CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR REHABILITATION COUNSELORS

The Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification has adopted the Code of Professional Ethics for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors; and the following professional organizations have adopted the Code for their memberships: American Rehabilitation Counseling Association, National Rehabilitation Counseling Association, and National Council on Rehabilitation Education.

Preamble

Rehabilitation Counselors are committed to facilitating personal, social, and economic independence of individuals with disabilities. In fulfilling this commitment, Rehabilitation Counselors work with people, programs, institutions, and service delivery systems. Rehabilitation Counselors recognize that both action and inaction can be facilitating or debilitating. Rehabilitation Counselors may be called upon to provide counseling; vocational exploration; psychological and vocational assessment; evaluation of social, medical, vocational, and psychiatric information; job placement and job development services; and other rehabilitation services, and do so in a manner that is consistent with their education and experience. Moreover, Rehabilitation Counselors also must demonstrate adherence to ethical standards and must ensure that the standards are enforced vigorously. The Code of Professional Ethics, henceforth referred to as the Code, is designed to facilitate the accomplishment of these goals.

The primary obligation of Rehabilitation Counselors is to their clients, defined in this Code as persons who are directly receiving rehabilitation services. The basic objective of the Code is to promote the public welfare by specifying and enforcing ethical behavior expected of Rehabilitation Counselors. Accordingly, the Code consists of two kinds of standards, Canons and Rules of Professional Conduct.

The Canons are general standards of an aspirational and inspirational nature reflecting the fundamental spirit of caring and respect which professionals share. They are maxims which serve as models of exemplary professional conduct. The Canons also express general concepts and principles from which more specific Rules are derived. Unlike the Canons, the Rules are more exacting standards that provide guidance in specific circumstances.
Rehabilitation Counselors who violate the Code are subject to disciplinary action. A Rule violation is interpreted as a violation of the applicable Canon and the general principles embodied thereof. Since the use of the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) designation is a privilege granted by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), the CRCC reserves unto itself the power to suspend or to revoke the privilege or to approve other penalties for a Rule violation. Disciplinary penalties are imposed as warranted by the severity of the offense and its attendant circumstances. All disciplinary actions are undertaken in accordance with published procedures and penalties designed to assure the proper enforcement of the Code within the framework of due process and equal protection of the laws.

When there is reason to question the ethical propriety of specific behaviors, persons are encouraged to refrain from engaging in such behaviors until the matter has been clarified. Certified Rehabilitation Counselors who need assistance in interpreting the Code should request in writing an advisory opinion from the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification. Rehabilitation Counselors who are not certified and require assistance in interpreting the Code should request in writing an advisory opinion from their appropriate professional organization.
Rehabilitation Counselors shall behave in a legal, ethical, and moral manner in the conduct of their profession, maintaining the integrity of the Code and avoiding any behavior which would cause harm to others.

Rules of Professional Conduct

R1.1 Rehabilitation Counselors will obey the laws and statutes in the legal jurisdiction in which they practice and are subject to disciplinary action for any violation, to the extent that such violation suggests the likelihood of professional misconduct.

R1.2 Rehabilitation Counselors will be thoroughly familiar with, will observe, and will discuss with their clients the legal limitations of their services, or benefits offered to clients so as to facilitate honest and open communication and realistic expectations.

R1.3 Rehabilitation Counselors will be alert to legal parameters relevant to their practices and to disparities between legally mandated ethical and professional standards and the Code. Where such disparities exist, Rehabilitation Counselors will follow the legal mandates and will formally communicate any disparities to the appropriate committee on professional ethics. In the absence of legal guidelines, the Code is ethically binding.

R1.4 Rehabilitation Counselors will not engage in any act or omission of a dishonest, deceitful, or fraudulent nature in the conduct of their professional activities. They will not allow the pursuit of financial gain or other personal benefit to interfere with the exercise of sound professional judgment and skills, nor will Rehabilitation Counselors abuse their relationships with clients to promote personal or financial gain or the financial gain of their employing agencies.

R1.5 Rehabilitation Counselors will understand and abide by the Canons and Rules of Professional Conduct which are prescribed in the Code.

R1.6 Rehabilitation Counselors will not advocate, sanction, participate in, cause to be accomplished, otherwise carry out through another, or condone any act which Rehabilitation Counselors are prohibited from performing by the Code.
Rl.7 Rehabilitation Counselors' moral and ethical standards of behavior are a personal matter to the same degree as they are for any other citizen, except as these may compromise the fulfillment of their professional responsibilities or reduce the public trust in Rehabilitation Counselors. To protect public confidence, Rehabilitation Counselors will avoid public behavior that clearly is in violation of accepted moral and ethical standards.

Rl.8 Rehabilitation Counselors will respect the rights and reputation of any institution, organization, or firm with which they are associated when making oral or written statements. In those instances where they are critical of policies, they attempt to effect change by constructive action within the organization.

Rl.9 Rehabilitation Counselors will refuse to participate in employment practices which are inconsistent with the moral or legal standards regarding the treatment of employees or the public. Rehabilitation Counselors will not condone practices which result in illegal or otherwise unjustifiable discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, disability, or national origin in hiring, promotion, or training.

Canon 2 - COUNSELOR-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

Rehabilitation Counselors shall respect the integrity and protect the welfare of people and groups with whom they work. The primary obligation of Rehabilitation Counselors is to their clients, defined as persons who are directly receiving rehabilitation services. Rehabilitation Counselors shall endeavor at all times to place their clients' interests above their own.

Rules of Professional Conduct

R2.1 Rehabilitation Counselors will make clear to clients, the purposes, goals, and limitations that may affect the counseling relationship.

R2.2 Rehabilitation Counselors will not misrepresent their role or competence to clients. Rehabilitation Counselors will provide information about their credentials, if requested, and will refer clients to other specialists as the needs of clients dictate.
R2.3 Rehabilitation Counselors will be continually cognizant of their own needs, values, and of their potentially influential position, vis-a-vis clients, students, and subordinates. They avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of such persons. Rehabilitation Counselors make every effort to avoid dual relationships that could impair their professional judgments or increase the risk of exploitation. Examples of dual relationships include, but are not limited to, research with and treatment of employees, students, supervisors, close friends, or relatives. Sexual intimacies with clients are unethical.

R2.4 Rehabilitation Counselors who provide services at the request of a third party will clarify the nature of their relationships to all involved parties. They will inform all parties of their ethical responsibilities and take appropriate action. Rehabilitation Counselors employed by third parties as case consultants or expert witnesses, where there is no pretense or intent to provide rehabilitation counseling services directly to clients, beyond file review, initial interview and/or assessment, will clearly define, through written or oral means, the limits of their relationship, particularly in the area of informed consent and legally privileged communications, to involved individuals. As case consultants or expert witnesses, Rehabilitation Counselors have an obligation to provide unbiased, objective opinions.

R2.5 Rehabilitation Counselors will honor the right of clients to consent to participate in rehabilitation counseling services. Rehabilitation Counselors will inform clients or the clients' legal guardians of factors that may affect clients' decisions to participate in rehabilitation counseling services, and they will obtain written consent after clients or their legal guardians are fully informed of such factors. Rehabilitation Counselors who work with minors or other persons who are unable to give voluntary, informed consent, will take special care to protect the best interests of clients.

R2.6 Rehabilitation Counselors will avoid initiating or continuing a consulting or counseling relationship if it is expected that the relationship can be of no benefit to clients, in which case Rehabilitation Counselors will suggest to clients appropriate alternatives.
R2.7 Rehabilitation Counselors will recognize that families are usually an important factor in clients' rehabilitation and will strive to enlist family understanding and involvement as a positive resource in promoting rehabilitation. The permission of clients will be secured prior to family involvement.

R2.8 Rehabilitation Counselors and their clients will work jointly in devising an integrated, individualized rehabilitation plan which offers reasonable promise of success and is consistent with the abilities and circumstances of clients. Rehabilitation Counselors will persistently monitor rehabilitation plans to ensure their continued viability and effectiveness, remembering that clients have the right to make choices.

R2.9 Rehabilitation Counselors will work with their clients in considering employment for clients in only jobs and circumstances that are consistent with the clients' overall abilities, vocational limitations, physical restrictions, general temperament, interest and aptitude patterns, social skills, education, general qualifications and other relevant characteristics and needs. Rehabilitation Counselors will neither place nor participate in placing clients in positions that will result in damaging the interest and welfare of either clients or employers.

Canon 3 - CLIENT ADVOCACY

Rehabilitation counselors shall serve as advocates for persons with disabilities.

Rules of Professional Conduct

R3.1 Rehabilitation Counselors will be obligated at all times to promote access for persons with disabilities in programs, facilities, transportation, and communication, so that clients will not be excluded from opportunities to participate fully in rehabilitation, education, and society.

R3.2 Rehabilitation Counselors will assure, prior to referring clients to programs, facilities, or employment settings, that they are appropriately accessible.

R3.3 Rehabilitation Counselors will strive to understand accessibility problems of persons with cognitive, hearing, mobility, visual and/or other disabilities and demonstrate such understanding in the practice of their profession.

R3.4 Rehabilitation Counselors will strive to eliminate attitudinal barriers, including stereotyping and discrimination, toward persons with disabilities and will enhance their own sensitivity and awareness toward persons with disabilities.
R3.5 Rehabilitation Counselors will remain aware of the actions taken by cooperating agencies on behalf of their clients and will act as advocates of clients to ensure effective service delivery.

Canon 4 - PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Rehabilitation Counselors shall act with integrity in their relationships with colleagues, other organizations, agencies, institutions, referral sources, and other professions so as to facilitate the contribution of all specialists toward achieving optimum benefit for clients.

Rules of Professional Conduct

R4.1 Rehabilitation Counselors will ensure that there is fair mutual understanding of the rehabilitation plan by all agencies cooperating in the rehabilitation of clients and that any rehabilitation plan is developed with such mutual understanding.

R4.2 Rehabilitation Counselors will abide by and help to implement "team" decisions in formulating rehabilitation plans and procedures, even when not personally agreeing with such decisions, unless these decisions breach the ethical Rules.

R4.3 Rehabilitation Counselors will not commit receiving counselors to any prescribed courses of action in relation to clients, when transferring clients to other colleagues or agencies.

R4.4 Rehabilitation Counselors, as referring counselors, will promptly supply all information necessary for a cooperating agency or counselor to begin serving clients.

R4.5 Rehabilitation Counselors will not offer on-going professional counseling/case management services to clients receiving such services from other Rehabilitation Counselors without first notifying the other counselor. File review and second opinion services are not included in the concept of professional counseling/case management services.

R4.6 Rehabilitation Counselors will secure from other specialists appropriate reports and evaluations, when such reports are essential for rehabilitation planning and/or service delivery.

R4.7 Rehabilitation Counselors will not discuss in a disparaging way with clients the competency of other counselors or agencies, or the judgments made, the methods used, or the quality of rehabilitation plans.
R4.8 Rehabilitation Counselors will not exploit their professional relationships with supervisors, colleagues, students, or employees sexually or otherwise. Rehabilitation Counselors will not condone or engage in sexual harassment, defined as deliberate or repeated comments, gestures, or physical contacts of a sexual nature unwanted by recipients.

R4.9 Rehabilitation Counselors who know of an ethical violation by another Rehabilitation Counselor will informally attempt to resolve the issue with the counselor, when the misconduct is of a minor nature and/or appears to be due to lack of sensitivity, knowledge, or experience. If the violation does not seem amenable to an informal solution, or is of a more serious nature, Rehabilitation Counselors will bring it to the attention of the appropriate committee on professional ethics.

R4.10 Rehabilitation Counselors possessing information concerning an alleged violation of this Code, will, upon request, reveal such information to the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification or other authority empowered to investigate or act upon the alleged violation, unless the information is protected by law.

R4.11 Rehabilitation Counselors who employ or supervise other professionals or students will facilitate professional development of such individuals. They provide appropriate working conditions, timely evaluations, constructive consultation, and experience opportunities.

Canon 5 - PUBLIC STATEMENTS/Fees

Rehabilitation Counselors shall adhere to professional standards in establishing fees and promoting their services.

Rules of Professional Conduct

R5.1 Rehabilitation Counselors will consider carefully the value of their services and the ability of clients to meet the financial burden in establishing reasonable fees for professional services.

R5.2 Rehabilitation Counselors will not accept for professional work a fee or any other form of remuneration from clients who are entitled to their services through an institution or agency or other benefits structure, unless clients have been fully informed of the availability of services from other such sources.

R5.3 Rehabilitation Counselors will neither give nor receive a commission or rebate or any other form of remuneration for referral of clients for professional services.
R5.4 Rehabilitation Counselors who describe rehabilitation counseling or the services of Rehabilitation Counselors to the general public will fairly and accurately present the material, avoiding misrepresentation through sensationalism, exaggeration, or superficiality. Rehabilitation Counselors are guided by the primary obligation to aid the public in developing informed judgments, opinions, and choices.

Canon 6 - CONFIDENTIALITY

Rehabilitation Counselors shall respect the confidentiality of information obtained from clients in the course of their work.

Rules of Professional Conduct

R6.1 Rehabilitation Counselors will inform clients at the onset of the counseling relationship of the limits of confidentiality.

R6.2 Rehabilitation Counselors will take reasonable personal action, or inform responsible authorities, or inform those persons at risk, when the conditions or actions of clients indicate that there is clear and imminent danger to clients or others after advising clients that this must be done. Consultation with other professionals may be used where appropriate. The assumption of responsibility for clients must be taken only after careful deliberation and clients must be involved in the resumption of responsibility as quickly as possible.

R6.3 Rehabilitation Counselors will not forward to another person, agency, or potential employer, any confidential information without the written permission of clients or their legal guardians.

R6.4 Rehabilitation Counselors will ensure that there are defined policies and practices in other agencies cooperatively serving rehabilitation clients which effectively protect information confidentiality.

R6.5 Rehabilitation Counselors will safeguard the maintenance, storage, and disposal of the records of clients so that unauthorized persons shall not have access to these records. All non-professional persons who must have access to these records will be thoroughly briefed concerning the confidential standards to be observed.

R6.6 Rehabilitation Counselors, in the preparation of written and oral reports, will present only germane data and will make every effort to avoid undue invasion of privacy.
R6.7 Rehabilitation Counselors will obtain written permission from clients or their legal guardians prior to taping or otherwise recording counseling sessions. Even with guardians' written consent, Rehabilitation Counselors will not record sessions against the expressed wishes of clients.

R6.8 Rehabilitation Counselors will persist in claiming the privileged status of confidential information obtained from clients, where communications are privileged by statute for Rehabilitation Counselors.

R6.9 Rehabilitation Counselors will provide prospective employers with only job relevant information about clients and will secure the permission of clients or their legal guardians for the release of any information which might be considered confidential.

Canon 7 – ASSESSMENT

Rehabilitation Counselors shall promote the welfare of clients in the selection, utilization, and interpretation of assessment measures.

Rules of Professional Conduct

R7.1 Rehabilitation Counselors will recognize that different tests demand different levels of competence for administration, scoring, and interpretation, and will recognize the limits of their competence and perform only those functions for which they are trained.

R7.2 Rehabilitation Counselors will consider carefully the specific validity, reliability, and appropriateness of tests, when selecting them for use in a given situation or with particular clients. Rehabilitation Counselors will proceed with caution when attempting to evaluate and interpret the performance of persons with disabilities, minority group members, or other persons who are not represented in the standardized norm groups. Rehabilitation Counselors will recognize the effects of socioeconomic, ethnic, disability, and cultural factors on test scores.

R7.3 Rehabilitation Counselors will administer tests under the same conditions that were established in their standardization. When tests are not administered under standard conditions, as may be necessary to accommodate modifications for clients with disabilities or when unusual behavior or irregularities occur during the testing session, those conditions will be noted and taken into account at the time of interpretation.
Rehabilitation Counselors will ensure that instrument limitations are not exceeded and that periodic reassessments are made to prevent stereotyping of clients.

Rehabilitation Counselors will make known the purpose of testing and the explicit use of the results to clients prior to administration. Recognizing the right of clients to have test results, Rehabilitation Counselors will give explanations of test results in language clients can understand.

Rehabilitation Counselors will ensure see that specific interpretation accompanies any release of individual data. The welfare and explicit prior permission of clients will be the criteria for determining the recipients of the test results. The interpretation of assessment data will be related to the particular goals of evaluation.

Rehabilitation Counselors will attempt to ensure when utilizing computerized assessment services that such services are based on appropriate research to establish the validity of the computer programs and procedures used in arriving at interpretations. Public offering of an automated test interpretation service will be considered as a professional-to-professional consultation. In this instance, the formal responsibility of the consultant is to the consultee, but the ultimate and overriding responsibility is to clients.

Rehabilitation Counselors will recognize that assessment results may become obsolete. They make every effort to avoid and prevent the misuse of obsolete measures.

Canon 8 - RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Rehabilitation Counselors shall assist in efforts to expand the knowledge needed to more effectively serve persons with disabilities.

Rules of Professional Conduct

Rehabilitation Counselors will ensure that data for research meets rigid standards of validity, honesty, and protection of confidentiality.

Rehabilitation Counselors will be aware of and responsive to all pertinent guidelines on research with human subjects. When planning any research activity dealing with human subjects, Rehabilitation Counselors will ensure that research problems, design, and execution are in full compliance with such guidelines.

Rehabilitation Counselors presenting case studies in classes, professional meetings, or publications will confine the content to that which can be disguised to ensure full protection of the identity of clients.
R8.4 Rehabilitation Counselors will assign credit to those who have contributed to publications in proportion to their contribution.

R8.5 Rehabilitation Counselors recognize that honesty and openness are essential characteristics of the relationship between Rehabilitation Counselors and research participants. When methodological requirements of a study necessitate concealment or deception, Rehabilitation Counselors will ensure that participants understand the reasons for this action.

Canon 9 - COMPETENCE

Rehabilitation Counselors shall establish and maintain their professional competencies at such a level that their clients receive the benefit of the highest quality of services the profession is capable of offering.

Rules of Professional Conduct

R9.1 Rehabilitation Counselors will function within the limits of their defined role, training, and technical competency and will accept only those positions for which they are professionally qualified.

R9.2 Rehabilitation Counselors will continuously strive through reading, attending professional meetings, and taking courses of instruction to keep abreast of new developments, concepts, and practices that are essential to providing the highest quality of services to their clients.

R9.3 Rehabilitation Counselors, recognizing that personal problems and conflicts may interfere with their professional effectiveness, will refrain from undertaking any activity in which their personal problems are likely to lead to inadequate performance. If they are already engaged in such activity when they become aware of their personal problems, they will seek competent professional assistance to determine whether they should suspend, terminate or limit the scope of their professional activities.

R9.4 Rehabilitation Counselors who are educators will perform their duties based on careful preparation so that their instruction is accurate, up-to-date and scholarly.

R9.5 Rehabilitation Counselors who are educators will ensure that statements in catalogs and course outlines are accurate, particularly in terms of subject matter covered, bases for grading, and nature of classroom experiences.
R9.6 Rehabilitation Counselors who are educators will maintain high standards of knowledge and skill by presenting rehabilitation counseling information fully and accurately, and by giving appropriate recognition to alternative viewpoints.

Canon 10 - CRC Credential

Rehabilitation Counselors holding the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) designation shall honor the integrity and respect the limitations placed upon its use.

Rules of Professional Conduct

R10.1 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors will use the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) designation only in accordance with the relevant GUIDELINES promulgated by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification.

R10.2 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors will not attribute to the mere possession of the designation depth or scope of knowledge, skill, and professional capabilities greater than those demonstrated by achievement of the CRC designation.

R10.3 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors will not make unfair comparisons between a person who holds the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) designation and one who does not.

R10.4 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors will not write, speak, nor act in ways that lead others to believe Certified Rehabilitation Counselors are officially representing the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification, unless such written permission has been granted by the said Commission.

R10.5 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors will make no claim to unique skills or devices not available to others in the profession unless the special efficacy of such unique skills or device has been demonstrated by scientifically accepted evidence.

R10.6 Certified Rehabilitation Counselors will not initiate or support candidacy for certification by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification of any individual known to engage in professional practices which violate the ethical Rules prescribed by this Code.
Rehabilitation Counselors who are educators will maintain high standards of knowledge and skill by presenting rehabilitation counseling information fully and accurately, and by giving appropriate recognition to alternative viewpoints.

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