



CASC / ACSS

Canadian Association for Spiritual Care / Association canadienne de soins spirituels

CASC/ACSS POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

CHAPTER 5: CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

CASC/ACSS Board of Directors
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CASC/ACSS is committed to education, certification and research in support of spiritual care professionals in their practice of spiritual care, psycho-spiritual therapy and education.



CASC/ACSS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preamble	3
Section I: Ethical Principles	3
Section II: Ethical Standards	4
A. In Relationships with “Clients”	4
A.2 Consultation Guidelines Regarding Relationships with Former Clients.....	5
B. In Relationships Between Supervisors / Educators and Staff / Students	6
C. In Relationships with Social Institutions.....	6
D. In Relationships with Other Professionals and the Community.....	7
E. In Relationships with Colleagues.....	7
F. In Advertising	8
G. In Research	8
H. In Relation to the Social Media.....	9
I. In Relationship to CASC/ACSS	9



CHAPTER 5: CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

All members of CASC/ACSS are accountable to the principles and standards in this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

The Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists:

- a. Gives expression to the basic values and standards of the profession;
- b. Guides decision-making and professional behaviour;
- c. Provides a mechanism for professional accountability; and
- d. Informs the public as to what they should expect from Spiritual Care Providers.

PREAMBLE

CASC/ACSS gathers together Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists who are grounded in communities of faith and informed by professional education and training.

They are called to nurture their personal health of mind, body and spirit and be responsible for their personal and professional conduct as they grow in their respect for all living beings and the natural environment.

When Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists behave in a manner congruent with the values of this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, they bring greater justice, compassion and healing to our world.

SECTION I: ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists:

- a. Affirm the dignity and value of each individual;
- b. Protect clients from predatory/destructive relationships;
- c. Affirm life-giving, fulfilling, healthy relationships;
- d. Respect the right of each faith group to hold to its values and traditions;
- e. Advocate for professional accountability that protects the public and advances the profession; and
- f. Respect the diversity of cultural, ethnic, gender, racial, sexual-orientation, spiritual, religious, and disability experiences that people have and strive to eliminate discrimination.



SECTION II: ETHICAL STANDARDS

A. IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH “CLIENTS”

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists understand “clients” to be any counselees, congregants, prisoners, patients and their family members, students or staff to whom they provide spiritual care or psycho-spiritual therapy. In relationships with clients, Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists uphold the following standards of professional ethics. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists:

- 1.1 Speak and act in ways that honor the dignity and value of every individual.
- 1.2 Provide care that is intended to promote the best interest of the client and to foster strength, integrity and healing.
- 1.3 Demonstrate respect for the cultural and religious values of those they serve and refrain from imposing their own values and beliefs on those served.
- 1.4 Are mindful of the imbalance of power in the professional/client relationship and refrain from exploitation of that imbalance.
- 1.5 Maintain relationships with current clients on a professional basis only.
- 1.6 Determine the propriety of any sexual, financial, political/organizational or other power-imbalance relationship with a former client by consulting the Regional Ethics Chair and the Region’s Professional Practice Chair (Subsection A.2).
- 1.7 Avoid or correct any conflicts of interest or appearance of conflicting interest(s).
- 1.8 Refrain from any form of exploitative behavior, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment or sexual assault in relationships with clients.
- 1.9 Refrain from any form of harassment, coercion, intimidation or otherwise abusive words or actions in relationships with clients.
- 1.10 Safeguard the confidentiality of clients when using materials for educational purposes or written publication.
- 1.11 Respect the confidentiality of information entrusted to them by clients when communicating with family members or significant others except when disclosure is required for necessary treatment, granted by client permission, for the safety of any person or when required by law.
- 1.12 Understand the limits of their individual expertise and make referrals to other professionals when appropriate.
- 1.13 Provide clear expectations regarding responsibilities, appointment schedules, fees and payments.



A.2 CONSULTATION GUIDELINES REGARDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FORMER CLIENTS

Ending the spiritual care/psycho-spiritual relationship does not eliminate the possibility that sexual, financial, political/organizational or other power-imbalance contact between a Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psycho-Spiritual Therapist and a former client may be considered to be professional misconduct. This is because there may be continuing trust, knowledge or influence derived from the previous professional relationship. What follows is intended to provide a procedure to determine when this assumption does not exist.

- 2.1 A Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psycho-Spiritual Therapist must end the care giving relationship before starting a sexual, financial, political/organizational or other power-imbalance relationship with a former client. It is the Spiritual Care Practitioner's or Psycho-Spiritual Therapist's responsibility to ensure that termination of the spiritual care/psycho-spiritual relationship is communicated to the client and documented in the client's record. The Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psycho-Spiritual Therapist should also ensure that alternative services are arranged or the client is given a reasonable opportunity to arrange alternative services.

- 2.2 In determining the propriety of sexual, financial, political/organizational or other power-imbalance relationships between a Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psycho-Spiritual Therapist and a former client, a number of factors will be considered, including:
 - a. The length and intensity of the former professional relationship;
 - b. The nature of the client's spiritual/clinical problem;
 - c. The type of care provided by the Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psycho-Spiritual Therapist;
 - d. The extent to which the client has confided personal or private information to the Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psycho-Spiritual Therapist; and
 - e. The vulnerability the client has in the spiritual care relationship.

For example, when the spiritual care relationship involves a significant component of psychotherapy, then sexual, financial, political/organizational or other power-imbalance involvement with the client is likely inappropriate at any time after termination. However, if a Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psycho-Spiritual Therapist saw a client on one or two occasions to provide routine supportive care, it may not be inappropriate to have a sexual, financial, political/organizational or other power-imbalance relationship with the former client within a short time following the end of the spiritual care/psycho-spiritual relationship.

- 2.3 At all times, a Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psycho-Spiritual Therapist has an ethical obligation not to exploit the trust, knowledge and dependence that develops during the spiritual care/psycho-spiritual relationship for the Spiritual Care Practitioner's or Psycho-Spiritual Therapist's personal advantage. A Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psycho-Spiritual Therapist who is considering a sexual, financial, political/organizational or other power-imbalance relationship with a former client must:
 - a. Act cautiously, making sure to consider the potentially complex issues;



- b. Consult with the Regional Ethics Chair and the Region's Professional Practice Chair concerning this relationship, and
- c. Ensure that the former client has a good understanding of the dynamics of the spiritual care/psycho-spiritual relationship and the boundaries applicable to the relationship.

B. IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SUPERVISORS / EDUCATORS AND STAFF / STUDENTS

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists respect the integrity of their employees or students using the power they have as managers/directors or supervisors/educators in responsible ways. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists:

1. Maintain a healthy educational or work environment, free of coercion or intimidation.
2. Maintain clear ethical boundaries in the areas of self-disclosure, intimacy and sexuality.
3. Provide clear expectations regarding responsibilities, work schedules, fees and payments.
4. Provide adequate, timely and constructive feedback to students and complete regular performance appraisals for their staff.
5. Maintain a healthy respect for the personal growth of students and provide appropriate professional referrals.
6. Maintain appropriate confidentiality regarding all information and knowledge gained in the course of supervision.

C. IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists are accountable to their faith communities, one another and other organizations. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists:

1. Maintain good standing in their faith group.
2. Abide by the professional practice and/or teaching standards of the state/province, the community and the institution in which they are employed. If for any reason a Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psycho-Spiritual Therapist is not free to practice or teach according to conscience, the Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psycho-Spiritual Therapist shall notify the employer, his or her professional organization and faith group as appropriate.
3. Do not directly or by implication claim professional qualifications that exceed actual qualifications or misrepresent an affiliation with any institution.



D. IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS AND THE COMMUNITY

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists are accountable to the public, faith communities, employers and professionals in all professional relationships. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists:

1. Promote justice in relationships with others, in their institutions and in society.
2. Represent accurately their professional qualifications and affiliations.
3. Exercise good stewardship of resources entrusted to their care and employ sound financial practices.
4. Respect the opinions, beliefs and professional endeavors of colleagues and other professionals.
5. Seek advice and counsel of other professionals whenever it is in the best interest of those being served and make referrals when appropriate.
6. Provide expertise and counsel to other health professionals in advocating for best practices in care.
7. Seek to establish collaborative relationships with other community and health professionals.
8. Advocate for changes in their institutions that would honor spiritual values and promote healing.
9. Provide other professionals with chart notes where they are used that further the treatment of the clients or patients, obtaining consent when required.
10. Communicate sufficient information to other care team members while respecting the privacy of clients.
11. Ensure that private conduct does not impair the ability to fulfill professional responsibilities or bring dishonor to the profession.
12. Clearly distinguish between statements made or actions taken as a private individual and those made as a member or representative of one of the cognate organizations.

E. IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists engage in collegial relationships with peers, other chaplains, local clergy and counselors, recognizing that perspective and judgment are maintained through consultative interactions rather than through isolation. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists:

1. Honor all consultations, whether personal or client-related, with the highest professional regard and confidentiality.
2. Maintain sensitivity and professional protocol of the employing institution and/or the certifying organization when receiving or initiating referrals.



3. Respect each other and support the integrity and well being of their colleagues.
4. Maintain honesty, professional excellence and integrity, including academic integrity. This means that any form of plagiarism is prohibited (See Administrative Policy 11: Plagiarism and Disciplinary Procedures for Acts of Plagiarism).
5. Take collegial and responsible action when concerns about or direct knowledge of incompetence, impairment, misconduct or violations against this code arise.
6. Communicate sufficient information to other care team members while respecting the privacy of clients.

F. IN ADVERTISING

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists engage in appropriate informational activities that educate the public about their professional qualifications and individual scopes of practice. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists:

1. Represent their competencies, education, training and experience relevant to their practice of spiritual care, education and counseling in an accurate manner.
2. Do not use any professional identification (business cards, letterhead, Internet or telephone directory, etc.) if it is false, misleading, fraudulent or deceptive.
3. List and claim as evidence only degrees and certifications that are earned from educational institutions and/or training programs recognized by the certifying organizations of Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists.
4. Ascertain that the qualifications of their employees, supervisees and students are represented in a manner that is not false, misleading, fraudulent or deceptive.
5. Represent themselves as providing specialized services only if they have the appropriate education, training or supervised experience.

G. IN RESEARCH

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists engaging in research follow guidelines and applicable laws that strive to protect the dignity, privacy and well-being of all participants. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists:

1. Engage only in research within the boundaries of their competence.
2. In research activities involving human participants, are aware of and ensure that the research question, design and implementation are in full compliance with ethical principles.
3. Adhere to informed consent, including a clear and understandable explanation of the procedures, a description of the risks and benefits, and the duration of the desired participation.
4. Inform all participants of the right to withdraw consent and to discontinue involvement at any time.



5. Engage in research while being sensitive to the cultural characteristics of participants.
6. Maintain the confidentiality of all research participants and inform participants of any limits of that confidentiality.
7. Use any information obtained through research for professional purposes only.
8. Exercise conscientiousness in attributing sources in their research and writing thereby avoiding plagiarism.
9. Report research data and findings accurately.

H. IN RELATION TO THE SOCIAL MEDIA

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists are aware that Social Media (for example, Internet, intranet, text messaging, e-mail, Twitter, Facebook, blogs, YouTube, LinkedIn, as well as all other forms of electronic/digital communication) influences and informs our daily life and work. We recognize that the World Wide Web records everything that is posted anywhere, anytime and retains this information indefinitely.

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists:

1. Recognize that the Ethical Principles of the Professional Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct apply to the use of Social Media.
2. Engage in honest and respectful communication both professionally and personally in all Social Media activity.
3. Maintain a clear professional identity and refrain from developing inappropriate Social Media relationship with clients, students, employees or other individuals.
4. Will not speak formally or informally on behalf of CASC/ACSS when engaging in personal Social Media activity unless authorized in writing by an Officer of CASC/ACSS.
5. Will be mindful of the privacy and confidentiality of clients and others and not engage in the use of Social Media in any way which may breach another's privacy and confidentiality.

I. IN RELATIONSHIP TO CASC/ACSS

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists within CASC/ACSS maintain the highest possible standards of trust in relationship to one another in the interest of the public whom they serve. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psycho-Spiritual Therapists:

1. Will disclose to the Chair of the National Ethics Committee, if they have been criminally charged or hold a conviction on record of an indictable offence found within the Criminal Code of Canada and/or Narcotic Statutes of Canada, or equivalent legislation in a foreign jurisdiction.

