

Summary and application of ethical codes



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The American Counseling Association, The International Association of Marriage and Family Counseling Association and The American Mental Health Counseling Association bring together the foundation of standards and guidance that unifies the counseling profession. This foundation is made up of the ethical standards which the mental health profession follows, enabling the safety of both counselors and clients.

The codes allow the licensed counselor to be educated, to have accountability, and to provide ways to improve their personal practices (Herlihy & Corey, 2006). The codes these associations developed help professional counselors navigate the dilemmas and challenges, ethical and legal, that they will face dealing with patients on a daily basis (Linde & Erford, 2010). A dilemma is a dilemma, because there is no easy answer to the problem at hand, and often attempting to question and/or solve it often brings to the surface more questions than it answers.

There is no answer sheet to ethical dilemmas, but with practical application of the codes of ethics and the use of the ethical decision making process, counselors are given the tools to make the best ethical choices or the skills to seek guidance and assistance to do so. Similarities between the ACA and IAMFC codes of ethics The American Counseling Associations code of ethics (2005) and the International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors code of ethics (2011) have several similarities.

Both codes of ethics have a similar missions requesting counselors promote the advancement of training, practices, research and development of counselors, so that the counselor may promote and encourage the healthiest life choices, growth and development of skills for their clients. Both the ACA

and IAMFC stress the importance of client confidentiality, maintaining that without written consent no information shall be shared about a client with anyone. Both codes discuss the requirement of client notification if there might be a breach of confidentiality or the receipt of a subpoena requiring the discussion of the client's case.

The American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics (2005) states that it is based on five moral principles: autonomy, justice, beneficence, nonmaleficence and fidelity. All of these are applied if a counselor is properly doing their job. The ACA's Code of Ethics makes beneficence the primary ethical responsibility for the practicing counselor. Beneficence is the promotion of mental health and wellness (Herlihy & Corey, 2006). The IAMFC's Code of Ethics asks you to consider the beneficence of and the standards of the community in which you practice, beneficence being the similarity that ties the two codes of ethics together.

The differences between the ACA and IAMFC codes of ethics Both sets of codes address cultural diversity, the ACA discusses cultural sensitivity in A. 2. c. (2005) and the IAMFC in Section I: Diversity (2011). The difference lies in the fact that the IAMFC goes in to greater detail discussing the removal of barriers that oppress clients based on cultural context and the ACA's discussion is limited to clients having trouble with communication due to language barriers. The American Counseling Association addresses the client's sensitive issue of the right to end their life in Section A.

This issue is not directly addressed in the International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors code of ethic. This area of difference stands out to me due to the fact that the IAMFC deals with family counseling issues

and the implications of a family member making such a choice would seem to be something that would be directly addressed. Lastly the ACA code of ethics specifically covers the issues of established fees and bartering in Section A. 10. where counselors may barter with a client if it is not exploitive or harmful or place the counselor at an advantage (2005).

The IAMFC in no way covers the issue of established fees or bartering. Application of ethical codes in my future work as a counselor Being able to make sound ethical decisions is an awesome responsibility for a practicing counselor. The primary role of counseling's ethical code is to protect the public and to preserve the credibility of the counseling profession (Remley & Herlihy, 2010). My future work as a counselor may entail a wide variety of different ethical dilemmas that arise at any given time. I might also be required to make decisions that have implications in several different legal and ethical areas.

In order to be able to meet the needs of my clients, the role as a counselor and the professional responsibilities of the field I practice in I must be fully aware of all the necessary information that is available to me to make such decisions. I must strive to be fully versed in all areas of ethical codes so that I am able to provide services that allow me to function within the best practices guidelines. Being the very best at what I do and striving to go beyond leave me no alternative but to be fully versed in the application of ethics in my future field of work.