

# ETHICAL PRINCIPLES ACROSS PROFESSIONS

How do ethical principles across professions inform global mental health programs and practices?



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## Key Takeaways

- ✓ Mental health-serving professional organizations have distinct terms in their ethical codes, yet many of these terms conceptually overlap.
- ✓ Few professional organizations offer guidance on how to adapt their guiding ethical principles to global mental health settings.
- ✓ Cultural competence and awareness are essential skills for global mental health professionals to adequately apply common ethical ideals in global settings.
- ✓ Seven common ideals emerge to guide ethical behavior among mental health professionals. These include:
  1. Competent Care
  2. Dignity
  3. Professional Responsibility
  4. Integrity
  5. Autonomy
  6. Justice
  7. Privacy and Confidentiality

## Promising Approaches

Taking into account the findings of this review, as well as the strengths and limitations of terms and approaches in global mental health, we identify the following courses of action to strengthen the field:



**Revisions of ethical codes** should include specific guidelines for mental health professionals working in international settings.

- Consider developing and integrating a supplementary code of ethics for global mental health professionals.
- Establish a centralized regulatory body for global mental health professionals to oversee the development and monitoring of the revised code of ethics across disciplines. This should include representation of mental health professionals from the Global South and from a range of disciplines such as psychiatry, psychology, counseling, and social work.



**Convene an interdisciplinary group of experts** working in the field of global mental health to provide input on best practices and ethical considerations that can be applied to a revised code of ethics applicable to the global scope of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support practice. This group should include local experts and may include but should not be limited to representatives from social work, psychology, psychiatry, and peer support networks.



**Convene regional or national advisory groups of mental health professionals** from low- and middle-income countries to advise and offer input on best practices and ethical considerations within specific global contexts. This advisory group may:

- Review existing codes of ethics and guide the adaptation of principles to fit legal rules and cultural norms, values, and beliefs.
- Offer guidance on addressing cultural mismatches of ethical principles and standards within and between professions.



FEW PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS  
OFFER GUIDANCE ON HOW TO ADAPT  
THEIR GUIDING ETHICAL PRINCIPLES TO  
GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH SETTINGS.

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## Introduction

### Background

Mental health professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, counselors, and peer supporters are guided by ethical codes established by their respective professional organizations. However, terms to describe these ethical principles vary among professions. These variations can create confusion about conceptually similar ethical standards across professions and exacerbate ambiguity for mental health professionals working or practicing in global mental health contexts. This brief examines the codes of conduct of a variety of professional organizations. Throughout the mental health professions, prevalent ethical codes were identified and analyzed. For comparison, this review also includes ethical codes of related professions such as sociology. The operationalization of each ethical principle in the context of global mental health is discussed, and suggestions are provided for addressing ethical ambiguity in global settings.

### Search Strategy

The following combination of terms was used for this search: “ethics in social work,” “ethics and social workers,” “ethical principles in social work,” “ethical principles in social workers,” “ethical principles in psychology,” “ethical principles in psychologists,” “ethical principles in psychiatry,” “ethical principles in psychiatrists,” “ethical principles in sociology,” and “ethical principles in sociologists.” Also searched were combinations of terms of “association,” “international association,” “world association,” and “national association.” Only well-established professional organizations with clearly delineated ethical principles were included in this brief. Those professional organizations include 11 representing social work, psychology, sociology, peer support, and psychiatry. Table 1 provides a description of each organization by profession. A wider set of 50 ethical codes that represent various international mental health professions are provided in Appendix 2.

Table 1. Professional Organizations

PROFESSION	ORGANIZATION
Peer Support	The National Association of Peer Supporters
Counseling	The American Counseling Association
Social Work	International Federation of Social Workers National Association of Social Workers
Psychology	Canadian Psychological Association American Psychological Association The International Union of Psychological Science International Association of Applied Psychology
Psychiatry	American Psychiatric Association World Psychiatric Association
Sociology	American Sociological Association

## Results

The number of explicit ethical principles mentioned by the 11 organizations in this brief ranged between four to fifteen. However, some were included across organizations more often than others. After arranging and grouping each principle, seven were found to occur most frequently:

- **Competent Care** includes working for the benefit of the client, helping people in need (beneficence), upholding the highest standards of professionalism (including appropriate behaviors), and doing no harm.
- **Dignity** includes respecting all persons and their inherent worth regardless of social status, ethnic origin, gender, individual differences, cultural and ethnic diversity, and capacities or other characteristics. It also encompasses respect for human rights, the idea that mental health professionals must embody certain behaviors, including being open-minded, and advocating for people to fully integrate into their communities.
- **Professional Responsibility** to the field and society involves improving the conditions of individuals, families, communities, and society via transmission and expression of knowledge, research, ethical and trustworthy behavior, continuous professional development, and recognition of responsibility for the improvement and betterment of public health.
- **Integrity** includes practicing with honesty, fairness, truthfulness, and accurate communication. Integrity means mental health professionals develop the competencies to provide adequate care, are accountable for their actions, and do not misrepresent themselves or their profession.
- **Autonomy** encompasses recognizing and empowering the decision-making process of patients and their right to make their own choices. It acknowledges that receiving help is a personal choice and encourages shared power and equal opportunity to express ideas and opinions.
- **Justice** refers to respecting the law, but also to challenging unjust policies or practices, discrimination, and oppression. Justice encourages providers to act as advocates in unjust situations, to seek fairness, and to support access to services.
- **Privacy and Confidentiality** are interrelated terms that describe the responsibility of providers to communicate with clients, maintain transparency, and outline clear expectations. For some organizations these ideals encompass all provider-patient interactions, whether they occur in person or virtually.<sup>A, B</sup>

<sup>A</sup>Table 2 includes the language from each of the 7 ethical standards by organization.

<sup>B</sup>Appendix 1 provides a detailed description of all ethical standards by professional organization.



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## Limitations of Ethical Principles When Applied to Global Mental Health

The above principles, while extensive in their meaning and aspirational content, are challenging to uphold in global mental health settings. Below is an overview of the nuances associated with each ethical principle that should be considered within the context of global mental health.

### Competent Care

The Sphere Handbook and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee provide useful guidance on approaching mental health and psychosocial support in humanitarian settings. However, several limitations should be addressed. These include:

- Healthcare providers from Western countries may not be familiar with different beliefs, perspectives, and practices surrounding mental health. This can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication, as well as to ineffective or inappropriate treatment. For example, a healthcare provider may not be familiar with culturally specific traditional healing practices, spiritual, or religious rituals and may be unaware of the significance of incorporating these practices into treatment plans.
- How mental health conditions are perceived, stigmatized, and treated can impact competent care. For example, in some cultures mental health conditions may be viewed as personal weaknesses or lack of willpower, while in other cultures they may be seen as spiritual or supernatural. These cultural differences can make it difficult for healthcare providers to understand and appropriately respond to their patients' needs.
- Power imbalances may exist among foreign and national mental health care workers where, in their desire to receive training or education, national counselors might conceal or feel ashamed of their own cultural practices and beliefs regarding mental health. Only time and relationship building has the potential to diminish or eliminate this power imbalance.
- In emergency situations mental health care providers and institutions responsible for quickly providing care and relief may fail to properly train, acquaint, and educate professionals. In time-sensitive situations, institutions may conduct hurried, short-term training and provide little supervision and ongoing follow-up support for mental health care workers.

## Dignity

- Cultural variation may exist regarding what constitutes respectful and dignified treatment. For example, some cultures may emphasize privacy and modesty, while others may place greater emphasis on communal support and open communication. These cultural differences can make it difficult for providers to understand and appropriately respond to their clients' needs and may lead to situations where the individual feels disrespected, misunderstood, or undignified.
- The use of certain language can also prove a challenge to uphold this principle. For instance, survivors may be described as victims. Using this language of victimhood is potentially useful to engage international legal protections and absolve survivors of horrific events of any responsibility for the assaults they have endured. However, the tendency to refer to patients as victims can leave them feeling helpless and paralyzed, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. People often reconstruct their identity as victims after horrendous events, yet victims are not in a good position to take charge of their recovery and future. The “victim” label can make people feel demeaned and shamed by their experiences. To avoid this, most seasoned mental health professionals use non-pathologizing language to build a sense of empowerment that supports recovery.

## Autonomy

- Autonomy emphasizes the right of individuals to make decisions about their own well-being and treatment. However, many non-Western collectivist cultures prioritize community over individual autonomy. Thus, decisions for mental health treatment may be made by the family and the community, overriding the preferences of the individual. This can result in situations where individuals are encouraged or coerced to receive care that is deemed most appropriate by the collective and limits the individual's autonomy in deciding their own course of treatment.
- Certain cultures may view mental health conditions differently than others and may not recognize them as legitimate health concerns. This can lead to varying cultural beliefs about treatment and different cultural expectations of healthcare providers, which can make it difficult for patients to assert their autonomy.

- Power imbalances between providers and clients can threaten autonomy in certain cultures. Hierarchical relationships between providers and patients can make it difficult for patients to assert their autonomy and make their own choices about their treatment. Power imbalances can arise when a person is not entirely informed or educated about their condition and available treatment options, which can limit their ability to exercise autonomy.
- Informed consent procedures need to consider the collective rather than the individual. For example, the consenting process may need to be locally defined and tailored based on decision-making capacity, level of education, and understanding of mental health conditions and treatment.<sup>1</sup>

## Justice

- Mental health assistance can become a political tool when it increases the power of one group over another. Providers who do not understand local power dynamics may inadvertently support unequal displays of care, discrimination, and other sources of harm. Therefore, providers must be aware of and sensitive to cultural differences and local power dynamics when providing mental health programs and care in a global setting. They must also be open to different views of what “just” and “fair” treatment is and respect that it may vary depending on the cultural context.

## Privacy and Confidentiality

- In diverse global contexts, cultural expectations and understandings of privacy and confidentiality vary widely. Similar to the autonomy principle, collectivist societies may have different expectations regarding confidentiality than more individualistic Western cultures.
- Different cultural beliefs about mental health, diagnoses, and treatment may make it difficult to implement this ideal in all settings. For example, in cultures where mental health conditions are thought to be rooted in supernatural or spiritual phenomenon, requiring some communal support or traditional healing methods, global mental health practitioners may find it challenging to maintain the same standard of privacy and confidentiality expected in Western settings.

Additional insights regarding ethical principles that organizations may apply to ensure that global mental health policies and practices do no harm are available in a [separate brief](#).

## ETHICAL PRINCIPLES ACROSS PROFESSIONS

**Table 2. The Seven Most Frequently Invoked Ethical Standards by Profession**

This table provides an overview of the most frequently invoked ethical standards across different professions. In the table, we have incorporated both direct quotes and summarized content from the sources (associations) referenced. Importantly, direct quotes are not enclosed within quotation marks. We acknowledge the contributions of the different associations in strengthening our understanding of the ethical principles in their profession.

ASSOCIATION	COMPETENT CARE	DIGNITY	PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	INTEGRITY	AUTONOMY	JUSTICE	PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY
<b>The National Association of Peer Supporters<sup>2</sup></b>	<p><b>Honest And Direct:</b> Difficult issues are addressed with those who are directly involved. Privacy and confidentiality build trust.</p> <p><b>Hopeful:</b> Evidence that people can and do overcome the internal and external challenges that confront people with mental health conditions, traumatic experiences, or substance use challenges.</p> <p><b>Empathetic:</b> Listen with emotional sensitivity.</p> <p><b>Respectful:</b> Accept and are open to differences, encouraging people to share the gifts and strengths that come from human diversity.</p>	<p><b>Open Minded:</b> Withhold judgment about others.</p> <p><b>Mutual and reciprocal:</b> Peer supporters learn from those they support and those supported learn from peer supporters.</p>		<p><b>Person-driven:</b> Encourage people to move beyond their comfort zones, learn from their mistakes, and grow from dependence on the system toward their chosen level of freedom and inclusion in the community of their choice.</p>	<p><b>Voluntary:</b> Recovery is a personal choice.</p> <p><b>Equally shared power:</b> Sharing power in a peer support relationship means equal opportunity for each person to express ideas and opinions, offer choices, and contribute.</p> <p><b>Strengths-focused:</b> Peer supporters encourage others to identify their strengths and use them to improve their lives.</p>		<p><b>Peer support is transparent:</b> set expectations with each person about what can and cannot be offered in a peer support relationship, including privacy and confidentiality</p>
<b>The American Counseling Association (ACA)<sup>3</sup></b>	<p>Counselors practice only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, and supervised experience.</p>	<p>The primary responsibility of counselors is to respect the dignity and promote the welfare of clients (contained in their mission statement).</p>	<p>Counselors have a responsibility to abide by the ACA Code of Ethics. Counselors have a responsibility to the public to engage in counseling practices that are based on rigorous research.</p>	<p>Counselors safeguard the integrity of the counselor–client relationship and practice in a competent and ethical manner.</p>	<p>Counselors foster their clients’ right to control the direction of their own life.</p>	<p>Counselors treat individuals equitably and foster fairness and equality.</p>	<p>Counselors recognize that trust is a cornerstone of the counseling relationship. They uphold appropriate boundaries and maintain confidentiality.</p>

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ASSOCIATION	COMPETENT CARE	DIGNITY	PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	INTEGRITY	AUTONOMY	JUSTICE	PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY
<b>International Federation of Social Workers<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Treating People as Whole Persons:</b> Recognize the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of people's lives and understand and treat all people as whole persons.	<b>Promoting Human Rights:</b> Social workers embrace and promote the fundamental and inalienable rights of all human beings.  Social workers recognize and respect the inherent dignity and worth of all human beings in attitude, word, and deed. We respect all persons, but we challenge beliefs and actions of those persons who devalue or stigmatize themselves or other persons.	<b>Professional Competency:</b> Social workers must hold the required qualifications and develop and maintain the required skills and competencies to do their job.	<b>Professional Integrity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support peace and nonviolence.</li> <li>• Act with integrity. This includes not abusing positions of power and relationships of trust with people they engage with.</li> <li>• Have a duty to take the necessary steps to care for themselves professionally and personally in the workplace, in their private lives, and in society.</li> <li>• Acknowledge they are accountable for their actions to the people they work with, their colleagues, their employers, their professional associations, and local, national, and international laws.</li> </ul>	<b>Promoting the Right to Self-Determination.</b>  <b>Promoting the Right to Participation</b>	<b>Promoting Social Justice:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging discrimination and institutional oppression</li> <li>• Respect for diversity</li> <li>• Access to equitable resources</li> <li>• Challenging unjust policies and practices</li> <li>• Building solidarity</li> </ul>	<b>Respect for Confidentiality and Privacy:</b> Work in accordance with people's rights to confidentiality and privacy unless there is risk of harm to the self or to others or other statutory restrictions. Social workers inform the people with whom they engage about such limits to confidentiality and privacy.
<b>International Association of Applied Psychology<sup>*5</sup></b>	<b>Competent caring for the well-being of persons and peoples</b> involves working for their benefit and, above all, doing no harm.	<b>Recognizes the inherent worth of all human beings,</b> regardless of perceived or real differences in social status, ethnic origin, gender, capacities, or other such characteristics.	<b>Contributing to the knowledge</b> about human behavior and to persons' understanding of themselves and others and using such knowledge to improve the condition of individuals, families, groups, communities, and society.	<b>Based on honesty, truthful,</b> open and accurate communication.			



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<b>The International Union of Psychological Science</b> <sup>6</sup>	<b>Competent caring for the well-being of persons and peoples</b> involves working for their benefit and, above all, doing no harm.	<b>Recognizes the inherent worth of all human beings</b> , regardless of perceived or real differences in social status, ethnic origin, gender, capacities, or other such characteristics.	<b>Contributing to the knowledge</b> about human behavior and to persons' understanding of themselves and others and using such knowledge to improve the condition of individuals, families, groups, communities, and society.	<b>Based on honesty, truthful, open,</b> and accurate communication.			
<b>National Association of Social Workers</b> <sup>7</sup>	Social workers' primary goal is to <b>help people in need and to address social problems.</b> Social workers elevate service to others above self-interest. Social workers draw on their knowledge, values, and skills to help people in need and to address social problems.  Social workers <b>practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise.</b>	Social workers <b>respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person.</b> Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity.	Social workers continually <b>strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills</b> and to apply them in practice. Social workers should aspire to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession.	Social workers <b>behave in a trustworthy manner.</b> Social workers are continually aware of the profession's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards and practice in a manner consistent with them.	Social workers <b>recognize the central importance of human relationships.</b> Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change. Social workers engage people as partners in the helping process.		

\*The International Association of Applied Psychology and the International Union for Psychological Science adopted the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists in 2008. Therefore their entries in this table are identical.

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<b>American Psychiatric Association<sup>8</sup></b>	A physician shall uphold the standards of professionalism, be honest in all professional interactions, and strive to report physicians deficient in character or competence, or engaging in fraud or deception, to appropriate entities.	A physician shall be dedicated to providing competent medical care, with compassion and respect for human dignity and rights.	<p>A physician shall recognize a responsibility to participate in activities contributing to the improvement of the community and the betterment of public health.</p> <p>A physician shall continue to study, apply, and advance scientific knowledge, maintain a commitment to medical education, make relevant information available to patients, colleagues, and the public, obtain consultation, and use the talents of other health professionals when indicated.</p>		<p>A physician shall, while caring for a patient, regard responsibility to the patient as paramount.</p> <p>A physician shall, in the provision of appropriate patient care, except in emergencies, be free to choose whom to serve.</p>		A physician shall respect the rights of patients, colleagues, and other health professionals, and shall safeguard patient confidences and privacy within the constraints of the law.
<b>American Psychological Association<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Beneficence and Non-maleficence:</b> Psychologists strive to benefit those with whom they work and take care to do no harm. In their professional actions, psychologists seek to safeguard the welfare and rights of those with whom they interact professionally and other affected persons, and the welfare of animal subjects of research.	<b>Respect for People's Rights and Dignity:</b> Psychologists respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination.	<b>Fidelity and Responsibility:</b> Psychologists establish relationships of trust with those with whom they work. They are aware of their professional and scientific responsibilities to society and to the specific communities in which they work.	<b>Integrity:</b> Psychologists seek to promote accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness in the science, teaching, and practice of psychology. In these activities psychologists do not steal, cheat, or engage in fraud, subterfuge, or intentional misrepresentation of fact.			

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<b>World Psychiatric Association<sup>10</sup></b>	<p><b>Beneficence:</b> Psychiatrists provide competent and compassionate medical care with devotion to the interests of their patient.</p> <p><b>Non-maleficence:</b> Psychiatrists avoid actions that may be injurious to patients. They avoid harm by careful evaluation, prescription, and monitoring of effects of treatment.</p>		<p><b>Improving standards of mental health care and psychiatric practice:</b> Psychiatrists recognize a responsibility to promote the continuing development of their profession and their personal professional development.</p> <p><b>Applying psychiatric expertise to the service of society:</b> Psychiatrists, like other physicians, utilize their specialized knowledge and skills to promote mental health and the well-being of persons who may be vulnerable to mental health conditions.</p>		<p><b>Respect for patient's autonomy:</b> Psychiatrists are mindful for respect for autonomy given their statutory role in treating a proportion of their patients compulsorily.</p> <p>Compulsory treatment may be justified where a less restrictive intervention cannot achieve safe and adequate care; its purpose is ultimately to promote and re-establish patients' autonomy and welfare.</p>		
<b>Canadian Psychological Association<sup>11</sup></b>	<p><b>Responsible Caring:</b> Protect and promote the well-being and best interests of primary clients, contract examinees, research participants, employees, supervisees, students, trainees, colleagues, team members or other collaborators, and others.</p>	<p><b>Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples:</b> Demonstrate appropriate respect for the knowledge, insight, experience, areas of expertise, and cultural perspectives and values of others, including those that are different from their own, limited only by those that seriously contravene the ethical principles of this Code.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility to Society:</b> Contribute to the discipline of psychology and to society's understanding of itself and human beings generally, through free enquiry, innovation, and debate, and through the acquisition, transmission and expression of knowledge and ideas, unless such activities conflict with ethical requirements.</p>	<p><b>Integrity in Relationships:</b> Psychologists are expected to demonstrate the highest integrity in all of their relationships. Not knowingly participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, misappropriation, or misrepresentation.</p>			

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<b>American Sociological Association</b> <sup>12</sup>	<p><b>Professional Competence:</b> Sociologists strive to maintain the highest levels of competence in their work; they recognize the limitations of their expertise; and they undertake only those tasks for which they are qualified by education, training, or experience.</p>	<p><b>Respect for People’s Rights, Dignity, and Diversity:</b> Sociologists respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all people. They strive to eliminate bias in their professional activities, and they do not tolerate any forms of discrimination based on age; gender; race; ethnicity; national origin; religion; sexual orientation; disability; health conditions; or marital, domestic, or parental status. They are sensitive to cultural, individual, and role differences in serving, teaching, and studying groups of people with distinctive characteristics.</p>	<p><b>Professional and Scientific Responsibility:</b> Sociologists adhere to the highest scientific and professional standards and accept responsibility for their work. Sociologists understand that they form a community and show respect for other sociologists even when they disagree on theoretical, methodological, or personal approaches to professional activities.</p> <p><b>Social Responsibility:</b> Sociologists are aware of their professional and scientific responsibility to the communities and societies in which they live and work. They apply and make public their knowledge in order to contribute to the public good. When undertaking research, they strive to advance the science of sociology and to serve the public good.</p>	<p><b>Integrity in Relationships:</b> Sociologists are honest, fair, and respectful of others in their professional activities—in research, teaching, practice, and service. Sociologists do not knowingly act in ways that jeopardize either their own or others’ professional welfare. Sociologists conduct their affairs in ways that inspire trust and confidence; they do not knowingly make statements that are false, misleading, or deceptive.</p>			

## Appendix

In preparing this Appendix, we have incorporated both direct quotes and summarized content from the sources and references listed in the body of this report. Importantly, verbatim quotes in this Appendix are not enclosed within quotation marks. We acknowledge the contributions of these references in enriching our understanding and analysis of the ethical principles of diverse professions.

### Appendix I: Select Ethical Principles by Professional Organizations

**The National Practice Guidelines for Peer Supporters** (NPG)<sup>2</sup> identified 12 core values of peer support including a short description of each value in practice. These guidelines focused on the strength of peer workers as opposed to earlier efforts to delineate rules about what peer workers should not do. The guidelines have been recognized in all 50 U.S. states and by the World Health Organization for training and guiding peer workers on respecting and protecting the rights of people with mental disabilities worldwide. The 12 core values are: 1. peer support is voluntary; 2. peer supporters are hopeful; 3. peer supporters are open minded; 4. peer supporters are empathetic; 5. peer supporters are respectful; 6. peer supporters facilitate change; 7. peer supporters are honest and direct; 8. peer support is mutual and reciprocal; 9. peer support is equally shared power; 10. peer support is strengths-focused; 11. peer support is transparent; and 12. peer support is person-driven.

**The American Counseling Association**<sup>3</sup> Code of Ethics identifies five core professional values of the counseling profession: 1. enhancing human development throughout the life span; 2. honoring diversity and embracing a multicultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of people within their social and cultural contexts; 3. promoting social justice; 4. safeguarding the integrity of the counselor–client relationship; and 5. practicing in a competent and ethical manner. These professional values provide a conceptual basis for six ethical principles that are the foundation for ethical behavior and decision making for counselors: 1. *autonomy*, or fostering the right to control the direction of one's life; 2. *non-maleficence*, or avoiding actions that cause harm; 3. *beneficence*, or working for the good of the individual and society by promoting mental health and well-being; 4. *justice*, or treating individuals equitably and fostering fairness and equality; 5. *fidelity*, or honoring commitments and keeping promises, including fulfilling one's responsibilities of trust in professional relationships; and 6. *veracity*, or dealing truthfully with individuals with whom counselors come into professional contact.

**The International Federation of Social Workers**<sup>4</sup> statement of ethical principles serves as an overarching framework for social workers to pursue the highest possible standards of professional integrity. Implicit in the acceptance of the statement as social work practitioners, educators, students, and researchers is their commitment to uphold the core values and principles of the social work profession. The statement was recognized in 2014 by the International Federation of Social Workers and The International Association of Schools of Social Work as part of the global definition of social work, which is layered and encourages regional and national amplifications. The principles are:

- Recognition of the Inherent Dignity of Humanity. Social workers recognize and respect the inherent dignity and worth of all human beings in attitude, word, and deed. We

respect all persons, but we challenge beliefs and actions of those persons who devalue or stigmatize themselves or other persons.

- Promoting Human Rights. Social workers embrace and promote the fundamental and inalienable rights of all human beings. Social work is based on respect for the inherent worth, dignity of all people and the individual and social /civil rights that follow from this. Social workers often work with people to find an appropriate balance between competing human rights.
- Promoting Social Justice. Social workers have a responsibility to engage people in achieving social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work. This is further defined as challenging discrimination and institutional oppression, respect for diversity, advocating and working towards equitable access to resources, challenging unjust policies and practices, and building solidarity to work towards transformational change and inclusion.
- Promoting the Right to Self-Determination. Social workers respect and promote people's rights to make their own choices and decisions, provided this does not threaten the rights and legitimate interests of others.
- Promoting the Right to Participation. Social workers work toward building the self-esteem and capabilities of people, promoting their full involvement and participation in all aspects of decisions and actions that affect their lives.
- Respect for Confidentiality and Privacy. Social workers respect and work in accordance with people's rights to confidentiality and privacy unless there is risk of harm to the self or to others or other statutory restrictions. Social workers inform the people with whom they engage about such limits to confidentiality and privacy.
- Treating People as Whole Persons. Social workers recognize the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of people's lives and understand and treat all people as whole persons. Such recognition is used to formulate holistic assessments and interventions with the full participation of people, organizations, and communities with whom social workers engage.
- Ethical Use of Technology and Social Media. The ethical principles in this statement apply to all contexts of social work practice, education, and research, whether it involves direct face-to-face contact or through use of digital technology and social media. Social workers must recognize that the use of digital technology and social media may pose threats to the practice of many ethical standards including but not limited to privacy and confidentiality, conflicts of interest, competence, and documentation and must obtain the necessary knowledge and skills to guard against unethical practice when using technology.

- Professional Integrity. Professional integrity broadly encompasses not only staying up to date local ethical codes, qualifications, and competencies within the country they work, but also includes supporting peace and nonviolence as it relates to dignity and autonomy of others, a duty to take care of themselves professional and personally, recognizing accountability for their actions, facilitate ethically informed decisions both among themselves, but also in their employing bodies.

**The International Association of Applied Psychology<sup>5</sup>** and **The International Union of Psychology Science<sup>6</sup>** have an Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists that speaks to the common moral framework that guides and inspires psychologists worldwide toward the highest ethical ideals in their professional and scientific work. This declaration of ethical principles for psychologists was adopted by the Assembly of the International Union of Psychological Science in Berlin on July 22nd, 2008, and later adopted by the Board of Directors of the International Association of Applied Psychology in Berlin on July 26, 2008. The objectives of the Universal Declaration are to provide a moral framework and generic set of ethical principles for psychology organizations worldwide and include:

- Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples. Respect for the dignity of persons is the most fundamental and universally found ethical principle across geographical and cultural boundaries, and across professional disciplines.
- Competent Caring for the Well-Being of Persons and Peoples. Competent caring for the well-being of persons and peoples involves working for their benefit and, above all, doing no harm.
- Integrity. Integrity is vital to the advancement of scientific knowledge and to the maintenance of public confidence in the discipline of psychology.
- Professional and Scientific Responsibilities to Society. Psychology functions as a discipline within the context of human society. As a science and a profession, it has responsibilities to society. These responsibilities include contributing to the knowledge about human behavior and to persons' understanding of themselves and others and using such knowledge to improve the condition of individuals, families, groups, communities, and society.

**The National Association of Social Workers<sup>7</sup>** Code of Ethics is a set of standards that guides the professional conduct of social workers. The code of ethics sets forth values, principles, and standards to guide social workers' conduct. The code is relevant to all social workers and social work students, regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the populations they serve. These values, principles and standards are described as:

- Social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems. Social workers elevate service to others above self-interest. Social workers draw on their knowledge, values, and skills to help people in need and to address social problems. Social workers are encouraged to volunteer some portion of their professional skills with no expectation of significant financial return (pro bono service).

- Social workers challenge social injustice. Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice.
- Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person. Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers promote clients' socially responsible self-determination.
- Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships. Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change. Social workers engage people as partners in the helping process.
- Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner. Social workers are continually aware of the profession's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards and practice in a manner consistent with them.
- Social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise. Social workers continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills and to apply them in practice. Social workers should aspire to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession.

**The American Psychiatric Association<sup>8</sup>** states that a physician must recognize responsibility to patients first and foremost, as well as to society, to other health professionals, and to self. The following principles adopted by the American Medical Association are not laws, but standards of conduct which define the essentials of honorable behavior for the physician. In July of 1980, the American Medical Association (AMA) approved a new version of the Principles of Medical Ethics (the first revision since 1957), and the APA Ethics Committee incorporated many of its annotations into the new Principles, which resulted in the 1981 edition and subsequent revisions. This version includes changes to the Principles approved by the AMA in 2001 and include:

- A physician shall be dedicated to providing competent medical care, with compassion and respect for human dignity and rights.
- A physician shall uphold the standards of professionalism, be honest in all professional interactions, and strive to report physicians deficient in character or competence, or engaging in fraud or deception, to appropriate entities.
- A physician shall respect the law and also recognize a responsibility to seek changes in those requirements which are contrary to the best interests of the patient.
- A physician shall respect the rights of patients, colleagues, and other health professionals, and shall safeguard patient confidences and privacy within the constraints of the law.
- A physician shall continue to study, apply, and advance scientific knowledge, maintain a commitment to medical education, make relevant information available to patients, colleagues, and the public, obtain consultation, and use the talents of other health professionals when indicated.

- A physician shall, in the provision of appropriate patient care, except in emergencies, be free to choose whom to serve, with whom to associate, and the environment in which to provide medical care.
- A physician shall recognize a responsibility to participate in activities contributing to the improvement of the community and the betterment of public health.
- A physician shall, while caring for a patient, regard responsibility to the patient as paramount.
- A physician shall support access to medical care for all people.

**The American Psychological Association<sup>9</sup>** and its Ethics Code provides guidance for psychologists and standards of professional conduct that can be applied by the APA and by other bodies that choose to adopt them. The Ethics Code is not intended to be a basis of civil liability. This Ethics Code is intended to provide specific standards to cover most situations encountered by psychologists. It has as its goals the protection of the welfare of individuals and groups with whom psychologists work and the education of members, students, and the public regarding ethical standards of the discipline. The Ethics Code outlines five broad principles and what they encompass:

- **Beneficence and Non-maleficence.** Psychologists strive to benefit those with whom they work and take care to do no harm. In their professional actions, psychologists seek to safeguard the welfare and rights of those with whom they interact professionally and other affected persons, and the welfare of animal subjects of research. When conflicts occur among psychologists' obligations or concerns, they attempt to resolve these conflicts in a responsible fashion that avoids or minimizes harm. Because psychologists' scientific and professional judgments and actions may affect the lives of others, they are alert to and guard against personal, financial, social, organizational, or political factors that might lead to misuse of their influence. Psychologists strive to be aware of the possible effect of their own physical and mental health on their ability to help those with whom they work.
- **Fidelity and Responsibility.** Psychologists establish relationships of trust with those with whom they work. They are aware of their professional and scientific responsibilities to society and to the specific communities in which they work. Psychologists uphold professional standards of conduct, clarify their professional roles and obligations, accept appropriate responsibility for their behavior, and seek to manage conflicts of interest that could lead to exploitation or harm. Psychologists consult with, refer to, or cooperate with other professionals and institutions to the extent needed to serve the best interests of those with whom they work. They are concerned about the ethical compliance of their colleagues' scientific and professional conduct. Psychologists strive to contribute a portion of their professional time for little or no compensation or personal advantage.

- **Integrity.** Psychologists seek to promote accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness in the science, teaching, and practice of psychology. In these activities psychologists do not steal, cheat, or engage in fraud, subterfuge, or intentional misrepresentation of fact. Psychologists strive to keep their promises and to avoid unwise or unclear commitments. In situations in which deception may be ethically justifiable to maximize benefits and minimize harm, psychologists have a serious obligation to consider the need for, the possible consequences of, and their responsibility to correct any resulting mistrust or other harmful effects that arise from the use of such techniques.
- **Justice.** Psychologists recognize that fairness and justice entitle all persons to access to and benefit from the contributions of psychology and to equal quality in the processes, procedures, and services being conducted by psychologists. Psychologists exercise reasonable judgment and take precautions to ensure that their potential biases, the boundaries of their competence, and the limitations of their expertise do not lead to or condone unjust practices.
- **Respect for People's Rights and Dignity.** Psychologists respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination. Psychologists are aware that special safeguards may be necessary to protect the rights and welfare of persons or communities whose vulnerabilities impair autonomous decision making. Psychologists are aware of and respect cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status, and consider these factors when working with members of such groups. Psychologists try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone activities of others based upon such prejudices.

**The World Psychiatric Association<sup>10</sup>** Code of Ethics for Psychiatry was approved in 2020 and claims to be a universal Code of Ethics that crosses all cultures and nationalities.

- **Beneficence.** Psychiatrists provide competent and compassionate medical care with devotion to the interests of their patient.
- **Respect for patient's autonomy.** Psychiatrists are mindful for respect for autonomy given their statutory role in treating a proportion of their patients compulsorily. Compulsory treatment may be justified where a less restrictive intervention cannot achieve safe and adequate care; its purpose is ultimately to promote and re-establish patients' autonomy and welfare.
- **Non-maleficence.** Psychiatrists avoid actions that may be injurious to patients. They avoid harm by careful evaluation, prescription, and monitoring of effects of treatment.
- **Improving standards of mental health care and psychiatric practice.** Psychiatrists recognize a responsibility to promote the continuing development of their profession and their personal professional development.

- Applying psychiatric expertise to the service of society. Psychiatrists, like other physicians, utilize their specialized knowledge and skills to promote mental health and the well-being of persons who may be vulnerable to mental health conditions.

**The Canadian Psychological Association<sup>11</sup>** enforces a code that articulates ethical principles, values, and standards to guide all its members, whether scientists, practitioners, or scientist-practitioners. The code was approved by the CPA Board of Directors in January 2017. Although some of the standards are specific to particular activities or contexts, its ethical principles and values are applicable whether members are acting in a research, direct service, teaching, supervision, administrative, management, employer, employee, student, trainee, consultative, peer review, editorial, expert witness, social policy, or other role related to the discipline of psychology. The four ethical principles and corresponding values are also applicable regardless of the communication modality used (e.g., spoken, written, or printed, in person, or remotely through telephone, text, audio, video, online communication, or other means).

- **Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples.** This principle, with its emphasis on inherent worth, non-discrimination, moral rights, distributive, and social and natural justice, generally should be given the highest weight, except in circumstances in which there is a clear and imminent danger of bodily harm to someone.
- **Responsible Caring.** This principle generally should be given the second highest weight. Responsible caring requires competence, maximization of benefit, and minimization of harm, and should be carried out only in ways that respect the dignity of persons and peoples.
- **Integrity in Relationships.** This principle generally should be given the third highest weight. Psychologists are expected to demonstrate the highest integrity in all of their relationships. The values within this principle (e.g., openness, straightforwardness) may need to be subordinated to the values contained in the Principles of Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples and Responsible Caring.
- **Responsibility to Society.** This principle generally should be given the fourth highest weight when it conflicts with one or more of them. Although it is necessary and important to consider responsibility to society in every ethical decision, adherence to this principle needs to be subject to and guided by Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples, Responsible Caring, and Integrity in Relationships. When the welfare of an individual or group appears to conflict with benefits to society, it is often possible to find ways of working for the benefit of society that do not violate respect for dignity, responsible caring, or integrity. However, if this is not possible, the dignity, well-being and best interests of persons and peoples, and integrity in relationships should not be sacrificed to a vision of the greater good of society.

**The American Sociological Association<sup>12</sup>** Code of Ethics sets forth the principles and ethical standards that underlie sociologists' scientific and professional responsibilities and conduct. These principles and standards should be used as guidelines when examining everyday scientific and professional activities. They constitute normative statements for sociologists and provide guidance on issues that sociologists may encounter in their work. The Code of Ethics was revised in June of 2018 and these General Principles are aspirational and serve as a guide for sociologists in determining the ethical course of action in a specific context. They exemplify the highest ideals of professional conduct.

- **Professional Competence.** Sociologists strive to maintain high levels of competence in their work, they recognize the limitations of their expertise, and they undertake only those tasks for which they are qualified by education, training, or experience. They recognize the need for ongoing education in order to remain professionally competent and they utilize the appropriate scientific, professional, technical, and administrative resources needed to ensure competence in their professional activities. They consult with other professionals when necessary for the benefit of their colleagues, students, research participants, and clients.
- **Integrity.** Sociologists are honest, fair, and respectful of others in their professional activities—in research, teaching, practice, and service. Sociologists do not knowingly act in ways that jeopardize either their own or others' professional welfare. Sociologists conduct their affairs in ways that inspire trust and confidence; they do not knowingly make statements that are false, misleading, or deceptive.
- **Professional and Scientific Responsibility.** Sociologists adhere to the highest scientific and professional standards and accept responsibility for their work. Sociologists understand that they form a community and show respect for other sociologists even when they disagree on theoretical, methodological, or personal approaches to professional activities. This is the essence of collegiality. Sociologists also value the public trust in Sociology and are concerned about their ethical behavior and that of other sociologists that might compromise that trust. While endeavoring always to be collegial, sociologists must never let the desire to be collegial outweigh their shared responsibility for ethical behavior. When appropriate, they consult with colleagues to assess, prevent, and/or report unethical conduct.
- **Respect for People's Rights, Dignity, and Diversity.** Sociologists respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all people. They strive to eliminate bias in their professional activities, and they do not tolerate any forms of discrimination based on age, gender, race, socioeconomic status and socioeconomic origins, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, health conditions, political affiliation, marital status, domestic status, parental status, or any other applicable basis proscribed by law. They are sensitive to cultural, individual, and role differences in serving, teaching, and studying groups of people with distinctive characteristics. In all their work-related activities, sociologists acknowledge the rights of others to hold values, attitudes, and opinions that differ from their own.



- **Social Responsibility.** Sociologists are aware of their professional and scientific responsibility to the communities and societies in which they live and work. They apply and make public their knowledge in order to contribute to the public good. When undertaking research, they strive to advance the science of Sociology and to serve the public good. At the same time, sociologists strive to be aware of situations that may result in harm to individuals, groups, or communities.
- **Human Rights.** In the course of their research, teaching, practice, and service, sociologists are committed to professional behaviors consistent with promoting the human rights of all people, including other sociologists. In their professional lives, sociologists strive to use their knowledge and skills to advance the cause of human rights worldwide.

## Appendix 2: Select Ethical Principles of Varied Professional Mental Health Organizations

American Association of Christian Counselors: Ethical Guidelines
American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists: Ethical Codes
American Association of Pastoral Counselors: Ethical Codes
American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists: Ethical Codes
American Counseling Association: Ethical Codes
American Group Psychotherapy Association: Ethical Codes
American Mental Health Counselors Association: Ethical Codes
American Psychiatric Association (Annotations specific to psychiatry)
American Psychoanalytic Association: Ethical Codes
American Psychological Association: Ethical Codes
American School Counselor Association: Ethical Codes
American Society of Clinical Hypnosis: Ethical Codes
Association of Professional Chaplains: Ethical Codes
Australian Psychological Society: Ethical Codes
British Psychological Society: Ethical Codes
Bulgarian Psychological Society: Ethical Codes
Canadian Psychological Association: Ethical Codes
Chinese Psychological Society: Code of Ethics for Counseling and Clinical Practice
Clinical Social Work Federation: Ethical Codes
Croatian Psychological Society: Ethical Codes
Czech-Moravian Psychological Society: Ethical Codes
European Federation of Psychologists' Associations Ethical Codes
Forensic Psychiatry Ethics Guidelines
Feminist Therapy Institute: Code of Ethics
German Psychological Society: Ethical Principles
Hong Kong Psychological Society: Professional Code of Practice
International Association for Analytical Psychology: Code of Ethics
International Association of Applied Psychology: Ethical Principles for Psychologists
International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors: Ethical Code
International Federation of Social Workers: Ethics in Social Work

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International Union of Psychological Science: Ethical Principles for Psychologists

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Iranian Organization of Psychology and Counseling: Ethics Code

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Israeli Psychological Association: Code of Ethics

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Latvian Association of Professional Psychologists: Code of Ethics

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Lithuanian Psychological Association: Code of Ethics

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Malta Union of Professional Psychologists: Charter of Professional Ethics

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National Association of School Psychologists: Principles for Professional Ethics

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National Association of Social Workers: Code of Ethics

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National Board for Certified Counselors: Code of Ethics

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National Registry of Certified Group Psychotherapists: Guidelines for Ethics

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Netherlands Institute of Psychologists: Code of Ethics

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New Zealand Psychological Society: Code of Ethics

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Polish Psychological Association: Code of Professional Ethics

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Psychological Association of the Philippines: Professional Mission

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Psychological Society of Ireland: Code of Professional Ethics

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Singapore Psychological Society: Code of Professional Ethics

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Slovene Psychologists: Code of Professional Ethics

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Turkish Psychological Association: Ethics Code

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Union of Estonian Psychologists: Ethical Principles

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