

Beyond the Hype: A One-Year Review of AI Ethics and the New CRCC Guiding Questions

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Who are we?

- Nichole G. Tichy, Ph.D., CRC – Visiting Assistant Professor, The George Washington University
- Robert J. Froehlich, Ed.D., LPC, CRC, - Associate Professor, The George Washington University,



Agenda

- What is Artificial Intelligence?
- The Current State of AI and Professional Codes of Ethics
- Introduction to CRCC Guidelines for AI usage



Learning Objectives

By the end of this one-hour session, participants will be able to:

- Analyze the Evolution of AI in Practice
- Apply the CRCC “Guiding Questions” Framework
- Implement Ethical Transparency Protocols
- Mitigate Algorithmic Bias and “Hallucinations”



What is Artificial Intelligence?

...no, but really, what is it?



Complex Answer

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** is a branch of computer science focused on creating systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence.
- These tasks include learning, reasoning, problem-solving, understanding natural language, perception, and decision-making.
- AI is about *what the system does*, not *how it learns*.

Machine Learning

- A more complicated aspect of **AI** is the use of machine learning – which enables systems to learn and improve from experience without being explicitly programmed.
- Three different types:
 - Supervised**
 - Unsupervised
 - Reinforcement
- Systems that *learn patterns from data* rather than being explicitly programmed with rules.

Deep Learning

- Deep learning is a **specialized form of ML** using *neural networks*.
 - computational model composed of interconnected layers of nodes that learn to recognize patterns in data by adjusting weighted connections, enabling complex prediction and classification tasks.
 - many layers (hence the term deep), are used to learn increasingly complex features—from simple patterns to abstract representations
- Deep learning automatically learns relevant features from raw data, rather than requiring humans to define them.
- Powers things like ChatGPT, image recognition, speech analysis
- Often requires **large datasets**
- Often less interpretable (“black box”)

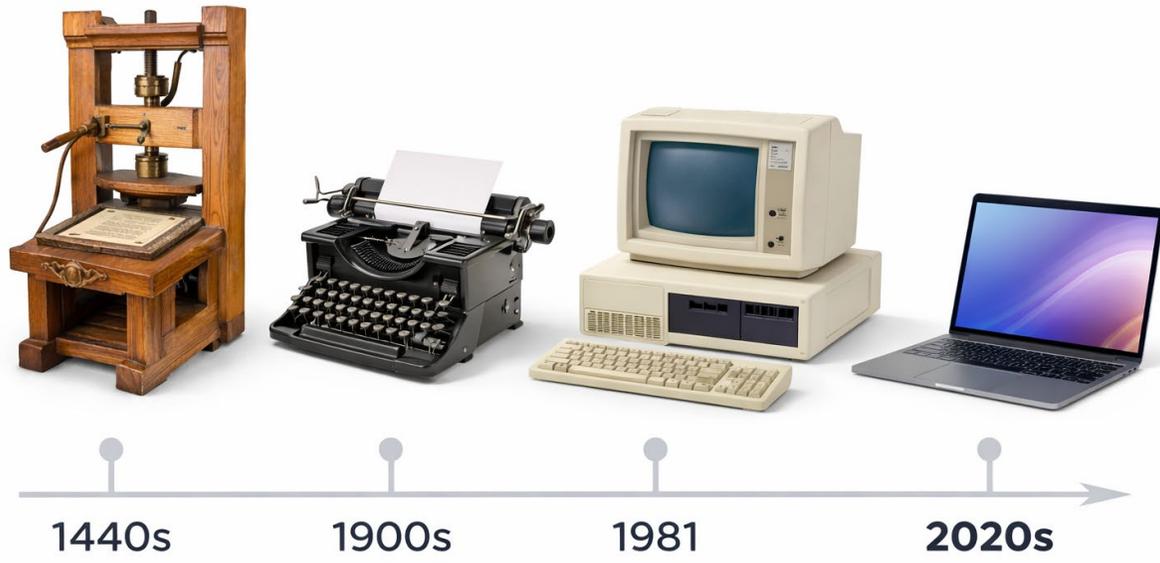


Let's define some other important key terms...

- **Generative AI:** Creates *new* content (text, images, video) based on patterns.
- **Natural Language Processing (NLP):** Enables computers to interpret and generate human language (e.g., Wordtune, VMock).
- **Large Language Models (LLMs):** Trained on vast text data to summarize, translate, and converse (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini).
- **Agentic AI:** Proactive systems that take goal-directed actions (e.g., monitoring vocational goals and flagging issues automatically).



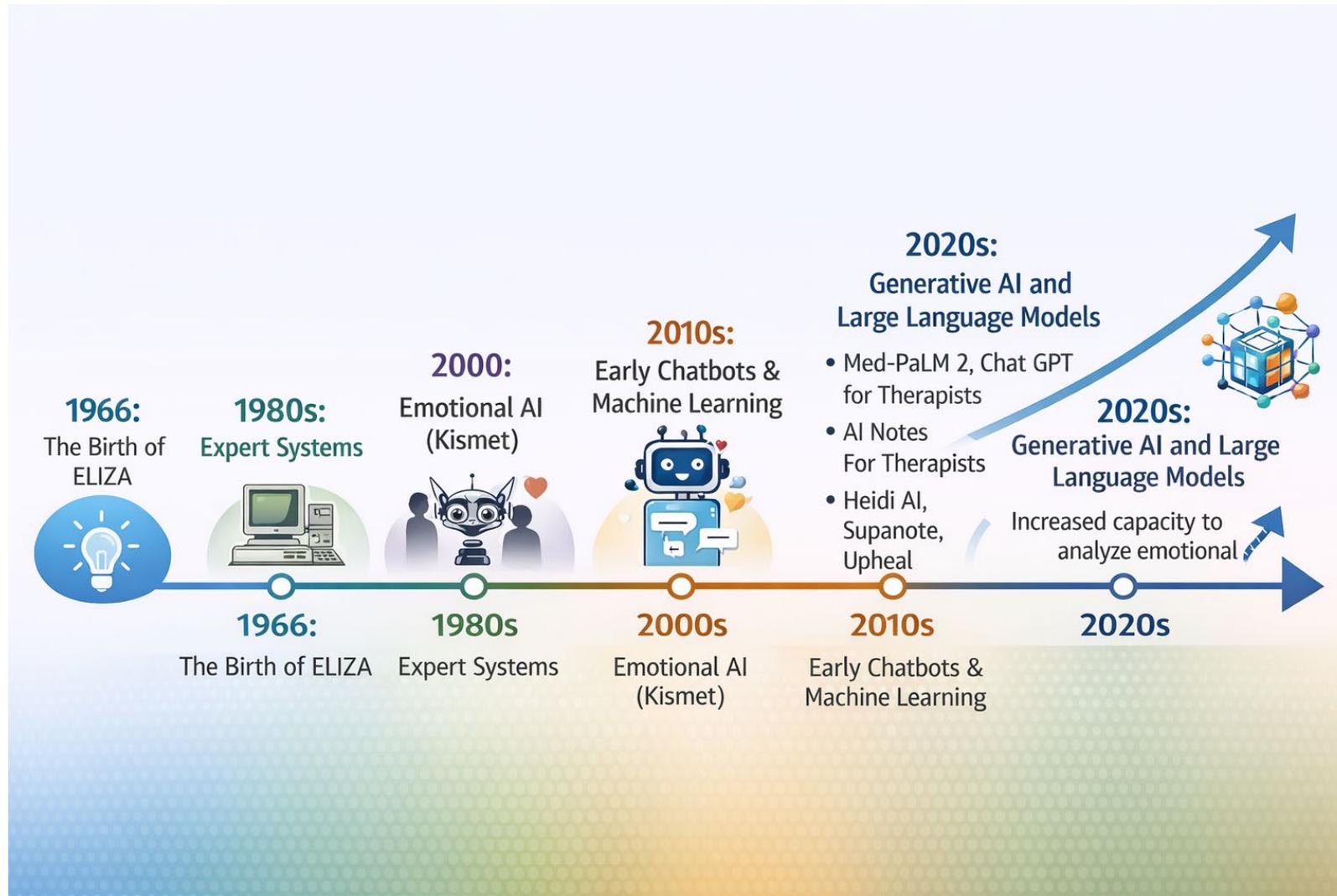
AI in Counseling



Evolution...

Technology is starting to expand exponentially.

Counseling & AI - Timeline



AI in Counseling Literature

- **Counselors in Training supported AI tools** (Jeong, et al., 2025)
 - Using ChatGPT as a training tool for verbal communication; LLM served as the client and provided feedback to counselor
 - Participants completed 3, 30-min text-based counseling sessions, two groups, one self-reflected on skills, and the other asked ChatGPT for feedback.
- **Diagnostic Predictions using Machine Learning** (Zhai et al., 2024)
- **Suicide Risk:**
 - AI – viewed as rating it too low (Elyoseph & Lekovich, 2023)
 - Literature shows mental health professionals sometimes overestimate actual suicidality. (Airey et al. 2020; Gale et al., 2016, Nielssen et al. 2017)
 - So, who/what is right?

AI in Clinical Documentation

- **Counseling-Specific Tools:** Often administrative (e.g., Mentalyc, Eleos Health).
- **AI Note-Taking:** Uses speech-to-text and LLMs to structure session summaries.
- **AI Transcription:** Converts spoken dialogue to written text.
- **Benefit:** Reduces administrative burden to allow for more direct client interaction.
- **Privacy Note:** Some tools use manual summaries rather than audio to reduce privacy risks.



The CRCC Code of Professional Ethics

- The word technology appears in the current version of the CRCC Code of Professional Ethics 35 times.
 - 1 time related to presentations (Professional Responsibility - E.4.c.)
 - 2 times under Testing & Assessment and the correct use of technology to score assessments (H.4.b. & H.5.c.)
 - 2 times related to supervision and teaching (I.2.c. [TAS]; I.6.b. [TAE]).
 - Requirement of competency/proficiency with technology.
- Section K – Technology
- But, no mention of AI.

Introducing the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Guiding Statements to support Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRCs) Using Artificial Intelligence



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CRCC Ethics Committee – AI Task Force

- Consists of current members of the CRCC Ethics Committee
- Started in response to ensure the ethical use of AI across the Rehabilitation Counseling Profession
- Product is intended to serve as a resource for rehabilitation counseling professionals using AI in their practices or supporting clients who are using AI.



FAQs and Guiding Statements

- What does this document talk about?
 - Helps to define the different “types” of AI
 - Ensuring confidentiality
 - Using AI with clients
 - Understanding the limitations of AI
- Additionally, places emphasis on the skills we have as counselors and counselor educators – use of ethical-decision making
- [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) and Guiding Statements to support Certified Rehabilitation Counselors \(CRCs\) Using Artificial Intelligence](#)



Ensuring Confidentiality

- **Anonymity is Key**
 - If it can't be anonymized, don't enter it into public AI (e.g., ChatGPT).
- **The "Gold Standard"**
 - Only use HIPAA-compliant systems with a signed Business Associate Agreement (BAA).
- **Data Stripping**
 - Remove all Protected Health Information (PHI) and Personally Identifiable Information (PII).
- **Assumption of Risk**
 - Assume any data entered into public-facing AI is immediately compromised.

Data Security & Informed Consent

- **Data Security Measures:**
 - Encryption and strict access controls.
 - Ensuring client data is **not** used to train public models.
- **Informed Consent:**
 - Be transparent about AI usage.
 - Explain how data is processed.
 - **Right to Opt-Out:** Clients must have the right to decline AI use without penalty.

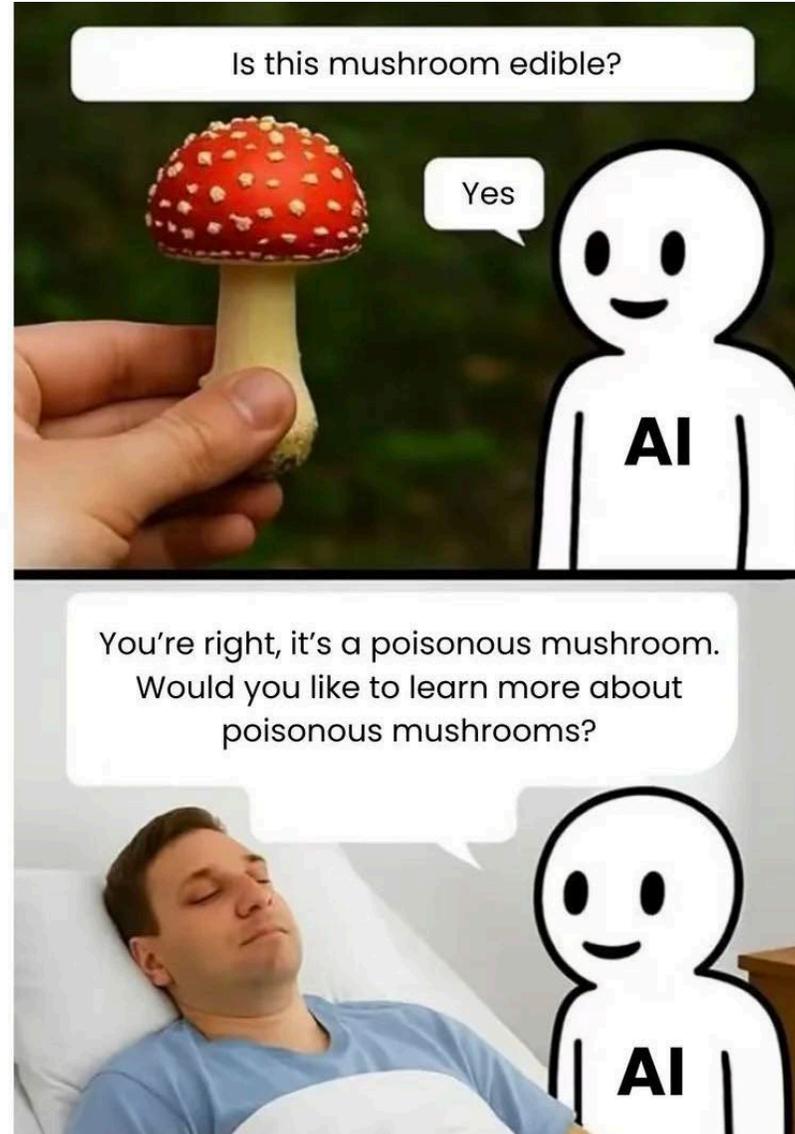


How can I use AI tools with clients?

- **Job Market Analysis**
 - Summarizing trends, skills, and salary data.
- **Document Drafting**
 - Creating initial resumes or cover letters (de-identified).
- **Skill/Credential Matching**
 - Identifying career paths based on market demand.
- **The Golden Rule** - Use AI collaboratively, but vet all tools with your agency first.



Importance of AI Literacy



How do I Develop AI Literacy?

- **For Clients:** Teach them that AI is a "pattern-matcher," not an expert. Encourage them to challenge AI suggestions against their lived experience.
- **For Counselors:** Treat literacy as **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**.
 - Understand basic mechanics (Patterns vs. Thinking).
 - Master **Prompt Engineering** for better, less-biased results.
 - Knowing what you want as an output based on the information from the input.
 - Stay current on HIPAA/BAA compliance.



Understanding the Limitations of AI

- **Algorithmic Bias:** Reflects societal biases regarding race, gender, and disability.
- **Inaccuracy ("Hallucinations"):** AI can confidently generate false information or fake research.
- **Lack of Empathy:** AI cannot understand the complex, systemic barriers faced by individuals with disabilities.
 - While many chatbots offer the illusion of demonstrating empathy or compassion, machines do not have feelings.
- **Sycophancy:** AI may "please" the user by reinforcing existing biases rather than offering clinical challenges.



With all this information, how do we safeguard Ethical Decision-Making?

- **Human Oversight:** The counselor maintains **final authority and accountability**.
- **Suggestions, Not Directives:** Treat AI outputs as data points to be critically evaluated.
- **Ethical Decision-Making Model (Corey et al.):**
 - Identify the problem and collaborate with the client.
 - Develop and review solutions together.
 - Implement, evaluate, and reflect.
- **Consultation:** Always speak with supervisors or colleagues to strengthen decision defensibility.



Questions to consider when using (or not using) AI

- Is this tool equitable and culturally responsive?
 - Who is represented and who might be missing from the data used to train the system?
- Does it respect privacy and autonomy?
 - What data is being collected, stored, or shared?
- Who created it, and how are decisions made?
- Can I explain how this tool arrives at its recommendations?
- How does it support, not replace, student (or client or educator) voice?
- Am I relying on this tool beyond my level of competence?
- Would I make the same decision without the AI's recommendation?



What are other organizations saying?

Counseling boards, ACA, NBCC, AASCB

ACA and NBCC and AASCB links

- American Counseling Association (ACA) - [Recommendations for Practicing Counselors and Their Use of AI](#)
- National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) - [Ethical Principles for Artificial Intelligence in Counseling](#)
- American Association of State Counseling Boards (AASCB) - [AASCB AI Position and Guidelines](#)

ACA: AI Workgroup recommendations for Counselors

- Learn more about the essentials of artificial intelligence, its subfields, and its applications to mental health.
- Stay open, informed, and educated.
- Avoid over-reliance on AI.
- Recognize that AI may contain bias and be capable of discrimination.
- Career counselors and those who address employment issues should stay informed about how automation is shaping the world of work.
- Advocate for transparency in AI algorithms.
- Maintain transparency and informed consent.
- Leverage AI for data-driven insights.
- Ensure data security and privacy.
- Counselors should empower clients to communicate about their AI use.
- Supervisors can use AI to enhance the development of supervisees.
- Counselors must understand the limitations of AI in diagnosis and assessment in all counseling settings.
- Consider conducting research on the intersection of AI and counseling.

State Board Counseling Recommendations

Virginia

- “As technological advancements, especially in artificial intelligence (AI), become increasingly integrated into clinical practice, the Board of Counseling is committed to ensuring that these new technologies enhance care quality while maintaining client safety, privacy, and the integrity of the therapeutic relationship. To fulfill its responsibility of protecting the public, the Board will be creating a guidance document to support licensees in the ethical use of AI. In the interim, the Board recommends that licensees review the following links from counseling national associations before incorporating AI into their practice.’ Refers to ACA, NBCC, and AASCB recommendations.”
- <https://www.dhp.virginia.gov/media/dhpweb/docs/counseling/guidance/115-4.pdf>

South Carolina

- Statement focuses on client confidentiality, informed consent, professional oversight, client welfare, cultural competence, competence in the use of AI and continuing education, and emergency situations.

State Board Recommendations: West Virginia

- WV House Bill 4770 (2026)
- Core Purpose: Establishes regulations for using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the delivery and administration of mental health care in West Virginia.
- Key Restrictions for Licensed Professionals:
 - AI may not make independent therapeutic decisions or generate treatment plans without human review.
 - AI is prohibited from direct therapeutic communication with clients.
 - AI cannot be used to detect emotions for making diagnostic or treatment decisions.
- Mandatory Transparency:
 - Operators must provide "clear and conspicuous" notification at the start of interactions (and every 3 hours) stating the user is not talking to a human.
 - Written informed consent is required if AI is used to record or transcribe therapeutic sessions.
- Clinical Guardrails:
 - Patient care and insurance claim decisions cannot be based exclusively on AI-generated info.
 - AI may only be used to flag or triage safety concerns (e.g., self-harm), provided a human professional conducts the actual clinical assessment.
- Compliance & Enforcement:
 - Rules apply to policies issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2027.
 - Violations carry civil penalties of up to \$10,000 per occurrence

State Board Recommendations: Maryland

- Based on proposed 2026 Maryland legislation (HB 995), behavioral health providers, including counselors, are prohibited from using AI to directly deliver care (assessments, diagnosis, treatment, counseling).
- AI may only be used for administrative tasks (scheduling, notes) if patient confidentiality is strictly maintained, data is not used for training, and patients are notified.
- AI cannot replace human decision-making in diagnosing, treating, or counseling patients.

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Thank you!

Nichole Tichy:
nbean2@email.gwu.edu

Robert Froehlich:
rfro@gwu.edu



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