



Approved Clinical  
**SUPERVISOR**<sup>TM</sup>

# CODE OF ETHICS

## INTRODUCTION

The Approved Clinical Supervisor (ACS) credential initially resulted from collaboration between the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC). In January 2001, the Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE) began administering the ACS credential. With permission, NBCC has authorized CCE's use of a portion of the directives from the NBCC *Code of Ethics* and select standards from the NBCC *Policy Regarding the Provision of Distance Professional Services* for the ACS credential. CCE acknowledges both of these policies and their content as NBCC's intellectual property.

Regardless of any other affiliations or credentials, this ACS *Code of Ethics* (Code), applies to each individual credentialed by CCE as an ACS (credential holder), and each individual seeking the ACS credential (applicant). The Code is designed to provide appropriate ethical practice guidelines and enforceable standards of conduct for all ACS credential holders and applicants. The Code also serves as a resource for those served by ACS credential holders (supervisees), with respect to such standards and requirements.

ACS credential holders and applicants have the obligation to maintain high standards of integrity and conduct, act in a manner that protects the welfare and interests of both supervisees and the clients that they serve, facilitate additional skill acquisition, promote supervisees' development of ethical and legal decision-making skills, and model quality service provision.

## **SECTION A: COMPLIANCE WITH LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND CONDUCT STANDARDS**

ACS credential holders and applicants shall:

1. Refrain from conduct or behavior that is contrary to applicable occupational ethical standards or requirements.
2. Refrain from conduct that is contrary to legal or regulatory requirements.
3. Refrain from unlawful discrimination in occupational activities, including but not limited to discrimination based on age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender orientation, religion, national origin or disability.
4. Avoid condoning or engaging in unlawful harassment, including but not limited to deliberate or repeated unwelcome comments, gestures or physical contact.

5. Make appropriate disclosures and referrals to government agencies and employers when a client appears to be a danger to or is otherwise unable to act safely concerning him/herself or others, consistent with legal and occupational requirements.

## **SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH CCE ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES AND RULES**

ACS credential holders and applicants shall:

1. Comply with all applicable CCE policies and procedures, including the ACS *Code of Ethics* and CCE *Ethics Case Procedures*, as amended or revised.
2. Provide accurate information to CCE.
3. Maintain the security of confidential CCE information and materials.
4. Cooperate fully with CCE concerning ethics matters, including the submission of requested information.
5. Inform and support others regarding credential standards and responsibilities set forth in this Code.
6. Report an apparent violation of the ACS *Code of Ethics* by a credential holder or applicant to CCE after first attempting to resolve concerns upon a reasonable and clear factual basis unless state regulations require immediate reporting.

## **SECTION C: PERFORMANCE OF SERVICES AND OTHER OCCUPATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

ACS credential holders and applicants shall:

1. Offer supervision only in areas of individual professional competence as developed through significant and demonstrable education and experience. This includes qualifications regarding service delivery via distance means (e.g., supervision through online platforms).

In the event that an area outside of the supervisor's competence arises during the supervision process, the ACS credential holder or applicant shall provide the appropriate referral(s) to other qualified supervisor(s) or discuss alternative supervision models (e.g., addition of another colleague supervisor) for the specified client issue or treatment modality.

2. Present accurate written information to supervisees regarding the supervisor's credentials as well as information regarding the process of supervision. This information shall include any conditions of supervision, supervision goals, case management procedures, fees, confidentiality and its limitations, appraisal methods, and evaluations. The ACS credential holder or applicant shall review this information with the supervisee at the initiation of supervision services and at appropriate times throughout the supervisory relationship. These discussions shall be documented in the supervisee's record.

3. Develop written procedures regarding the use of electronic communications in connection with providing supervision services. ACS credential holders and applicants shall provide a copy of these procedures to supervisees in written form.
4. Provide additional and specific written information about supervision services if they are to be provided using distance means. ACS credential holders or applicants who offer this type of supervision shall include information about the appropriateness of distance supervision given the supervisee's specific needs, the format for such communications, additional materials needed, limitations of confidentiality and privacy, possible technological failure, alternative supervision formats, and any additional considerations necessary to determine the appropriateness of this service delivery format. These written procedures must also include information regarding the measures used to minimize the risk of inappropriate distribution of confidential information.
5. Inform supervisees at the time of initiation of services that the primary purpose of supervision relates to the supervisee's provision of professional services to clients. ACS credential holders and applicants shall therefore limit the discussion of supervisee personal issues to the effect(s) of these issues on professional functioning. ACS credential holders and applicants shall explicitly communicate this focus in the initial supervision documentation as well as document any follow-up discussions and observed effects on service provision.
6. Recommend available support services in the event that the supervisee exhibits any personal, emotional or professional limitations negatively affecting the provision of professional services. The ACS credential holder or applicant shall provide a list of possible resources or referrals to the supervisee. The ACS credential holder or applicant shall include a copy of this list in the supervisee's record.
7. Inquire of supervisees at the time of the supervision initiation if the supervisee has additional supervisors (e.g., field placement or university). In the event that the supervisee has multiple supervisors, ACS credential holders or applicants shall obtain written informed consent agreements which allow for the exchange of contact information and communication regarding the supervisee's performance. This written consent shall be retained in the supervisee's record.
8. Establish with their supervisees procedures for the communication of concerns regarding supervision as well as for responding to emergency situations. This information shall be provided in verbal and written formats, and copies shall be retained by the supervisor in the supervisee's record.
9. Protect all information gained in the course of providing supervision as confidential. Such information may be released only to prevent clear, imminent danger; when legally required to do so by a court or government agency order; or when specifically authorized by the supervisee.
10. Notify the supervisee in the event of receiving a court or governmental agency order requiring the production of supervision records. Such notifications or attempts at notification shall be documented in the supervisee's record. In cases in which the supervisee is a student of a graduate program, the supervisor shall release supervision records consistent with the applicable legal requirements and academic institution policies.

11. Identify and discuss ethical practices relating to supervision as well as the legal standards that regulate the supervisee's profession. Relevant codes of ethics and legal resources discussed with the supervisee shall be identified in the supervisee's record.
12. Require that supervisees submit a copy of their informed consent documents that are to be used with clients. ACS credential holders and applicants shall review this documentation to ensure that supervisees provide accurate information to clients about the supervisee's professional status (e.g., intern, licensed, etc.) as well as the supervisor's name, credentials and contact information. This information shall be added to the other required informed consent elements, including the purposes, goals, procedures, record-keeping, confidentiality and its limitations, potential risks and benefits of services and techniques as well as how client information is shared as a part of the supervision process. Once reviewed and discussed, a sample copy shall become a part of the supervisee's record.
13. Require that supervisees discuss with every client the information contained in the informed consent process. ACS credential holders and applicants shall also discuss the importance that copies of the informed consent documentation are provided to each client in written form. ACS credential holders and applicants shall emphasize that the informed consent process must be repeated throughout service provision as appropriate when changes occur in the treatment plan, including those relating to goals, roles and techniques.
14. Discuss with supervisees the importance of appropriately screening any clients prior to service provision, including through distance means.
15. Include all electronic communications exchanged with supervisees, including those through digital technology and social media methods, as a part of the supervisee's record, even when strictly related to clerical issues such as change of contact information or scheduling appointments.
16. Discuss with supervisees the importance of retaining all written communications, even those through electronic means or related to issues such as change of contact information or scheduling appointments. Examples of written communications include e-mail, text messages, instant messages and histories of chat-based discussions even if they are related to issues such as change of contact information or scheduling appointments. ACS credential holders and applicants shall document this discussion in the supervision record.
17. Ensure that supervisees who plan to use distance communication methods develop appropriate procedures to protect the client's confidentiality and complete a comprehensive, written informed consent process with the client regarding the use of such communication tools.
18. Use encryption security for all supervision communications regarding clients served by supervisees. All electronic communication regarding clients shall also use appropriate client protections, such as the client numbers rather than names and password security, as well as adhere to any federal or state restrictions protecting information.
19. Require that supervisees who use distance communication methods provide clients with information about security safeguards and inform them of the potential risks regarding distance communications, including the potential risks of using public access or shared network computers.

20. Discuss with supervisees the importance of informing prospective distance service clients of locations where they may access the Internet free of charge or provide information regarding the location of complimentary Web communication services.
21. Require that supervisees who use distance services with clients verify the identity of the client, his or her current location, and his or her psychological readiness to proceed at each distance session. Examples of verification means include the use of code words or phrases.
22. Discuss with supervisees the importance of identifying client-named contacts in the event of identified emergency situations when the supervisee is providing client services through distance means. As a part of this discussion, the ACS credential holder or applicant shall ensure that the supervisee will identify to clients the circumstances in which client-named individuals will be contacted and what information will be shared with them. ACS credential holders and applicants shall require supervisees to provide clients of distance services with specific written procedures regarding emergency situations. This information shall include emergency responders near the recipient's location.
23. Discuss with supervisees the importance of limiting use of information obtained through social media sources (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.) in accordance with the informed consent procedures discussed at the initiation of client services. ACS credential holders and applicants shall review these procedures and ensure that copies of this information are provided to the client at the initiation of services and adapted through ongoing informed consent process. These written procedures shall include information about the use of social media and other related electronic technology with former clients. Additionally, these written procedures shall provide appropriate protections against the disclosure of confidential information and the creation of multiple relationships (e.g., social media accounts used with clients are distinct from those used for personal purposes).
24. Review supervisees' work using multiple assessment methods (e.g., discussion, audio or video recordings, observation, and consultation with other professionals) and present supervisees with feedback according to a predetermined schedule and throughout the process as needed. Evaluation methods shall include both verbal and written forms and be noted in the supervisee's record.
25. Intervene appropriately in situations where supervisees are impaired or incompetent and place client(s) at risk. Such interventions shall be documented in the supervisee's record. If warranted by the underlying impairment, the supervisor must discuss and document methods of client referral.
26. Attempt to resolve problems in the supervisory relationship consistent with the supervision agreement prior to termination of the supervisory relationship. When termination of the supervision relationship is necessary, ACS credential holders and applicants shall provide to supervisees referrals to other supervisors and discuss relevant methods to protect the services offered to clients.
27. Seek supervision and consultation with other qualified professionals when unsure about supervision responsibilities, client treatment or professional practice responsibilities.
28. Provide accurate assessments of supervisees' qualifications as observed during supervision. ACS credential holders and applicants shall avoid providing recommendations if they have

reasonable belief that the supervisee is not qualified, is not able to provide competent professional services or presents a risk of harm to others. ACS credential holders and applicants shall discuss this obligation at the initiation of the supervisory relationship as well as procedures available to the supervisee (e.g., appeal, change of supervisor) should this occur.

29. Maintain accurate and otherwise appropriate supervisee records for five years beyond the termination of the supervisory relationship or longer if required by state or federal law. ACS credential holders and applicants who use electronic communications as a part of the supervisory practice shall maintain secure backup systems to prevent the loss of communications or records. ACS credential holders and applicants shall dispose of records in a manner that protects confidentiality.

## **SECTION D: AVOIDANCE OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND THE APPEARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY**

ACS credential holders and applicants shall:

1. Disclose any circumstances that could be construed as a potential or real conflict of interest, or any having an appearance of impropriety.
2. Avoid conduct that could cause a conflict of interest related to, or otherwise interfere with, supervision. If such a circumstance arises in an unforeseen manner, the ACS credential holder or applicant shall take reasonable steps to resolve such conflicts of interest and document them in the supervisee's record.
3. Avoid engaging in multiple relationships with supervisees that may interfere with supervisors' professional judgment or exploit supervisees. This includes the using of personal social media accounts to communicate with supervisees or clients of supervisees (e.g., "friending," etc.). ACS credential holders and applicants shall not provide clinical supervision to relatives or friends.

In situations where multiple relationships arise in an unexpected manner, the ACS credential holder or applicant shall discuss the potential effects of the relationships with the affected supervisee(s), and shall take appropriate steps to avoid harm. These steps shall be documented in the supervisee's record.

4. Avoid sexual or romantic relationships with current supervisees. ACS credential holders and applicants shall not engage in sexual or romantic interactions with former supervisees for a minimum of two years from the date of last supervision contact.
5. Refrain from accepting significant payments, gifts or other forms of compensation or benefits that are intended to influence occupational judgment.
6. Accurately, truthfully and completely acknowledge the intellectual property of others with respect to all activities.

Approved by the CCE Board of Directors: March 31, 2001.

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