

COMMUNITY COUNSELING SERVICES, INC.  
CODE OF ETHICAL PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT  
ADAPTED FROM THE OHIO COUNSELOR AND SOCIAL WORKER BOARD

1. Responsibility to consumers of services:

- a. Agency staff shall not misrepresent directly, indirectly or by implication their professional qualifications such as education, specialized training, experience, or area(s) of competence.
- b. Agency staff shall inform consumers of services the extent and nature of services available to them, as well as the limits, rights, opportunities and obligations associated with the services to be provided which might effect the decisions of consumers to enter into or continue the relationship.
- c. Agency staff shall not delegate professional responsibilities to another person when the person delegating the responsibilities knows or has reason to know that such a person is not qualified by training, experience or licensure to perform them.
- d. Service providers may practice only within the competency areas for which they are qualified by education, training or experience. Service providers must make appropriate referrals when the consumer's needs exceed the provider's competence level. The referrals must be made in a timely manner.
- e. CCS, Inc. employees shall have a primary obligation to protect the consumer's right to confidentiality as established by law and the professional standards of practice. Confidential information shall only be revealed to others when the consumers or other persons legally authorized to give consent on behalf of the consumers, have given their informed consent, except in those circumstances in which failure to do so would violate other laws or result in clear and present danger to the consumer or others. Unless specifically contraindicated by such situations, consumers shall be informed and written consent shall be obtained before the confidential information is revealed.
- f. If electronic technology is used to enhance the services being provided to consumers, that technology shall not compromise the consumer's right to privileged communications and confidentiality.
- g. Service providers shall terminate services only after giving careful consideration to factors affecting the relationship and making effort to minimize possible adverse effects. If an interruption or termination of services is anticipated, reasonable notification and appropriate referral for continued services shall be provided to the consumer of services.
- h. CCS, Inc. employees shall not sexually harass consumers of services. Sexual harassment includes sexual advances, sexual solicitations, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- i. Agency staff shall not practice, condone, facilitate or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, veteran status, or mental or physical challenge.

2. Multiple relationships affecting staff judgment:

- a. Agency staff should avoid multiple relationships with any consumer of services which might impair professional judgment or increase the risk of consumer of services exploitation. Agency staff shall not undertake or continue a professional relationship with a consumer of services, supervisee, or student when the objectivity or competency of the staff person is, or could reasonably be, expected to be impaired or where the relationship with the consumer of services, supervisee, or student is exploitative. The staff person should be particularly aware that familial, social, emotional, financial, supervisory, political, administrative, or legal relationships with a consumer or a person related to or associated with the consumer of services must be carefully considered to insure that impaired judgment or exploitation is not involved.
- b. Service providers must always be sensitive to the potentially harmful effects of other contacts on their practice and on those persons with whom they deal. A professional refrains from entering into, or promising another, personal, scientific, professional, or other relationships

with such persons if it appears or should appear likely that such a relationship might reasonably impair the professional's objectivity or otherwise interfere with the professional's effectiveness as a service provider, or might harm or exploit the other party.

- c. When a multiple relationship cannot be avoided, agency staff shall take appropriate professional precautions, such as informed consent, consultation, supervision, and documentation to ensure that judgment is not impaired and that no exploitation occurs.
- d. If a staff person finds that due to unforeseen factors, a potentially harmful, multiple relationship has arisen with a consumer, the professional shall attempt to resolve it with due regard for the best interests of the consumer of services and maximal compliance with statutes and rules of their licensing Board.

### 3. Sexual relationships:

- a. CCS, Inc. employees shall not engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with current consumers, whether contact is consensual or forced.
- b. Service providers shall not have sexual intimacies with consumers and shall not counsel persons with whom they have had a sexual relationship.
- c. Service providers shall not engage in sexual intimacies with a former consumer within two years after terminating the therapeutic relationship. Service providers who choose to engage in such a relationship after two years following termination have the responsibility to thoroughly examine and document that such a relationship does not have an exploitative nature, based upon factors such as duration of therapy, amount of time since therapy, termination circumstances, consumer's personal history and mental status, adverse impact on the consumer, and actions by the professional suggesting a plan with the consumer after termination.
- d. Agency staff shall not engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with consumers' relative or other individuals with whom consumers maintained a close personal relationship when there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the consumer. Sexual activity or sexual contact with consumers' relatives or other individuals with who the consumer maintains a personal relationship has the potential to be harmful to the consumer and may make it difficult for the staff person to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. Service providers, not their consumers, their consumers' relatives or other individuals with whom the consumer maintains a personal relationship, assume the full burden for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries. If the staff person engages in a conduct contrary to this prohibition or claims that an exception to this prohibition is warranted because of extraordinary circumstances, it is the staff person, not the consumer, who assumes the full burden of demonstrating that the consumer or former consumer has not been exploited, coerced, or manipulated, intentionally or unintentionally.

### 4. Impaired practice:

- a. Services providers shall not undertake or continue professional relationships with a consumer, supervisee, or student when the objectivity or competency of the service provider is, or could reasonably be expected to be, impaired due to mental, emotional, physiological, pharmacological, or substance abuse conditions. If such a condition develops after a professional relationship has been initiated, the service provider shall terminate the professional relationship in an appropriate manner, shall notify the consumer of the termination in writing, and shall assist the consumer in obtaining services from another professional.

### 5. Use of assessment and testing instruments:

#### a. General:

1. Appraisal techniques: The primary purpose of educational and psychological assessment is to provide measures that are objective and interpretable in either comparative or absolute terms. Service providers recognize the need to interpret the statements in this section as applying to the whole range of appraisal techniques,

including test and non-test data.

2. Consumer welfare: Service providers promote the welfare and best interests of the consumer in the development, publication, and utilization of educational and psychological assessment results and interpretations and take reasonable steps to prevent others from misusing the information these techniques provide. They respect the consumer's right to know the results, of the interpretations made, and the bases for their conclusions and recommendations.

b. Competence to use and interpret tests:

1. Limits of competence: Service providers recognize the limits of their competence and perform only those testing and assessment services for which they have been trained. They are familiar with reliability, validity, related standardization, error measurement, and proper application of any technique utilized. Service providers using computer-based test interpretations are trained in the construct being measured and the specific instrument being used prior to using this type of computer application. Service providers take reasonable measures to ensure the proper use of psychological assessment techniques by persons under this supervision.
2. Appropriate use: Service providers are responsible for the appropriate application, scoring, interpretation, and use of assessment instruments, whether they score and interpret such tests themselves or use computerized or other services.
3. Decisions based on results: Agency staff responsible for decisions involving individuals or policies that are based on assessment results have a thorough understanding of educational and psychological measurement, including validation criteria, test research, and guidelines for test development and use.
4. Accurate information: Service providers shall provide accurate information and shall not make false claims or misconceptions when making statements about assessment instruments or techniques. Special efforts are made to avoid unwarranted connotations of such terms as IQ and grade equivalent scores.

c. Informed consent:

1. Prior to assessment, agency staff explain the nature and purposes of assessment and the specific use of results in language the consumer (or other legally authorized person on behalf of the consumer) can understand, unless an explicit exception to this right has been agreed upon in advance. Regardless of whether scoring and interpretation are completed by service provider, or by computer or other outside services, agency staff take reasonable steps to ensure that appropriate explanations are given to the consumer.
2. Recipients of results: The examinee's welfare, explicit understanding, and prior agreement determine the recipients of test results. Agency staff shall include accurate and appropriate interpretations with any release of individual or group test results.

d. Release of information to competent professionals:

1. Misuse of results. Agency staff shall not misuse assessment results, including test results, and interpretations, and take reasonable steps to prevent the misuse of such by others.
2. Release of raw data. Service providers ordinarily release data (e.g. protocols, counseling or interview notes, or questionnaires) in which the client is identified only with the consent of the client or the client's legal representative. Such data are usually released only to persons recognized by services providers as competent to interpret the data.

e. Proper diagnosis of mental disorders:

1. Proper diagnosis. Service providers take special care to provide proper diagnosis of mental disorders. Assessment techniques (including personal interview) used to determine client care (e.g., locus of treatment, type of treatment, or recommended follow-up) are carefully selected and appropriately used.
2. Cultural sensitivity. Agency staff recognize that culture affects the manner in which client's problems are defined. Clients' socioeconomic and cultural experience is considered when diagnosing mental disorders.

f. Test selection:

1. Appropriateness of instruments. Service providers carefully consider the validity, reliability, psychometric limitations and appropriateness of instruments when selecting tests for use in a given situation or with a particular client.
2. Culturally diverse populations. Service providers are cautious when selecting tests for culturally diverse populations to avoid inappropriateness of testing that may be outside of socialized behavioral or cognitive patterns.

g. Conditions of test administration:

1. Administration conditions. Service providers administer tests under the same conditions that were established in their standardization. When tests are not administered under standard conditions or when unusual behavior or irregularities occur during the testing session, those conditions are noted in interpretation, and the results may be designated as invalid or of questionable validity.
2. Computer administration. Service providers are responsible for ensuring that administration programs function properly to provide clients with accurate results when a computer or other electronic methods are used for test administration.
3. Unsupervised test-taking. Agency staff do not permit unsupervised or inadequately supervised use of tests or assessments unless the tests or assessments are designed, intended, and validated for self administration and/or scoring.
4. Disclosure of favorable conditions. Prior to test administration, conditions that produce most favorable test results are made know to the examinee.

h. Diversity in testing:

1. Service providers are cautious in using assessment techniques, making evaluations, and interpreting the performance of populations not represented in the norm group on which an instrument was standardized. They recognize the effects of age, color, culture, disability, ethnic group, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status on test administration and interpretation and place test interpretation results in proper perspective with other relevant factors.

i. Test scoring and interpretation:

1. Reporting reservations. In reporting assessment results, service providers indicate any reservations that exist regarding validity or reliability because of the circumstances of the assessment or the inappropriateness of the norms for the person tested.
2. Research instruments. Service providers exercise caution when interpreting the results of research instruments possessing insufficient technical data to support respondent results. The specific purposes for the use of such instruments are stated explicitly to the examinee.
3. Testing services. Service providers who provide test scoring and test interpretation services to support the assessment process confirm the validity of such interpretations. They accurately describe the purpose, norms, validity, reliability, and applications of the procedures and any special qualifications applicable to their use. The public

offering of an automated test interpretations service is considered a professional-to-professional consultation. The formal responsibility of the consultant is to the consultee, but the ultimate and overriding responsibility is to the client.

j. Test security:

1. Agency staff maintain the integrity and security of tests and other assessment techniques consistent with legal and contractual obligations. Agency staff do not appropriate, reproduce, or modify published tests or parts thereof without acknowledgment and permission from the publisher.

k. Obsolete tests and outdated test results:

1. Service providers do not use data or test results that are obsolete or outdated for the current purpose. Service providers make every effort to prevent the misuse of obsolete measures and test data by others.

l. Test construction:

1. Agency staff use established scientific procedures, relevant standards, and current professional knowledge for test design in the development, publication, and utilization of educational and psychological assessment techniques.

6. Research and Publication:

a. Research responsibilities:

1. Use of human subjects. CCS, Inc. employees plan, design, conduct, and report research in a manner consistent with pertinent ethical principles, federal and state laws, host institutional regulations, and scientific standards governing research with human subjects. Agency staff design and conduct research that reflects cultural sensitivity and appropriateness.
2. Deviation from standard practices. Agency staff seek consultation and observe stringent safeguards to protect the rights of research participants when a research problem suggests a deviation from standard acceptable practices.
3. Precautions to avoid injury. Agency staff who conduct research with human subjects are responsible for the subjects' welfare throughout the experiment and take reasonable precautions to avoid causing injurious psychological, physical, or social effects to their subjects.
4. Principal researcher responsibility. The ultimate responsibility for ethical research practice lies with the principal researcher. All others involved in the research activities share ethical obligations and full responsibility for their own actions.
5. Minimal interference. Agency staff take reasonable precautions to avoid causing disruptions in subjects' lives due to participation in research.
6. Diversity. CCS, Inc. employees are sensitive to diversity and research issues with special populations. They seek consultation when appropriate.

b. Informed consent:

1. Topics disclosed. In obtaining informed consent for research, agency staff use language that is understandable to research participants and that:
  - a. Accurately explains the purpose and procedures to be followed;
  - b. Identifies any procedures that are experimental or relative untried;
  - c. Describes the attendant discomforts and risks;
  - d. Describes the benefits or changes in individuals or organizations that might

- e. be reasonably expected;
  - e. Discloses appropriate alternative procedures that would be advantageous for subjects;
  - f. Offers to answer any inquiries concerning the procedures;
  - g. Ascribes any limitations on confidentiality, and;
  - h. Instructs that subjects are free to withdraw their consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time.
2. Deception. CCS, Inc. employees do not conduct research involving deception unless alternative procedures are not feasible and the prospective value of the research justifies the deception. When the methodological requirements of a study necessitate concealment or deception, the investigator is required to explain clearly the reasons for this action as soon as possible.
  3. Voluntary participation. Participation in research is typically voluntary and without any penalty for refusal to participate. Involuntary participation is appropriate only when it can be demonstrated that participation will have no harmful effects on subjects and is essential to the investigation.
  4. Confidentiality of information. Information obtained about research participants during the course of an investigation is confidential. When the possibility exists that others may obtain access to such information, ethical research practice requires that the possibility, together with the plans for protecting confidentiality, be explained to participants as a part of the procedure for obtaining informed consent.
  5. Person incapable of giving informed consent. When a person is incapable of giving informed consent, agency staff provide an appropriate explanation, obtain agreement for participation and obtain appropriate consent from a legally authorized person.
  6. Commitments to participants. Agency staff take reasonable measures to honor all commitments to research participants.
  7. Explanation of after data collections. After data are collected, agency staff provide participants with full clarifications of the nature of the study to remove any misconceptions. Where scientific or human values justify delaying or withholding information, agency staff take reasonable measures to avoid causing harm.
  8. Agreements to cooperate. Agency staff who agree to cooperate with another individual in research or publication incur an obligation to cooperate as promised in terms of punctuality of performance and with regard to the completeness and accuracy of the information required.
  9. Informed consent for sponsors. In the pursuit of research agency staff give sponsors, institutions, and publications channels the same respect and opportunity for giving informed consent that they accord to individual research participants. CCS, Inc. employees are aware of their obligation to future research workers and ensure that host institutions are given feedback information and proper acknowledgment.

c. Reporting results:

1. Information affecting outcome. When reporting research results, agency staff explicitly mention all variables and conditions known to the investigator that may have affected the outcome of a study or the interpretation of this data.
2. Accurate results. Agency staff plan, conduct and report research accurately and in a manner that minimizes the possibility that results will be misleading. They provide thorough discussions of the limitations of their data and alternative hypotheses. Agency staff do not engage in fraudulent research, distort data, misrepresent data, or deliberately bias their results.
3. Obligations to report unfavorable results. Agency staff communicate to other service providers the results of any research judged to be of professional value. Results that reflect unfavorably on institutions, programs, services, prevailing opinions, or vested interests are not withheld.
4. Identity of subjects. Agency staff who supply data, aid in the research of

another person, report research results, or make original data available take due care to disguise the identify of respective subjects in the absence of specific authorization from the subjects to do otherwise.

5. Replication studies. Agency staff are obligated to make available sufficient original research data to qualified professionals who may wish to replicate the study.

d. Publication:

1. Recognition of others. When conducting and reporting research, agency staff are familiar with, and give recognition to, previous work on the topic, observe copyright laws, and give full credit to those to whom credit is due.
2. Contributors. Agency staff give credit through joint authorship, acknowledgment, footnote statements, or other appropriate means to those who have contributed significantly to research or concept development in accordance with such contributions. The principal contributor is listed first and minor technical or professional contributions are acknowledged in notes or introductory statements.
3. Student research. For an article that is substantially based on a student's dissertation or thesis, the student is listed as the principal author.
4. Duplicate submission. Agency staff submit manuscripts for consideration to only one journal at a time. Manuscripts that are published in whole or in substantial part in another journal or published work are not submitted for publication without acknowledgment and permission from the previous publication.
5. Professional review. Agency staff who review material submitted for publication, research, or other scholarly purposes respect the confidentiality and proprietary rights of those who submitted it.

7. Payment for services:

- a. When setting fees, CCS, Inc. should ensure that the fees are fair, reasonable, and commensurate with the services performed.
- b. Agency staff should not accept goods or services as payment for professional services. Bartering arrangements, particularly involving services, create the potential for conflicts of interest, exploitation, and inappropriate boundaries in service provider's relationship with clients. Agency staff may explore and may participate in bartering only in very limited circumstances when it can be demonstrated that such arrangements are an accepted practice among professionals in the local community, considered to be essential for the provision of services, negotiated without coercion, and entered into at the client's initiative and with the client's informed consent. Agency staff who accept goods or services from clients as payment for professional services assume the full burden of demonstrating that this arrangement will not be detrimental to the client or the professional relationship.
- c. Agency staff may not solicit a private fee or other remuneration for providing services to clients who are entitled to such available services through the service provider's employer or agency.

8. Record keeping:

- a. For each client/consumer, agency staff shall keep records of the dates of services, types of services, termination, and billing information.
- b. Agency staff shall take reasonable steps to ensure that documentation in records is accurate and reflects the services provided.
- c. Agency staff shall include sufficient and timely documentation in records to facilitate the delivery of services and to ensure continuity of services provided to clients in the future.
- d. Service providers' documentation should protect clients' privacy to the extent that it is possible and appropriate and should include only information that is directly relevant to the delivery of services.
- e. CCS, Inc. shall store records following termination of services to ensure reasonable future

access. Records should be maintained as required by statute or relevant contracts.

- f. CCS, Inc. shall provide clients with reasonable access to records concerning the client. Service providers who are concerned that clients' access to their records could cause serious misunderstanding or harm to the client should provide assistance in interpreting the records and consultation with the client regarding the records. Agency staff should limit clients' access to their records, or portions of their records, only in exceptional circumstances when there is compelling evidence that such access would cause serious harm to the client. Both the clients' requests and the rationale for withholding some or all of the records shall be documented in the clients' files. When providing clients with access to their records, agency staff shall take steps to protect the confidentiality of other individuals identified or discussed in such records.