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SOCIETY



## **Voluntary Counseling and Testing for HIV/AIDS in Pakistan** *- A project supported by The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM)*

### **Ethical Code of Conduct**

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish minimum standards of ethical practice for the information and protection of VCT Staff and those using their services in VCT program.

For the purpose of this statement, the term 'Counselor' is used to include Psychotherapists and field counselors and any other person involved in counseling. The term 'Supervisor' refers to professional Counselling supervision. The term 'Client' refers to individuals, couples, families, groups, communities or supervisees, as applicable.

Any form of misuse is an offence against professional Code of Conduct. The responsibility for this lies solely with the person found of misconduct.

#### **Confidentiality:**

- Counselor as well as all support staff is bound for confidentiality regarding all information of the client that has become known to them during their counseling involvement / practice. The same applies to supervision.
- Counselor shall inform the client and obtain the client's consent before tape-recording the client's session and before allowing another person to observe or monitor the client.
- Counselor will keep the client's records secure and also ensure that the data requested from other parties is limited to information that is necessary to the services being provided and is accessible only to appropriate parties.
- Counselor will not discuss information obtained in clinical or consulting relationships anywhere, except in appropriate settings and for professional purposes which clearly relate to the case.
- Counselor will ensure privacy of the client during counseling sessions.



### **Limitations of Confidentiality:**

- When the client's condition indicates that there is clear and imminent danger to the client or others, the counselor must inform the Counseling supervisor and take reasonable personal action accordingly.
- In the case of clients who are not their own consenters, inform the client's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of circumstances which might influence the professional relationship.

### **Respect for Client's Rights:**

- VCT Staff will respect the social, cultural, religious norms and values, worth and respect of all people and promote this value in their work.
- VCT Staff will protect the rights of the clients including the right to informed consent.
- VCT Staff will always act in the best interest of the client; and will not abuse, neglect, or exploit a client.
- VCT Staff will make every effort to provide access to treatment, including advising clients about resources and services, taking into account the financial constraints of the client.
- VCT Staff will recognize and respect diversity among people and oppose discrimination and oppressive behavior.
- VCT Staff will abide by the laws of the society in which he/she practice.
- VCT Staff will respect client's right for information about the illness, treatment, testing procedure and its implications.

### **Respecting colleague's right:**

- Counselor will not serve the client(s) of other Counselor. He/she has an obligation not to impair the work of colleague. Nevertheless, Counselor need to be aware of the client's right to seek a second opinion.

### **Professional Conduct:**

- VCT Staff need to keep some degree of 'therapeutic distance' or objectivity; avoid 'dual relationship' and exploitation of clients out of VCT Staff need.



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- Counselor should be aware of any client dependency and will promote client objectivity and encourage clients to make responsible decisions on their own behalf.
- VCT Staff will not enter into a personal, business or sexual relationship with a client (including any client receiving services from the counselor's employer). Counselors must not exploit clients, previous or present, in financial, sexual, emotional or any other way.
- VCT Staff will not accept a private professional fee or any gift or gratuity from a client. He/She will not accept money or any gift of value or engage in any financial transactions.
- VCT Staff will not engage in any activity which could be considered as professional conflict, and shall immediately remove him or herself from such a conflict if one occurs.
- VCT Staff will not request a client to reveal information that is not necessary and appropriate for the services being provided; and not offer or provide counseling or related services in settings or locations which are inappropriate, harmful to the client or others, or which would tend to discredit the profession of counseling.

#### **Human Relations:**

- Counselor will not enter into a professional relationship with members of one's own family, close friends or associates, or others whose welfare might be at risk in any way by such relationship.
- Counselor will not accept as a client anyone with whom he/she have engaged in social or sexual relation; and will not exploit relationships with clients for personal gain.

#### **Group Counseling:**

- For group counseling, the counselor shall conduct a pre-group interview with each perspective member for the purpose of screening and orientation.
- Counselor will select a member for group counseling whose needs and goals are compatible with the established goals of the group, who will not impede the group process; and whose well-being will not be at risk by the group experience.



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- While dealing with the groups, the participant's right of 'not to explore certain issues' or 'to stop at a certain point' should be respected.

### **Boundaries of competence**

- Counselors will not attempt to diagnose, treat or advice on problems outside the recognized boundaries of their competence.
- Counselor is ethically bound to refer client to other therapist / counselor / professional when working with them is beyond their professional training.
- In using testing or other assessment techniques, Counselor will respect the right of clients to have full explanations of the nature and purpose of the techniques in language the client can understand.

### **Interruption of Services:**

- Counselor should terminate service to clients and professional relationships with client when such services and relationships no longer serve the clients need or interests. Counselor will offer to help the client locate alternative sources of assistance.
- Counselor should withdraw services suddenly only under unusual circumstances, giving careful consideration to all factors in the situation and taking care to minimize possible adverse effects.

### **Providing services in Emergencies:**

- Counselor will not deny the services to any client. If there is any emergency for which client does not have any services available than counselor may provide services for which he/she has not obtained the necessary training. The services are discontinued as soon as the emergency has ended or appropriate services are available.

### **Maintaining professional Competence:**

- Counselor will not counsel when his/her functioning capacity is significantly impaired by personal or emotional difficulties, illness, alcohol, drugs or any other cause.



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- VCT Staff will take steps to maintain and develop his / her competence throughout professional life.
- The counselor appropriately applies all the above principles as entitlements for self. This includes seeking counselling or therapy and other opportunities for personal development as required.
- There is an ethical responsibility to use supervision for appropriate personal and professional support and development, and to seek training and other opportunities for continuing professional development.
- The principle of self-respect encourages active engagement in life-enhancing activities and relationships that are independent of relationships in counselling or psychotherapy.

### **References:**

Corey Gerald, Marianne; (1988) IIIrd edition; Issues in helping profession; Brooks/Cole, Pacific Grove publication.

Ethical principals of psychologists and code of conduct (2002), American psychological Association

Counseling.co.uk/ethical\_framework, (Feb 2004), British Association for Counseling and psychotherapy.