

Canadian Standards and Guidelines  
for Career Development Practitioners

## **Code of Ethics**

**2004**

# **Code of Ethics**

## **Preamble**

Career development practitioners are engaged in a wide spectrum of activities in many fields. They work in a wide range of organizational settings and provide a spectrum of services and programs to a diverse population. This Code of Ethics is intended as a platform for the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners.

This Code of Ethics is designed to reflect the breadth of the field as a companion to the core competencies that are being developed nationally. Therefore this Code of Ethics is purposely broad and quite general. Further detailed and focused ethical guidelines may be developed for the specialization areas identified. These specialized guidelines will then be considered as an adjunct to this Code of Ethics, not a replacement for this Code. The Code of Ethics does not supersede legislation and regulations that you as a practitioner are required to follow according to the jurisdiction you work in and the services you provide.

The purpose of the Code of Ethics is to provide a practical guide for professional behaviour and practice for those who offer direct service in career development and to inform the public which career development practitioners serve. Ethical principles help career development practitioners to make thoughtful decisions to resolve ethical dilemmas. The Code of Ethics when combined with the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development will protect the consumer and the public when receiving the services of career development practitioners.

## **Definitions for the purpose of this Code**

**Client:** means the person(s) or organization to whom the career development practitioner provides services. This may include individuals, groups, classes, organizations, employers and others.

**Customer:** means the person(s) or organization that is paying for the career development service. A customer may or may not be the client.

**Field:** refers to practitioners involved in career development services.

## **1. Ethical Principles for Professional Competency and Conduct**

### **1.a. Knowledge/Skills/Competency**

Career development practitioners value high standards of professional competence and ensure they are able to offer high standards of professional knowledge, skills and expertise.

### **1.b. Self-Improvement**

Career development practitioners are committed to the principle of life-long learning to maintain and improve both their professional growth and the development of the field in areas of knowledge, skills and competence.

### **1.c. Boundary of Competency**

Career development practitioners recognize the boundaries of their competency and only provide services for which they are qualified by training and/or supervised experience. They are knowledgeable of and arrange for appropriate consultations and referrals based on the best interests of their clients.

**1.d. Representation of Qualifications**

Career development practitioners do not claim nor imply professional qualifications or professional affiliations that may imply inaccurate expertise and/or endorsement. Career development practitioners are responsible for correcting any misrepresentations or misunderstandings about their qualifications.

**1.e. Marketing**

Career development practitioners maintain high standards of integrity in all forms of advertising, communications, and solicitation and conduct business in a manner that enhances the field.

**1.f. Relations with Institutions and Organizations**

Career development practitioners assist institutions or organizations to provide the highest calibre of professional service by adhering to this Code of Ethics. Career development practitioners will encourage organizations, institutions, customers and employers to operate in a manner that allows the career development practitioner to provide service in accordance with the Code of Ethics.

**1.g. Respect for Persons**

Career development practitioners respect and stand up for the individual rights and personal dignity of all clients. Career development practitioners do not condone or engage in sexual harassment. Career development practitioners promote equality of opportunity and provide non-discriminatory service. Clients who fall outside the mandate of an organization should be referred to appropriate services.

**1.h. Abide by the Code of Ethics and Provincial and Federal Laws**

Career development practitioners abide by all of the by-laws outlined in this Code of Ethics and furthermore comply with all relevant provincial/territorial and federal legislation and regulations.

Career development practitioners inform others (such as colleagues, clients, students, employers, and third party sources) about the Code of Ethics and relevant laws as appropriate and any mechanisms available if violations of the Code of Ethics or laws are perceived to have taken place.

Career development practitioners take appropriate action to try to rectify a situation if ethical, moral or legal violations are perceived to have taken place by a colleague, whether a career development practitioner or not.

**1.i. Use of Information and Communication Technology**

Career development practitioners using information and communication technology which involves a client and service provider who are in separate or remote locations, are aware that all aspects of the Code of Ethics apply as in other contexts of service provision.

Career development practitioners provide clients with relevant information about themselves, as is appropriate for the type of relationship and service offered.

**2. Ethical Principles for Career Development Practitioner-Client Relationship**

**2.a. Integrity/Honesty/Objectivity**

Career development practitioners promote the welfare of clients by providing accurate, current and relevant information.

Career development practitioners assist clients to realize their potential and respect clients' rights to make their own informed and responsible decisions.

Career development practitioners are aware of their own personal values and issues and avoid bringing and/or imposing these on their clients.

## **2.b. Confidentiality**

Career development practitioners respect the privacy of the individual or third party referral source and maintain confidentiality of information as is appropriate for the type of relationship and service offered.

Career development practitioners will inform clients and customers of the limits of confidentiality.

Career development practitioners offering services in a group, family, class or open setting (such as a Career Resource Centre) take all reasonable measures to respect privacy.

Career development practitioners are cautioned that the issues of confidentiality apply to the use of information and communication technology, e.g., *voice mail, faxes, e-mail*

## **2.c. Releasing Private Information**

Career development practitioners release confidential information in the following circumstances:

- with the express permission of the client
- where there is clear evidence of imminent danger to the client\*
- where there is clear evidence of imminent danger to others\*
- where required by law, such as in reporting suspected child abuse or upon court order

(\* When the situation allows, action should be taken following careful deliberation and consultation with the client and other professionals. The client should be encouraged to take personal responsibility as soon as possible.)

Career development practitioners attend to privacy and security in the maintenance and release of all records, whether records are written, on audiotape, or videotape, computerized or electronically stored.

## **2.d. Informed Consent**

Career development practitioners honour the right of individuals to consent to participate in services offered, dependent upon the rights the individual does have, such as in being legally required to attend school.

Career development practitioners fully inform clients as to the use of any information that is collected during the offering of service. Career development practitioners ensure that information collected will only be used for its intended purpose or obtain the consent of clients for any other use of the information.

Career development practitioners inform clients and customers about the types of service offered and the limitations to service, as much as is reasonably possible given the type of service offered, including information about the limits to confidentiality, legal obligations, and the right to consult with other professionals.

Career development practitioners who work with minors or dependent individuals who are unable to give voluntary, informed consent, take special care to respect the rights of the individual and involve the parents or guardians wherever appropriate.

## **2.e. Multiple Relations**

Career development practitioners are aware of the ethical issues involved in having personal relationships with clients. Career development practitioners avoid having conflicting relationships whenever possible. If such a relationship cannot be avoided the career development practitioner is responsible to monitor the relationship to prevent harm, ensure that judgement is not impaired and avoid exploitation. To this end career development practitioners utilize informed consent, consultation, supervision and full disclosure to all parties involved.

## **2.f. Conflict of Interest**

Career development practitioners avoid and/or disclose any conflicts of interest which might influence their professional decisions or behaviours. Career development practitioners do not exploit any relationship to further their personal, social, professional, political, or financial gains at the expense of their clients, especially if the situation would impair the career development practitioner's objectivity.

Career development practitioners work to resolve any conflicts of interest with all parties involved giving priority to the best interests of the client.

## **3. Ethical Principles for Professional Relationships**

### **3.a. Consultation**

Career development practitioners reserve the right to consult with other professionally competent persons ensuring the confidentiality of the client is protected.

### **3.b. Respect for Other Professionals**

Career development practitioners make full use of the resources provided by other professionals to best serve the needs of the client, including professional, technical, or administrative resources. This means understanding and respecting the unique contributions of other related professionals. Career development practitioners seek to avoid duplicating the services of other professionals.

As career development practitioners have a responsibility to clients, they also have a responsibility to fellow service providers.

When a complaint is voiced about other service providers, or inappropriate behaviour is observed, the career development practitioner will follow the appropriate channels to address the concerns.

## **Ethical Decision-Making Model**

This is a model of ethical decision making to complement the Code of Ethics developed for the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development. This model is offered to assist career development practitioners with a process to follow and with cues, such as emotional reactions, which may assist in making better ethical decisions and resolving ethical dilemmas.

### **Steps in Ethical Decision-Making**

1. Recognize that an ethical dilemma exists.

An emotional response by a career development practitioner is often a cue to the need to make an ethical decision, such as feeling uneasy about a situation, questioning one's self or the actions of a client, or feeling blocked or uncomfortable in a situation with a client or colleague.

2. Identify the relevant ethical issues, all of the parties involved, and the corresponding pertinent ethical principles from the Code of Ethics.

The career development practitioner can check his/her feelings of discomfort and what these may tell about the situation. The feelings of the client or a third party involved in the dilemma could also be explored.

In some situations following one of the Codes of Ethics will offer enough guidance to resolve the situation. In situations where more than one Code is relevant or there is more than one course of action, the career development practitioner will need to proceed further with this model.

3. Examine the risks and benefits of each alternative action.

The examination should include short-term, ongoing and long-term consequences for each person involved, including the Practitioner, when more than one Code of Ethics is relevant or alternative courses of action seem to be suggested by the Code of Ethics. In such situations gathering additional information and consulting with a trusted colleague is highly recommended.

The career development practitioner can check his/her own emotional reactions to each solution and those of others involved in the decision. The career development practitioner also needs to determine if he/she has allowed enough time for contemplation of the situation. Projecting the various solutions into the future and envisioning the possible scenarios as each decision is enacted can be helpful.

4. Choose a solution, take action and evaluate the results.

The career development practitioner needs to act with commitment to one of the solutions, checking that the solution continues to feel the best that can be done in the situation, for all involved. The practitioner will need to assume responsibility for the consequences of the decision and be willing to correct for any negative consequences that might occur as a result of the action taken. This means determining that the outcome feels right and re-engaging in the decision-making process if the ethical dilemma remains unresolved.

5. Learn from the situation.

The career development practitioner will examine each ethical situation to consider the factors that were involved in the development of the dilemma and to see if any future preventative measures could be taken. Examining what he/she has learned from the situation and how the experience might affect future practice are also important activities for the career development practitioner.

## **Ethical Decision-Making Models Consulted**

Canadian Psychological Association (1991). *Canadian code of ethics for psychologists*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

Hill, M., Glaser, K., & Harden, K. (1995). A feminist model for ethical decision-making. In E. J. Rave, and C. C. Larsen (Eds.), *Ethical decision making in therapy: Feminist perspectives*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Sheppard, G., Schulz, W., & McMahon, S. (1999). *Code of ethics for the Canadian Counselling Association*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Counselling Association.



## **Acknowledgements for Code of Ethics**

The Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Ethics Subcommittee would like to acknowledge the following resources that were consulted in preparing the Code of Ethics.

### **Code of Ethics for:**

#### **Canada**

- Alberta Teachers Association - Teacher's Code of Professional Conduct
- Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers
- Canadian Association of Pre-Retirement Planners
- Canadian Association of Rehabilitation Professionals
- Canadian Association of Social Workers
- Canadian Counselling Association
- Canadian Psychology Association
- Career Development Association of Alberta
- International Association of Career Management Professionals
- Ontario Alliance of Career Development Practitioners Ethical Standards (DRAFT)
- Ontario Society of Psychotherapists
- Personnel Association of Ontario
- The Educational Association of Networking, Education and Training for Workers in Employment, Rehabilitation and Career Counselling (British Columbia)
- The Professional Corporation of Guidance Counsellors of Quebec

#### **United States**

- American Counseling Association
- Career Development Facilitator
- National Association of Colleges and Employers
- National Career Development Association
- National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. - Standards for the Ethical Practice of Web Counseling

#### **International**

- Institute of Careers Guidance (Britain)

#### **Papers and Documents**

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Schultz, W. (1996). Career and employment counsellors' code of ethics. In J. Kotylak & D. Welch (Eds.). *Building Tomorrow Today: Proceedings from the Third Annual Consultation for Career Development in Alberta*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Career Development Action Group.

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Ward, V. (1998). Training career development facilitators in ethical decision-making. In M. Van Norman (Ed.). *Natcon Papers 1998*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Guidance Centre.