

Addiction Counsellors of Ireland Code of Ethics and Practice for Addiction Workers

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Addiction work is a non-exploitative activity and, as such, is underpinned by integrity, impartiality and respect. Addiction Workers are obliged to work ethically whether the addiction work is paid for by the client or offered free by an Organisation or the Addiction Worker.
- 1.2. Addiction Workers shall have regard for the client's beliefs and values. The service offered shall not be minimised or diminished by any bias regarding gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or politics, ethnicity, social standing or class.
- 1.3. The Addiction Worker shall take all reasonable steps to ensure the client's safety during Addiction Work.
- 1.4. Addiction Workers must not abuse their client's trust in order to gain sexual, emotional, financial or any other kind of personal advantage.
- 1.5. The terms on which Addiction Work is being offered must be made clear to clients before Addiction Work begins. Regular reviews must be agreed at this stage.
- 1.6. The Addiction Worker-client relationship is the foremost ethical concern. This relationship also reflects upon colleagues, other Associations and members of the wider community. These will be considered in this Code under different headings.
- 1.7. The practice of Addiction Work depends on gaining and honouring the trust of clients. Keeping trust requires:
 - (i) Attentiveness to the quality of listening and respect offered to clients
 - (ii) Culturally appropriate ways of communicating that are courteous and clear
 - (iii) Respect for privacy and dignity
 - (iv) Careful attention to client consent and confidentiality.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 2.1. Confidentiality is a means of providing the client with safety and privacy.
- 2.2. As a general principle Addiction Workers must not reveal confidential material concerning clients. Confidentiality can only be broken where required by law, or if the Addiction Worker has reason to believe the client(s) will cause physical harm to themselves or others or be themselves in danger

of such harm. Before such disclosure is made, every effort shall be made to get the client's consent, and the Addiction Worker should consult their supervisor or experienced colleague. Minimise any breach of confidentiality by conveying only the information that is relevant and necessary. However, in emergencies, Addiction Workers shall make their own judgement as to what action is best.

- 2.3. Communications made on the basis of client consent do not constitute a breach of confidentiality. Client consent is the preferred way of resolving any dilemmas over confidentiality.
- 2.4. Confidential information about clients may be shared within teams where the client has consented or knowingly accepted a service on this basis. The disclosure enhances the quality of service available to clients or improves service quality.
- 2.5. Care must be taken to ensure that personally identifiable information is not transmitted through overlapping networks of confidential relationships.
- 2.6. Any agreement between the Addiction Worker and client may be reviewed and changed by joint negotiations.
- 2.7. Agreements between Addiction Worker and client about confidentiality continue after the client's death unless there are overriding legal or ethical considerations.
- 2.8. Special care is required when writing about specific Addiction Work situations for case studies or publication.
- 2.9. When a report is requested by a doctor, probation officers, courts etc., a mutual agreement is negotiated with the client and a signed consent is obtained.
- 2.10. Every possible care must be taken to protect the rights of children where a Addiction Worker has knowledge or suspicion that a child is being abused or is at risk at home. Where a client reports sexual abuse as presently occurring, then the safety of the child must take priority and steps outlined in the current Children First (2011) guidelines issued by the Department of Health & Children, must be followed. (See link to Children First Guidelines/Legislation).
- 2.11. When working with minors, Addiction Workers are legally obliged to have Garda clearance and operate fully and consistently within the terms of the current Children First (2011) guidelines issued by the Department of Health & Children. (See link to Children First Guidelines/Legislation).
- 2.12. Addiction Workers have a responsibility to inform themselves of the current statutory obligations (and any changes therein) in Child Protection legislation.
- 2.13. Discuss the limits of confidentiality with the client, including the implications for confidentiality of the supervisory relationship, at the time of initial contracting.
- 2.14. In a situation where an Addiction Worker is in any doubt about their legal rights/obligations, or where a current crime is disclosed, the Addiction Worker should seek legal advice and/or contact their Supervisor and/or their Association for guidance.

3. COMPETENCE

- 3.1. Addiction Workers should have received adequate training before commencing Addiction Work and should maintain on-going professional development (See link to CPD training).
- 3.2. It is an indication of the competence of Addiction Workers that, where applicable, they recognise their lack of training or expertise to work with a client and make an appropriate referral.
- 3.3. Addiction Workers shall take all reasonable steps to monitor and develop their own competence and ensure they work within the level of that competency. This includes having on-going supervision from a Supervisor who is appropriately trained and experienced.
- 3.4. Addiction Workers must cease work when their functioning is impaired due to illness, alcohol, drugs, gambling or any other process or behavioural addictions. Where personal problems or emotional difficulties impinge on their ability to function, they should seek advice from appropriate professionals to help them decide if they should limit, suspend or terminate their Addiction Work activity. In some circumstances, the decision to limit or suspend practice may lie with the Addiction Worker's Clinical Supervisor or the employing organisation.
- 3.5. Commitment to good practice requires Addiction Workers to keep up to date with latest knowledge and respond to changing circumstances. They are expected to monitor their own need for continuing professional development and engage in appropriate educational practices.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1. To review and evaluate the effectiveness of their professional activities.
- 4.2. Behave in professional activities in such a manner as not to undermine public confidence in the profession.
- 4.3. Addiction Workers are expected to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the client suffers neither physical nor psychological harm during Addiction Work.
- 4.4. Addiction Workers are responsible for setting and monitoring boundaries in the Addiction Work relationship and making these explicit to the client.
- 4.5. Clients should be offered privacy for Addiction Work sessions and should not be observed by anyone other than the Addiction Worker without the client having given informed consent.
- 4.6. Addiction Work occurs in an environment that is supportive, so attention must be paid to physical space.
- 4.7. It is a condition of Accreditation by the Addiction Workers of Ireland that the applicant is covered by Professional Indemnity Insurance as well as Public Liability Insurance.

- 4.8. If a Addiction Worker suspects misconduct by another Addiction Worker which cannot be resolved or remedied after discussion with the Addiction Worker concerned, there is a responsibility to ensure that necessary steps are taken to resolve the matter. This may involve implementing the Complaints Procedure without breaches of confidentiality other than those necessary to resolve the complaint.
- 4.9. Addiction Workers are responsible for communicating the terms on which Addiction Work is being offered, including availability, the degree of confidentiality offered, and their expectation of clients regarding fees and cancelled appointments. The communication of terms and negotiation over these should be agreed by the client and Addiction Worker before the client incurs any financial liability. An assessment fee may be charged.
- 4.10. Addiction Workers are obliged to be aware of and understand any legal requirements concerning their work; consider these consciously and be legally and professionally accountable for their practice.
- 4.11. Records of Addiction Work sessions are kept filed and subject to the statutory regulations under the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), and clients should be made aware of this. At the client's request, information should be given about access to these records, their availability to other people, and the degree of security with which they are kept.

5. CLIENT AUTONOMY

This principle respects the client's right to be self-governing. It emphasises the importance of the client's commitment to participating in Addiction Work, usually on a voluntary basis.

- 5.1. Addiction Workers are responsible for working in ways which promote the client's control over his/her own life; respects the client's ability to make decisions and change in the light of his/her own beliefs and values and to make decision and/or changes which promote the client's desire to enter/maintain recovery.
- 5.2. It is the client's choice whether to participate in Addiction Work. Reasonable steps should be taken during the Addiction Work relationship to ensure that the Addiction Worker and client are given the opportunity to mutually review the terms on which Addiction Work is being offered.
- 5.3. Any publicity material and all written and oral information must accurately reflect the nature of the service on offer, as well as the training, qualifications and relevant experience of the Addiction Worker. Only Accredited Addiction Workers may claim membership of the Association of Addiction Workers of Ireland relationship.

- 5.4. Addiction Worker will not be involved with the client in friendship, formal business relationship, sexual relationship or training relationship while the Addiction Work is current.
- 5.5. Addiction Workers must avoid unnecessary conflicts of interest and are expected to make explicit to the client any such conflicts.
- 5.6. If the client is currently engaged in any other therapeutic or similar relationship, the Addiction Worker must obtain the client's permission before conferring with them.
- 5.7. Addiction Workers remain accountable for relationships with former clients and must exercise caution over entering into friendships, formal business relationships or sexual relationships. The Addiction Worker is expected to wait at least two years before entering into a friendship, formal business relationship or sexual relationship.

6. ADDICTION WORK SUPERVISION/CONSULTATIVE SUPPORT

- 6.1. It is a breach of the requirements of the Addiction Workers of Ireland for Addiction Workers to practice without regular Addiction Work Supervision.
- 6.2. Addiction Work Supervision refers to a formal arrangement which enables Addiction Workers/Therapists to discuss their Addiction Work on a regular basis with one or more people who have an understanding of Addiction Work Supervision. Its purpose is to ensure the efficacy of the Addiction Worker-client relationship. This relationship carries an appropriate confidentiality.
- 6.3. Addiction Workers who also have line managers owe them appropriate managerial accountability for their work. The Addiction Work supervisor role should be independent of the line manager role. However, where the Addiction Work supervisor is also the line manager, the Addiction Worker should also have access to independent consultative support.
- 6.4. The discussion of cases within supervision/consultative support should take place without revealing the personal identity of the client.

7. ADVERTISING/PUBLIC STATEMENTS

- 7.2. When announcing Addiction Work services, Addiction Workers should limit the information to name, relevant qualifications, address, contact details, hours available, and a brief listing of the services offered and theoretical orientation. All such information should be accurate in every detail.

- 7.3. Addiction Workers should not display an affiliation with this Association in a manner which falsely implies the endorsement or verification of this Association.