

IDVR Counselor Training Series Decision Making and Ethics - Part 1

Welcome

Welcome to the Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Training. This program is provided by the New Hampshire Department of Education, Division of Workforce Innovation, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Interwork Institute of San Diego State University. It is part of the Agency's effort to provide readily available training support to vocational rehabilitation counselors. For further information contact: shannon.wilcox@vr.idaho.gov

Decision Making and Ethics

In this module we will explore the implication of ethics as it pertains to the rehabilitation decision-making process. We will highlight the values that serve as the foundation for the Rehabilitation Counselor Code of Ethics, as well as the principles upon which the Code is based. We will also learn how to recognize and analyze ethical dilemmas and provide a model for resolving them.

New Section: Code of Professional Ethics

CRCC's Code of Professional Ethics

The Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification [Code of Professional Ethics](#) serves as the standard for rehabilitation professionals. The standards of this professional code must be adhered to, enforced by Rehabilitation Counselors, and provides guidance for ethical practice. The Code also assures the community that the rehabilitation counseling profession accepts its responsibility to provide quality services that will facilitate the personal, social, and economic independence of people with disabilities. All IDVR staff providing services to VR applicants and eligible participants are required to adhere to the CRCC Code of Ethics.

The Preamble of the Code of Professional Ethics

The preamble to the Code of Professional Ethics provides information in the following areas:

- Purpose
- Values and Principles
- Commitment to Cultural Diversity
- Clients/Evaluees
- Structure of the Code
- Applying the Code

- Defining the profession

Objectives of the Code

CRCC Code of Professional Ethics, 2023 lists the objectives of the code as follows:

- 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 of the Code

- 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.

Principles of the Code

The fundamental spirit of caring and respect is described within the six principles of ethical behavior. The six principles of ethical behavior are autonomy, beneficence, fidelity, justice, nonmaleficence, and veracity.

- **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.” (CRCC Code of Professional Ethics, 2023)

Enforceable Standards of Ethical Practice

The code identifies several enforceable standards of ethical practice which include:

- **Section A:** The Counseling Relationship
- **Section B:** Confidentiality, Privileged Communication, and Privacy
- **Section C:** Advocacy and Accessibility
- **Section D:** Multicultural Considerations
- **Section E:** Professional Responsibility
- **Section F:** Relationships with Other professionals
- **Section G:** Forensic Services
- **Section H:** Assessment and Evaluation
- **Section I:** Supervision, Training and Teaching, Research and Publication
- **Section J:** Research and Publication
- **Section K:** Technology, Social Media, and Distance Counseling
- **Section L:** Business Practices
- **Section M:** Resolving Ethical Issues

Rehabilitation Counselors are responsible for reading, understanding, and following the Code, and seeking clarification of any standard that is not understood. Lack of knowledge or misunderstanding of an ethical responsibility is not a defense against a charge of unethical conduct.

Dual Relationships

Focus of the Section

One area of the Code that rehabilitation counselors must pay special attention to is the section on **dual relationships**. A dual relationship exists when the participant is involved in some other relationship with the rehabilitation counselor beyond the professional

relationship. Dual relationships can include a participant that is a friend, a sexual partner, a business partner, a family member, or a student, to name a few.

Ethical Implications of Dual Relationships

Section A.4 of the Code addresses the **ethical implications** of dual relationships.

Section A.4.a prohibits any type of sexual or romantic interactions or relationships with current participants. Counselors are also barred from providing counseling to individuals with whom they have previously had a sexual relationship.

Section A.4.b mandates that counselors are **not to engage in sexual or romantic interactions or relationships with former participants within 5 years of terminating the counseling relationship** and then only after thoroughly examining and documenting that the relationship is not exploitative in nature. Peer consultation is also required prior to entering into the relationship.

Section A.4.c prohibits counselors from engaging in sexual or romantic interactions or relationships with vulnerable former clients, regardless of the length of time elapsed since the termination of the professional counseling relationship.

Section A.4.d prohibits counselors from providing rehabilitation counseling services to previous sexual or romantic partners.

The Code specifies defines sexual or romantic interactions as occurring virtually, online and/or in-person.

Non-professional Relationships

Section A.4.e prohibits counselors from providing rehabilitation counseling services with family members, and any individual the counselor is unable to maintain objectivity within the delivery of rehabilitation services.

A.4.f prohibits counselors from engaging in personal, non-professional electronic or virtual relationships with current clients.

A.4.g. Requires counselors to analyze the risks and benefits of boundary extensions of their professional relationship with current and former clients, and their social support systems. Examples of appropriate boundary extensions are addressed in section A.4.g.

A.4.h. outlines the counselor's responsibility in officially documenting boundary extensions. This includes counselor rationale, benefits, and potential consequences of extending boundaries.

Lesson Completed

You have now completed the first part of the lesson for this module. Continue on to part 2 of this module.