

# Code of Ethics

## Introduction

The Hong Kong Professional Addiction Counseling Association provides voluntary certification services for addiction and other behavioral health professionals in the Greater China region to ensure their competence in serving clients, the public, and employers. The Association adheres to the core principle that workers in addiction treatment and behavioral health services must ensure their work meets the highest standards of ethical conduct.

Therefore, the Association abides by the following Code of Ethics, which applies to all certified professionals and applicants for certification. From the date of applying for any certificate from the Association, all individuals are required to fulfill the following Code of Ethics and the regulations of the Association. This Code of Ethics is established to protect clients and to maintain integrity and professionalism within the industry.

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## Core Ethical Principles

### 1. Client Welfare

- **Primary Consideration:** Professionals must place the welfare and best interests of their clients first, dedicating themselves to promoting clients' recovery and well-being.
- **Respect for Dignity:** Professionals must respect the personal dignity, worth, and fundamental human rights of all clients, and strictly refrain from any form of abuse, exploitation, or harm.
- **Informed Consent:** Before providing any services, professionals must clearly explain the nature, purpose, potential risks, fees, and limits of confidentiality of the services to the clients, and obtain their informed consent.

### 2. Confidentiality and Privacy

- **Strict Confidentiality:** Professionals must strictly keep confidential all client information obtained during the professional relationship, securely maintain records, and prevent unauthorized access.
- **Limits of Confidentiality:** Minimum necessary information may only be disclosed to relevant authorities or individuals with the explicit authorization of the client, or under extreme circumstances such as legal requirements (e.g., court orders), imminent and severe threats to the life of the client or others, or cases involving child/elder abuse.

### 3. Professional Competence and Development

- **Scope of Competence:** Professionals should only provide services within the boundaries of their education, training, experience, and the professional competence verified by the Association.

- **Continuing Education:** Professionals must commit to continuous learning and professional development, actively participating in training and supervision to maintain and enhance the latest knowledge and skills in addiction treatment and behavioral health.
- **Self-Awareness:** If a professional's judgment and quality of service are impaired due to personal health, psychological conditions, or substance use issues, they must proactively seek assistance and suspend or limit their professional duties.

#### 4. Avoiding Dual/Multiple Relationships

- **Clear Boundaries:** Professionals must maintain clear professional boundaries with clients, their family members, or intimate partners to avoid conflicts of interest.
- **Prohibition of Inappropriate Relationships:** Any form of romantic, sexual, or financial borrowing relationship with current or former clients is strictly prohibited to prevent impaired professional judgment or exploitation of the client.

#### 5. Fairness and Non-discrimination

- **Equal Treatment:** When providing services, professionals must not discriminate against clients in any form based on age, gender, race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability status, or socioeconomic background.

#### 6. Integrity and Professional Conduct

- **Honest Representation:** When applying for certification or promoting services, professionals must accurately represent their educational background, professional qualifications, experience, and certification status with the Association, and must not make false or misleading statements.
- **Maintaining Reputation:** The words and actions of professionals should uphold the reputation of the Hong Kong Professional Addiction Counseling Association and the addiction counseling industry as a whole, avoiding any fraudulent, dishonest, or illegal behaviors.

#### 7. Interprofessional Collaboration and Referral

- **Peer Respect:** Professionals should treat colleagues and workers from other professional fields with respect and fairness.
- **Timely Referral:** When a client's needs exceed the professional's scope of competence, they should act in the best interest of the client and promptly and appropriately refer the client to other suitable professionals or organizations.