



EAPA Code of Ethics

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Preamble

Code of Ethics Purpose

This Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) Code of Ethics provides guidance regarding ethical conduct for employee assistance professionals (hereafter, EA professionals), and it defines the standards of ethical behavior for the benefit of their clients, both individual employees and employer organizations. This code applies to the EA professional's activities and relationships with employees, employers, unions, employee assistance colleagues, professionals from other disciplines, the local community and society. The following ethical principles serve as a foundation for this code.

Ethical Principles

- **Service** The unique core technology of employee assistance allows EA professionals to minimize the impact of personal and/or work problems on productivity and safety. EA professionals are most effective when they are seen as professional, competent, and impartial. EA professionals routinely provide consultation to multiple clients with potentially conflicting interests and goals: the individual employee or client, the client organization or company, and other stakeholders in an organization, such as labor unions. Recognizing the needs of all levels of an organization and directing services to meet these needs is a key focus of the EA professional.
- **Beneficence** EA professionals diligently work to benefit the individuals and organizations they serve and to protect the welfare and rights of those with whom they interact professionally. It is expected that conflicts occur and that in finding resolution, the EA professional seeks to avoid or minimize the amount of harm that may occur. EA professionals understand that the decisions they offer may affect individual lives or the livelihood of the organization, and they strive to maintain awareness of the various influences that could impact their decisions.
- **Nonmaleficence** EA professionals strive to do no harm to individuals and organizations, even inadvertently. EA professionals carefully evaluate risks prior to providing services and refrain from actions that could negatively impact clients, organizations, or others.
- **Fidelity** EA professionals create trusting relationships with key stakeholders within the organizations they serve. Trusting relationships are developed with the individuals they counsel or with whom they consult. EA professionals are aware of their roles and responsibilities and the need to effectively manage conflicts to prevent exploitation or harm or the perception of exploitation or harm.
- **Integrity** EA professionals work to maintain and promote high standards of practice. They strive to clarify professional boundaries to minimize confusion of roles and outcomes. A primary goal is the practice and advancement of the values, knowledge and purpose of the profession. EA professionals work for the benefit of the individuals and organizations they serve and strive to do no harm by theft, fraud or misrepresentation of fact.

- **Respect for client's rights** EA professionals value the dignity of all people and the rights of individuals to privacy and confidentiality. They also value the organization that provides the contracted services and the corresponding needs, rights, directives, and mandates of the organization. EA professionals are aware of and respect differences based on gender, race, color, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation and disability. They work to eliminate biases based on these or other factors.
- **Competence** EA professionals work to become and remain proficient in professional practice and the performance of professional functions. They provide services and represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, or other professional training. EA professionals maintain current knowledge of employee assistance trends, research, emerging technology, cultural considerations, and other issues within the profession by reviewing professional literature, seeking professional development education, and maintaining involvement with other professionals. EA professionals have knowledge about the EAPA Standards.
- **Confidentiality** EA professionals strive to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the employees and organizations they serve, taking active steps to prevent breaches of confidentiality, clearly communicating limitations to confidentiality, and appropriately detecting and responding to situations in which confidentiality must be breached.

These ethical principles are inherent in EA professionals' responsibilities, including: (1) to employees as clients, (2) to employers or work organizations, (3) as professionals, (4) to colleagues, supervisees, and other professionals, (5) in conducting research, (6) to vendors and providers, and (7) to the employee assistance profession and broader society. EA professionals know and understand the *EAPA Code of Ethics* and other applicable ethics codes from professional organizations or certification and licensure bodies of which they are members, and seek supervision and consultation when unclear about ethical responsibilities.

1.0 Responsibility to employees as clients

- 1.1 **Informed consent** EA professionals adequately inform their clients of their rights regarding the scope of limited communications during the assessment, referral, and follow-up process. Clients are informed of benefits and limitations of service delivery options available to them. Clients are informed of all statutory requirements and/or duty-to-warn laws which may include, but are not limited to reporting of child/elder abuse and imminent threats of violence. EA professionals are aware of opportunities to enrich services by using interpretive resources, when indicated, with client consent.
- 1.2 **Privacy and confidentiality** EA professionals treat all client related information as confidential unless released in compliance with statutory requirements, a proper court order or subpoena, or with the written authorization and informed consent of the client. EA professionals may not disclose a client's information to a client company representative, even if a formal or supervisory referral, without a signed release of information form.

Disclosure may occur when the EA professional has reasonable grounds to

believe that failure to report such circumstances could place in imminent danger the physical safety of a particular client or of any person who might be threatened by that client. When necessary, the EA professional will seek professional consultation with appropriate professionals, including but not limited to, supervisors, peers, or EAPA.

EA professionals further protect confidentiality by ensuring that the physical facilities of their work environment, the methodology used to store and transmit records, and the technology utilized to provide services to clients minimize risk of breach of client information.

- 1.3 Records** EA professionals maintain written and/or electronic records of services provided, appropriately secure these records, and retain records for a minimum of 5 years or as otherwise indicated by the requirements set forth in state statute.
- 1.4 Screening and assessment** EA professionals possess knowledge and competence in the use of screening and assessment tools and methods to make timely and appropriate referrals. Recommendations are based on careful screening and assessment and are made according to the client's best interest.
- 1.5 Referrals** All referrals are made with the best interest of the client as paramount. Referrals are based on client need, void of any conflicts of interest, and in compliance with all pertinent confidentiality laws and regulations.

EA professionals refer employee clients to other professionals based on the client's needs and the professional's expertise, education, credentials, and competence in treating the client's assessed problem. EA professionals also consider other issues in ensuring a successful referral, including costs, availability, distance, and accessibility.

EA professionals do not accept payments of any type (in-kind, monetary, gifts, etc.) for referrals made to a specific person, program, or company.

- 1.6 Follow up** The EA professional provides sufficient follow up to ensure the client has resources to address risk, welfare, and needs, and to support overall continuity in care.
- 1.7 Sexual conduct** The relationship between the EA professional and the client is built on trust and non-exploitation. The EA professional does not engage in sexual conduct and/or romantic relationships with a current or former client. EA professionals do not engage in or condone sexual harassment, including sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- 1.8 Professional competence** EA professionals practice only within the boundaries of their competence and discipline based on their education, professional training, supervised experience, and corresponding credentials. When lacking in experience and/or expanding one's scope of practice, EA professionals seek supervision and mentoring to ensure appropriate practice. EA professionals participate in continuing education and professional training programs to maintain and enhance their

proficiency and competency.

1.9 Representation of qualifications EA professionals only present themselves in areas for which they have expertise, training, education, and direct experience. EA professionals are forthcoming in disclosing those areas outside their qualifications and competence.

1.10 Non-Discrimination EA professionals act to prevent the elimination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any client on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical ability client's race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, culture, marital status, education, political affiliation, disability, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or education.

1.11 Avoiding harm EA professionals conduct themselves in a manner to not harm or in any way interfere with their professional responsibilities to clients, employer organizations and the community at large.

EA professionals manage the duality of obligation inherent in serving the needs of employee and employer. When EA professionals encounter conflict in reconciling such dual obligations, they will seek professional consultation to guide them to resolution.

EA professionals are advocates for both their organizational and individual clients. EA professionals seriously consider situations in which preservation of human life may supersede confidentiality and, when possible, obtain professional consultation before taking action.

1.12 Full disclosure EA professionals make full disclosure to their clients and employer organizations regarding the functions and purposes of their employee assistance program, as well as any exclusions, limitations, and/or conflicts of interest.

1.13 Delivering EAP services via telephone or other virtual technologies EA professionals provide timely, effective services to clients by offering telephonic and virtual services that protect client confidentiality. EA professionals are aware of and communicate the benefits and limitations of technologies used. When using telephonic and virtual service methods, including chat, email, and other applications, EA professionals operate according to applicable privacy laws and professional best practices. Prior to delivering these services, the EA professional obtains specialized training and demonstrates competence.

2.0 Responsibility to employers or work organizations

2.1 Accurate representation of capability and capacity EA professionals accurately market services that are deliverable within the capabilities and limitations of their employee assistance program, which include but are not limited to: workplace consultation; emergency procedures; after hours coverage; trainings and educational programs; geographical coverage; and the experience,

credentials, and competencies of professional staff.

- 2.2 Truth in Contracting** EA professionals deliver services as defined in their service contracts with client organizations. EA professionals take full responsibility for failure to deliver contracted services, and take immediate corrective action when able.
- 2.3 Accuracy in reporting activities, utilization, and outcomes** All reports to employers or client organizations accurately reflect the activities, utilization, and outcomes of the program's services. Client confidentiality and information privacy laws and regulations are applied consistently to the reporting of activities, utilization, and outcomes.
- 2.4 Provision of management training and consultation** EA professionals provide training and consultation only within their scope of competence. The EA professional obtains further training on any EAP-related aspects of management training and consultation for which they are not currently competent.
- 2.5 Consultation on organizational policies, procedures, or benefits** EA professionals provide consultation on their client or employer organizations' policies, procedures, and benefit plans as they relate to improved access, coverage, treatment, and support related to mental health, substance abuse, behavioral problems, or other areas in which the EA professional is competent.
- 2.6 Employer confidentiality** EA professionals do not disclose the content of any organizational, management or customer consultation without consent unless otherwise required by policy and/or law.
- 2.7 Commitment to employers** The EA professional maintains a commitment to serve the client or employer organization. Should the EA professional believe an unethical practice is occurring in the client or employer organization, the EA professional will raise the concern with the client or employer organization, seek appropriate consultation from colleagues, and work toward an ethical resolution.
- 2.8 Financial practices** EA professionals take reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy of billing and reporting of the nature and extent of services while protecting the individual client's confidentiality.

The EA professional ensures that there is transparency and full disclosure around commissions or other incentives.

The pricing of employee assistance services reflect ethical practice and transparency, and are sufficient to fund all contracted services.

3.0 Responsibility as professionals

- 3.0 Boundaries of competence** EA professionals are competent and knowledgeable about the employer organization, human resource management, EAP policy and administration and the delivery of EAP direct services, and they demonstrate competence in applying this knowledge in their employee

assistance practice. EA professionals are knowledgeable about applicable laws and regulations, professional standards and the corresponding professional codes of conduct.

- 3.1 Continuing education and training** EA professionals participate in continuing education and professional training programs to maintain and enhance their knowledge and competence.
- 3.2 Supervision, consultation, and mentorship** EA professionals provide supervision, consultation and mentoring within their scope of competence.
- 3.3 Integrity** EA professionals demonstrate integrity by accurately representing their experience, credentials, and areas of competence to clients, organizations, and the public. EA professionals accurately represent the benefits and/or risks of proposed employee assistance strategies and services.
- 3.4 Acknowledging credit** EA professionals recognize the contributions of other professionals in any work or presentation in which they have collaborated and do not claim the work of others as their own through omission or direct statement.

4.0 Responsibility to colleagues, supervisees, and other professionals

- 4.1 Interdisciplinary teamwork and collaboration** EA professionals who participate in interdisciplinary teams uphold the values and standards of the employee assistance profession. If participation in a committee or other team raises ethical concerns, the EA professional will pursue appropriate means of resolution, while maintaining adherence to the EAPA Code of Ethics.
- 4.2 Confidential information between colleagues** EA professionals seek the consultation of colleagues whenever doing so is in the best interest of a client. Consultation protects the confidentiality of the client and organization unless a release of information or a recognized exception for disclosure exists.
- 4.3 Respect** EA professionals acknowledge the expertise of other professionals and are respectful of their practices. Cooperation within a professional community precludes the denigration of other professionals to promote self-interests. EA professionals accurately and fairly represent the qualifications and skills of colleagues.
- 4.4 Disputes** EA professionals seek to resolve disputes with colleagues with fairness, accuracy and respect, and prevent a dispute from interfering with the best interests of a client.
- 4.5 Impairment of colleagues** EA professionals endeavor to assist an impaired colleague in receiving appropriate assessment and treatment. EA professionals strive to prevent the delivery of EAP or clinical services by an impaired practitioner.

- 4.6 Incompetence of colleagues** EA professionals strive to prevent the exposure of clients to a practitioner known to be incompetent in a respective discipline or in the problem area for which help is sought.
- 4.7 Sexual conduct** In all instances, the supervisor/supervisee or field instructor/intern relationship is professional. Sexual and/or romantic relationships with supervisees or interns are unethical. Supervisors do not condone or subject supervisees to sexual harassment.
- 4.8 Non-Discrimination** In regard to the hiring of staff and other employment issues, EA professionals provide equal opportunity for all actual and prospective staff. EA professionals act to prevent the elimination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical ability and do not discriminate against any person on the grounds of race, gender, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, political affiliation, disability, sexual orientation, age, marital status or education.

5.0 Responsibility in conducting research

- 5.1 Informed consent** EA professionals/researchers obtain written consent from participants, without any consequence or penalty for refusal to participate. Participants have the right to withdraw consent at any time.
- 5.2 Institutional approval** When institutional review is required, EA professionals/researchers provide accurate information about their research proposal and obtain approval before conducting the research. When EA professionals/researchers do not have access to an Institutional Review Board (IRB), they will consult with researchers who are familiar with IRB procedures or ways to safeguard participant rights.
- 5.3 Inducements** EA professionals/researchers take reasonable efforts to avoid offering incentives for research participation to avoid any sense of coercion.
- 5.4 Avoiding detrimental effects** EA professionals/researchers take precautions to avoid any detrimental effects to participants.
- 5.5 Reporting results** EA professionals and researchers do not falsify data. When errors are discovered, they ensure that steps are taken to correct such errors and report the corrections. All research results will be reported, including results that reflect unfavorably on programs, services, or prevailing opinions.
- 5.6 Avoiding plagiarism** EA professionals and researchers earn and maintain the respect of the wider community by ensuring the proper credit of authorship of professional writings and presentations. EA professionals and researchers do not

present another's work (including work produced through artificial intelligence) as their own.

- 5.7 Publication credit** When reporting results of research or evaluation studies, EA professionals/researchers acknowledge contributions made by others.
- 5.8 Participant confidentiality** EA professionals/researchers engaged in research ensure the anonymity or confidentiality of participants and, as appropriate, client or employer organization data obtained from participants. Participants are informed of any limits of confidentiality.
- 5.9 Relationships with participants** EA professionals/researchers avoid nonprofessional relationships with participants and remain alert to potential conflicts of interest or dual relationships with participants. The participants' interests are primary when taking steps to resolve any conflicts of interest or other concerns.
- 5.10 Disclosure of sponsors/Informing sponsors** Sponsors or funders of research are disclosed to participants. EA professionals/researchers inform these sponsors regarding research methodologies, procedures, results or outcomes, and the publication of findings.

6.0 Responsibility to vendors and providers

- 6.1 Selection, contracting and pricing** EA professionals treat their external vendors and providers in a fair, lawful, and professional manner by:

Ensuring that vendors chosen to compete for business are provided with the same information and an equal opportunity to submit proposals without undue influence or bias;

Accepting the proposal which, in the opinion of that EA professional, best meets the organization's needs; and

Treating all submitted proposals as confidential, except to the extent that such information is public knowledge.

- 6.2 Conflict of interest** The EA professional does not make referrals to providers or vendors that present a conflict of interest, including but not limited to:

Referring to a spouse, partner or family member who is a therapist, counselor, treatment provider, or other professional resource;

Accepting financial incentives for referrals to a particular treatment provider or service; and

Attempting to limit service usage to minimize costs or obtain greater profits in their contracts.

6.3 Payment EA professionals who engage in contractual agreements for the delivery of EA services engage in fair contracting and honor the terms of these agreements.

6.4 Non-Discrimination EA professionals negotiate and contract with vendors to provide equal opportunities. As such, EA professionals:

- Act to prevent the elimination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical ability; and
- Ensure that any party with whom an EA professional contracts or sub-contracts for the provision of employee assistance services operates a policy of equal opportunity consistent with these provisions.

7.0 Responsibility to the employee assistance profession and broader society

7.1 Advancement of the profession EA professionals work toward the maintenance and promotion of high standards of practice.

EA professionals uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession. EA professionals protect, enhance, and improve the integrity of the profession through appropriate study and research, active discussion, and responsible assessment of the profession.

7.2 Non-Discrimination EA professionals do not condone discrimination against prospective or current clients, students, employees, supervisees, or research participants. EA professionals act to prevent the elimination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical ability.

7.3 Personal public statements When making personal statements in social media or any other public context, EA professionals clarify that they are speaking from their personal perspectives and that they are not speaking on behalf of all EA professionals or the profession. EA professionals are mindful about how statements may impact clients, organizations, and the profession.

7.4 Professional public statements EA professionals do not make public statements that are false or deceptive concerning their services, the profession, other professionals, or the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA).