which both buyers and sellers agree to do business.
Feedback:	An evaluative process whereby clients, colleagues or others provide information about services received, procedures used or outcomes experienced.
Fees:	Set charges for professional services.
Former client:	A person for whom service has been provided in the past, but for whom there is no current or ongoing provision of services by the practitioner.
Harming clients:	Any action or failure to take action by a practitioner which causes physical, emotional or material injury to a client.
Informed consent:	Providing clients and potential clients with sufficient information to make reasonable choices about, and be actively involved in, the professional relationship and process they are entering. Such information can include: the purpose, goals and methodology of specific interventions; reasonable expectation of outcomes; alternate procedures; fees; and confidentiality, along with any limitations of the above.
Lifelong learning:	An active, ongoing educational process which includes formal and informal learning. Ideally motivated by the realization that a rapidly changing world requires new information and process for the benefit of both the practitioner and his/her clients.

Norm of confidentiality:	The expressed expectation and agreement that identifiable information, comments, or incidents shared within the course of the counselling relationship (or group setting) will not be disclosed to others outside of that setting.
Professional development:	Ongoing training and skill development through courses, seminars and workshops which pertain to the professional activity of the career development practitioner.
Referral alternatives:	A professional and ethical responsibility of the career development practitioner to provide clients or individuals with information regarding equivalent or more appropriate services in the event that the practitioner cannot initiate or continue to deliver services: e.g., relocation, conflict of interest, ethical situations, etc.
Reliability: (In assessment & measurement)	A term which relates to the dependability of a measurement device or test. The essential notion is consistency; the extent to which the measurement device or test yields the same approximate results when used repeatedly under similar conditions.
Research:	Any attempt to study a problem systematically or to add to the general body of knowledge of a problem.
Research study:	The systematic investigation of a specifically defined problem or question.
Research subject:	A person who participates in an experiment, and from whom data are obtained. Other terms which may be applicable are: respondent - for questionnaire or survey studies; interviewee in interviews; patient in medical/psychological studies.
Conflict of interest:	A situation where the needs and best interests of the client are at odds with the interests of the practitioner or agency. E.g., a client seeks assistance to prepare for an interview for a position to which the practitioner has also applied.
Sexual harassment:	Verbal or physical sexual advances or sexually derogatory or discriminatory remarks.
Sexual	All forms of overt and covert seductive speech, gestures and

intimacy:	behaviour, as well as physical contact of a sexual nature.
Standardized tests:	Any measurement instrument that has been subjected to a sufficiently thorough empirical analysis so that an adequate set of norms has been developed and a reasonable assessment of its reliability and validity has been obtained.
Supervision:	Receiving direction and instruction with the objective of developing increased competency.
Third party: (payment or request)	An individual or agency requesting service or offering payment on behalf of another individual. E.g., a parent requesting assistance for a child; an insurance company paying for professional services for one of their clients.
Unbiased:	Without bias or prejudice; impartial.
Unequal balance of power:	Differences in actual or perceived authority, status or influence between two or more individuals.
Validity: (in assessment & measurement)	A term referring to the extent to which a test or instrument is actually measuring the behaviour, quality or aspect that it purports to measure. Various statistical measures and procedures have been developed to determine test validity.
Video conferencing:	Using computer networks to send and receive video, audio, and /or text in real time.