

PREAMBLE

PURPOSE

The Code of Professional Ethics for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, henceforth referred to as the Code, is designed to provide standards of practice for practitioners, trainees, recipients of services, and society on the ethical practice of certified rehabilitation counselors, henceforth referred to as CRCs/CCRCs. The Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) provides an accredited national certification for individuals meeting rigorous educational requirements for the purpose of providing specialized supports for individuals with disabilities. CRCs/CCRCs credentialed by CRCC may identify with various professional associations and practice settings. CRCs/CCRCs may also be licensed in fields that require specific standards of professional behavior. This Code is enforceable for all CRCs/CCRCs.

The basic objectives of the Code are to:

- promote public welfare by specifying ethical behavior;
- establish principles that guide ethical behaviors;
- serve as an ethical guide designed to assist in constructing a professional course of action; and
- serve as the basis for the processing of alleged Code violations.

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

CRCs/CCRCs are committed to facilitating the personal, economic, and social independence of individuals with disabilities. CRCs/CCRCs recognize diversity and embrace a culturally relevant and responsive approach to support of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of individuals with disabilities within their social and cultural context and bracket their personal values and beliefs when working with clients. They look to professional values as an important way of living out an ethical commitment.

The values that serve as a foundation for this Code include a commitment to

- respecting human rights and dignity of all people;
- ensuring the integrity of all professional relationships;
- acting to alleviate personal distress and suffering;
- enhancing the quality of professional knowledge and its application to increase professional and personal effectiveness;
- promoting empowerment through self-advocacy and self-determination;
- respecting and understanding the diversity of human experience and appreciating culture;
- emphasizing client strengths versus deficits;
- serving individuals holistically; and
- advocating for equitable and appropriate provision of services.

These values inform principles and represent one important way of expressing a general ethical commitment that becomes more precisely defined and action-oriented when expressed as a principle. The fundamental spirit of caring and respect with which the Code is written is based upon six principles of ethical behavior:

Autonomy: To respect the rights of clients to be self-governing within their social and cultural framework

Beneficence: To do good to others; to promote the well-being of clients

Fidelity: To be faithful; to keep promises and honor the trust placed in CRCs/CCRCs

Justice: To be fair in the treatment of all clients; to provide appropriate services to all

Nonmaleficence: To do no harm to others

Veracity: To be honest and truthful

COMMITMENT TO CULTURAL DIVERSITY

CRCs/CCRCs are aware that all individuals exist in a variety of social contexts and strive to understand the influence of these contexts on an individual. CRCs/CCRCs are aware of the continuing evolution of the field, changes in society at large, and the different needs of individuals in social, political, religious, historical, environmental, economic, and other contexts. CRCs/CCRCs are committed to providing respectful and timely communication, taking appropriate action when diversity issues occur, and being accountable for the outcomes as they affect people of all races, ethnicities, genders, national origins, religions, sexual orientations, and other cultural group identities.

CLIENTS/EVALUEES

The primary obligation of CRCs/CCRCs is to their clients, defined as persons who receive services from CRCs/CCRCs. In some settings, clients may be referred to by other terms such as, but not limited to, consumers, participants, or customers.

When employed to render an opinion for a forensic purpose, CRCs/CCRCs do not have clients. Instead, the person being evaluated is deemed an evaluatee. Additionally, if a section or standard in the Code does not seem to be relevant to CRCs/CCRCs in specific practice setting (e.g., state vocational rehabilitation agency, mental health setting, forensic practice), CRCs/CCRCs adhere to the principles of the Code.

STRUCTURE OF THE CODE

The Code consists of a Preamble, thirteen main Sections, and a Glossary. Each Section includes an introduction that describes the ethical behavior and responsibility to which CRCs/CCRCs aspire. The introduction helps set the tone for that Section and provides a starting point that invites reflection on the Enforceable Standards contained in each Section of the Code. The Enforceable Standards that follow the introduction outline professional responsibilities and provide direction for fulfilling those ethical responsibilities.

The Enforceable Standards within the Code are specific and intended to provide directives for specific circumstances and serve as the basis for processing complaints initiated against CRCs/CCRCs. A breach of the Enforceable Standards provided herein do not necessarily constitute legal liability or violation of the law; such action is established in legal and judicial proceedings.

APPLYING THE CODE

Individual Enforceable Standards are not meant to be interpreted in isolation. Instead, Enforceable Standards are interpreted across the Code as a whole, with each Enforceable Standard interpreted in conjunction with other related standards throughout the Code. Actions of CRCs/CCRCs are consistent with the spirit, as well as the letter, of these Enforceable Standards.

CRCs/CCRCs acknowledge that resolving ethical issues is a process. When CRCs/CCRCs are faced with ethical dilemmas that are difficult to resolve, they are expected to engage in a carefully considered ethical decision-making process, consulting available resources (including the CRCC Ethics Committee) as needed. Ethical reasoning includes consideration of professional values, professional ethical principles, and ethical standards.

CRCs/CCRCs are expected to use a credible ethical decision-making model that can bear public scrutiny of its application. Through a chosen ethical decision-making process and evaluation of the context of the situation, CRCs/CCRCs work to resolve any ethical dilemmas that arise. Ethical decision-making models can be viewed on CRCC's website.

CRCs/CCRCs must be aware of laws related to their scope of practice and service delivery. At times, legal and ethical standards may conflict. In such situations, CRCs/CCRCs are encouraged to consult with supervisors, legal/ethical experts, CRC/CCRC colleagues, and others as appropriate and to use an ethical decision-making model to inform the decision.

DEFINING THE PROFESSION

CRCs/CCRCs are nationally accredited counselors educated and trained at the graduate level. They have specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities to collaborate with persons with all types of disabilities to overcome barriers to employment or other life domains. Through a comprehensive and holistic approach, CRCs/CCRCs work with the whole person, supporting individuals in achieving their personal, social, psychological, vocational, and independent living goals. CRCs/CCRCs provide a bridge between the individual and self-sufficiency, assisting their clients in living fully integrated lives. CRCs/CCRCs are unique in comparison to other counseling professionals given their interaction with individuals with disabilities. No other counseling profession is primarily dedicated to working with individuals with all types of disabilities.