

Comparison of aaca and apa ethic codes essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



Just as controversy and differences emerge constantly with regards to God and His place in society, it would be equaled in the realm of counseling. This paper will review the Code of Ethics of the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC). When reviewing, it is the foundation of each association that prove to exemplify the most distinctive difference. The AACC seeks to honor Christ through counseling and provide guidance to the Christian counselor, while the ACA is committed to the general counselor at-large and enhancing the client's life while remaining focused on a general view of society. There are several other general similarities and differences. Primarily, that the counselor should never cause harm to the client. Other similarities that center around the protection of the client reside in both codes. Several would include confidentiality, record keeping, informed consent and the duty to protect the client and others from physical harm. Although both codes provide guidelines regarding sexual intimacies, it is defined differently in the codes which changes the timelines of appropriateness for having a relationship with a client. This paper will analyze the differences and similarities in three areas: confidentiality, continuing education and sexual intimacies. Keywords: comparison, ACA, AACC, ethics, code, counselor

A Comparison of the American Counseling Association and the American Association of Christian Counselors Code of Ethics It is understandable by observing the core of our nation's beliefs to protect the freedoms and rights of others, guidelines would be in place to promote ethical behavior in counselors. In 1892 Francis Bellamy penned words that would be etched into the framework of our country, "... one nation, indivisible, with liberty and

<https://assignbuster.com/comparison-of-aaca-and-apa-ethic-codes-essay-sample/>

justice for all." A desire to ensure that the people of this country would be treated fairly and with dignity rings true today. It is also notable that the controversy that came with the addition of " under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance by President Eisenhower in 1954 would exist in multiple facets of life. Whether or not the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) or the American Counseling Association (ACA) agree on every guideline, it is important to note that they both seek to protect those that are wrestling with the challenges of life and often easy to be preyed upon or taken advantage of. Section 1

Each organization may word this primary goal of ethical behavior differently, but the core is the same, do no harm. The ACA informs counselors that " The primary responsibility of counselors is to respect the dignity and to promote the welfare of clients." (2005, p. 4). The AACC introduces its mission of honoring Jesus Christ and promoting unity in Christian counseling, however, it affirms that "...the first rule of professional-ministerial ethical conduct is: do no harm to those served." (2004, pp. 4-6). It is this spirit of doing no harm that drives several other general similarities in the codes. As noted in the AACC preface, it is evident that the ACA codes were referred to while drafting them (2004, p. 2). The subjects of counseling relationship, professional responsibility, evaluation, assessment and interpretation, supervision training and teaching have many similarities. Though there are some differences in specific areas, it is what drives the codes foundations that offer the most noticeable variances.

For example, the ACA views the end-of-life care for terminally ill patients differently. Where the ACA code provides a more open-ended approach in giving the counselor an option based on the laws applicable to the situation (2005, p. 5), the AACC is specific in detailing that “ Christian counselors refuse to condone or advocate for active forms of euthanasia and assisted suicide.” (2004, p. 7). These types of differences occur throughout both documents. Confidentiality is also detailed in both codes to protect the client and their information. Both codes rely upon the fact that the relationship of trust is foundational to the counseling relationship and it is through confidentiality that the counselor can earn this trust (ACA, 2005, p. 7). Ethical guidelines in both support the importance of discussing confidentiality. Specifically, both encourage the process of informed consent to discuss disclosure, records and confidentiality guidelines to name a few. Clinton and Ohlschlager state, “ Informed consent, a key ethic in counseling, is as much about disclosure of values and beliefs as it is about theory and applied technique.” (2002, p. 29). Where techniques and theory may differ, some of the ethical guidelines with which all counselors should practice should not change. Section 2

The opportunity to inform the client of vital information that can determine the success of their counseling is crucial. Informed consent is also a time to discuss not only confidentiality, but the exceptions to confidentiality. It is the area of confidentiality that will begin the review of three specific areas (confidentiality, continuing education, sexual intimacies) to compare with both codes. Confidentiality is expressed in both codes to be upheld to the

fullest extent of the law. Both codes detail that this confidentiality covers all manners of communications including verbal, written, audio or videotaped (AACA, 2004, p. 11) (ACA, 2005, pp. 4-8). It is noticed that the ACA guidelines cover all of these methods throughout several sections of their code. Within the guidelines of confidentiality, one noted difference is the addition of specifically including disclosure of contagious, life-threatening diseases in the ACA code (2005, p. 7). Although both codes enlighten counselors to the general requirements that confidential does not apply when disclosure is required to protect clients or others from harm or when legally required to reveal, only the ACA details that “ When clients disclose that they have a disease commonly known to be both communicable and life threatening, counselors may be justified in disclosing...” (2005, p. 7).

This is interesting in light of high risk activities that be demonstrated by clients, a disclosure of this type can indeed fall in the category of protecting others from harm. It is also under the premise of protecting clients from harm that guidelines regarding sexual intimacies are in place. Clients are often vulnerable and can be exploited by counselors causing great harm. The similarities of both codes with regards to sexual or romantic relationships to current clients is almost identical, it is prohibited. Differences begin with relationships with former clients. The AACC defines and prohibits sexual relations with former clients as unethical (2004, p. 8). The ACA only prohibit the relationship with former clients for 5 years with guidelines in place to ensure that the counselor is clear and not exploiting the client and entering the relationship ethically (2005, p. 5). What is unique is that based on the

views of the AACC, the guidelines seem to differ. The AACC is dedicated to honoring God, and must note that “ Since marriage is honorable before God, the lone exception to this rule against marriage to a former client, is a case anticipating marriage...”.

It also provides guidelines to ensure the counselor is proceeding with a sound ethical decision. Instead of a 5 year waiting period, the AACC proposes a 2 year period after the conclusion of counseling (2004, p. 8). Lastly, another method that can sometimes be overlooked as ensuring that the client is not harmed is that of continuing education. The commitment of the counselor to train and educate themselves consistently in order to be an effective competent counselor is essential. Both the ACA and AACC note that counselors must stay engaged and informed in their field. With regards to ethical behavior, the AACC displays it as a duty of the Christian counselor. (2004, p. 10). Seeking out training, specialization and certification keeps the counselor aware of data in their field. It is also important to note that the ACA explains the need to keep current “...with diverse populations and specific populations with whom they work.” (2005, p. 9). It becomes a reminder that the competent counselor must always look for ways to improve and communicate with all people. Conclusion

It is with all people in mind that this paper began, and it is with all people in mind it will end. The codes of ethics and guidelines that have been crafted to assist the counselor in doing no harm are of great value. Although, there are differences, it is evident that both codes are needed to guide the counselor. One is not independent of the other. The AACC seeks to guide the Christian

counselor and provide them with the tools necessary to become not only competent counselors, however, competent Christian counselors. The task to blend the ability to function ethically with a deep devotion to honor God is not an easy one.

It is indeed a new code for an emerging profession (2004, p. 3). Both codes seek to see the world change because of their commitment to ethical counseling. The mission of the ACA is to "...enhance the quality of life in society by promoting the development of professional counselors..." (2005) while the AACC views ethics in what can be deemed a simpler way...love. George Ohlschlager speaks of the "The Christian Counselor's Golden Rule" adapted from Romans 13: 8-10. The rules are not long, they are not hard to conceive, and in a powerful sentence everything is summed up. "Therefore, to love your clients as Christ loves you is to fulfill all your obligations—all your moral-ethical-legal duties—as a Christian counselor." (Clinton, Ohlschlager, 2002, p. 147).

References

American Counseling Association (2005). ACA Code of Ethics. Alexandria, VA: Author. American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC). (2004). AACC code of ethics: The 2004 final code. Retrieved from <http://www.aacc.net/about-us/code-of-ethics/> Bellamy, F. (1892). Pledge of Allegiance. Independence Hall Association. Retrieved from <http://www.ushistory.org/documents/pledge.htm> Clinton, T. , & Ohlschlager, G. (2002). Competent Christian Counseling, Volume One. New York, NY: Crown Publishing Group.

<https://assignbuster.com/comparison-of-aaca-and-apa-ethic-codes-essay-sample/>