Counselor Ethics and Responsibilities

[Name]

[Name of the Institution]

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**Introduction**

 The counselor acts as a reformer, instructor, or spiritual teacher to provide intelligent support to the clients so that they can make their decisions well and improve their current condition overall. The counselor understands the clients’ problems, knows their rights, and carries out their treatment complying with the legal, ethical, and cultural parameters. The counselor prioritizes between rights of a client and interests of the community, and makes subsequent decisions regarding confidentiality of clients’ data, identification of possible victims, and providing multi-faceted support to different parties.

**Body**

**Part I**

 **Section 1: Client’s Rights**

 **1)**

* 1. Autonomy

While providing counseling services to the client, I would prefer giving him or her autonomy of decision making regarding the medical care being provided. Empowering the client with autonomy reflects the collaborative nature of the psychotherapy relationship between the counselor and the client. I will make sure that the informed consent of the client is proceeding with counseling practice. It will give me an enhanced sense of professional ethics. I will ask the client for permission as well as reasons for taking a particular side in the decision-making.

* 1. *Nonmaleficence*

I will work on the principle of nonmaleficence, that is, I will not perform any activity that could be harmful to the client in any way. People come to counselors with a trust in their relationship with the counselors (Bronzino & Peterson, 2016). I will avoid any activity that can cause harm to the client, such that I will not neglect my duty toward the client, and complete each session with utmost focus on the client's wellbeing.

* 1. *Beneficence*

In clinical practice, certain situations demand beneficence from the counselor’s end towards the client. This is because the client is sometimes not in a position to afford the counseling session, therefore, I will provide such clients with free or low-charged sessions depending on their financial background. It will remind me of the nobility of my profession and prevent me from being selfish at work.

* 1. *Justice*

Justice, in psychological counseling, refers to the fair treatment with the client based on human and moral values. For instance, I will assist my clients in overcoming their difficulties during the counseling sessions and make the necessary arrangements that help them take full benefits of the sessions. They might have a problem in speaking, hearing, seeing, or explaining the situation or answering my questions. Hence, I will facilitate them accordingly with the use of appropriate technology.

* 1. *Fidelity*

Since the counseling profession requires maximum confidence to exist in the client-counselor relationship, I’ll never take any initiative that can damage this confidence. I will always keep the information related to the client confidential and keep my commitment with the client. I will also regard clients’ requests to my best so that they can feel perfectly comfortable and secure under my clinical supervision.

 **2)**

Informed consent involves emphasizing the client’s role in deciding about the treatment decisions regarding options or procedures to be undertaken or avoided in providing medical care. The client feels an enhanced sense of ownership when empowered with the option of giving consent. A client usually fears the uncertainty and lack of clarity of the therapeutic process and therefore, has the right to be informed of all the complexities, implications, and incurring expenses beforehand to make better decisions.

1. *Billing*

Billing arrangements are among certain financial decisions that the client must know before the commencement of counseling.

1. *Right to Privacy*

Clients with different backgrounds, cultures, and moral values come to counselors, and it is the counselor’s job to address these types of issues. I will protect my clients by providing them with the need for recovery, protecting their privacy, and other information.

1. *HIPAA Compliance*

It is the health insurance profitability and accountability act that ensures the protection of the sensitive data of clients. Organizations have to develop and implement procedures and systems that comply with HIPAA so that protection of sensitive health data can be guaranteed (Lulla, Emmert, Cienki, & Chitra, 2017). I will keep clients’ information confidential as being the counselor until a situation demands it to be disclosed for legal or regulatory purposes. I will make a written agreement signed by clients stating the particular situations for information disclosure.

1. *Compliance with Credentialing Board Requirements*

I will commence my psychological counseling practice after completing my relevant degree and getting the licensure necessary for the practice. It will help me in dealing with clients confidently and authorize me to disclose their confidential information when it would be necessary, based on their informed consent duly signed, as described in the doctrine of informed consent.

**Section 2: Responsibility to Warn and Protect**

The counselor has to distinguish clearly between two sensitive matters, that is, the credibility of the client-counselor relationship by keeping everything confidential and disclosing information to the concerned authorities upon their request (Welfel, 2015). I will try to be a good judge between my ethical responsibility toward the client and legal responsibility to the state. Certain situations can emerge where I have to identify possible victims in a client’s case, and I will practice in compliance with the legal requirements. This is compulsory because certain clients can cause serious harm to others. Violence, abuse, offensive behavior, physical damages, and many other kinds of damages can result if I neglect my duties as a counselor. I must have to focus on preventing any detrimental effects on the community caused by my lack of cooperation with the authorities. I will warn the identifiable victims (third-party) to protect themselves from being harmed. I will inform the authoritative institutions in this regard as well. I will suggest anger therapies to the client.

**Section 3: Client Record-Keeping**

Record-keeping is more important in healthcare as compared to any other profession. It is essential for retrieving data in the absence of a client in case of an emergency. Many aspects are considered while preparing the records. These include legal, ethical, and external constraints. Maintaining records will help track the history and articulating logical connections in the development of his or her profile. I will keep clients’ records so that they can be used for legal proceedings, if any, and by the clients in the future in case they need to continue therapy again or with some other counselor. The records may also be used by some agencies for reimbursement purposes. I will keep the records confidential, inform the clients of the record-keeping procedures as necessary, organize them to be retrieved easily, protect them from being damaged, and comply with the related acts and regulations.

**Part II**

 **Section** **4: Self-care**

1. The ACA Code of Ethics says that counselors have to engage in self-care activities essentially. These activities would ensure their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of the counselors.

 2. Attaining a balance between the professional and personal life will be among one of the main priorities in my career. As a counselor, I will need the personal-professional life balance more than the professionals of other fields. Counseling people means giving advice and support to eliminate their problems, which requires the counselor to be in good health and spirit as well (Meier & Davis, 2019). I will prioritize my tasks and activities. I will organize my work schedule and social involvement. I will avoid unnecessary and non-productive activities.

 3. I have been involved in several self-care activities since my high school days. I have managed my time in a way that I have sufficient opportunity to do daily aerobics, sleep well, and prepare nutritious food for myself. These activities are healthful as well as dynamic. I get refreshed when I spend leisure time with my family and friends. I have an aptitude for reading prestigious books and writing letters to my loved ones. I often visit people having certain needs in my acquaintances and I get spiritually inspired by offering them my humble services.

 4. I am fully convinced of the usefulness of yoga, however, I have not taken any training classes for it until now. I plan to do yoga every day after having the necessary information and training about it in the near future. Another important activity I planned but could not pursue is swimming, which I believe gives enough confidence thrill to a person in life. It is also a useful skill. Finally, I want to make my cognitive abilities perfectly developed. Healthy mental habits, reasoning, effective use of logic, and creative thinking are the most privileged abilities as per my perception.

 5. Red flag symbolizes some threat or weakness. When I analyze critically my abilities, I find myself to be little talkative, shy, and less sociable. This weaknesses of mine is a red flag in my career. I have already identified it and started taking lessons. I have friends who are very dear to me, but I talk little to them in our meetings. I am reading personal development literature nowadays, and practically making an effort to overcome these red flags.

 6. I agree with the notion of counselors being counseled. Counselors can also have problems related to body, mind, emotions, and integrity, which call for examination and treatment.

 **Section 5: Advocacy**

Advocacy is providing argument and support to some issue related to society or individuals. ACA makes efforts for advocating for counseling. Legislators pay heed to the issues presented before them. If we could convey our message of advocacy in favor of the counseling profession and its requirements, the legislators will take necessary action fast (Walley & Chen-Hayes, 2015). I am a student and I want to contribute to this noble profession. I will advocate for the need of this profession. People with good health and appropriate actions may contribute their resources and time to help those deprived of normal health conditions. Counseling enables people to return to life, and it is essential to keep this profession for service to the needy.

 **Section 6: Counselor Values**

 Abortion

 The girl has freedom of choice in view of her plans for life. As the counselor, I will suggest her parents to try to understand their daughter's point of view. She is an adult now and take decisions with her free will. Though religion does not consider abortion as a better option, the condition of the girl is the major determinant of decision in this regard. I will endorse the rights given to the girl by country's legislation and convince her parents with the same argument that the country's law supports their daughter to make a decision she thinks better for her. As per ACA code, of the conflict between ethics and law cannot be resolved by commitment to the code, the counselor will follow the regulations set by legislation.

 Assisted Suicide

 Ms. Eleanor, the old lady, does not need to talk to her family because they are aware of her incurable condition. The hospital staff is accountable for any decision or action they take in her case. Ms. Eleanor can take the decision of ending her life as per the ACA code. “Counselors who provide services to terminally ill individuals who are considering hastening their own deaths have the option to maintain confidentiality, depending on applicable laws and the specific circumstances of the situation and after seeking consultation or supervision from appropriate professional and legal parties (“Code of Ethics Resources,” 2014).” If she plans to die early, nobody is going to doubt the hospital staff as her condition is critical.

**Conclusion**

 Counseling is a highly esteemed profession that is challenging and demanding at the same time. The counselor has to know clearly his or her limits and authorities, and play an important role in transforming the clients' lives. The counselor should be informed of the legal, ethical, and professional responsibilities and do the necessary things in the right context. While working as a counselor, I will keep both clients' rights and community's overall wellbeing in consideration to avoid detrimental effects to any of them.

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