Fostering Collaboration in a Multidisciplinary Counseling Center through Ethical Analysis

KRISTEN VAUGHN, LPC-MHSP

There is no conflict of interest in this presentation. There is no benefit to the presenter.
UTC’s Counseling and Personal Development Center

- Student population: 11,674
- Services:
  - Intake
  - Individual Counseling: personal, academic, career
  - Group Counseling
  - Testing
  - Psychiatric Services
  - Crisis Intervention
  - Consultation
  - Outreach and education
We are a multidisciplinary counseling center…

- Counselors
- Psychologists
- Social worker
- This created some conflict…
Example #1
Professionals dealing with other professionals
- A budget dilemma…

Example #2
Professionals dealing with clients
- A dilemma with managing our case loads…
Resolving the dilemmas

Why examine the Code of Ethics?
Purpose of Ethical codes

ACA: “The Code establishes principles that define ethical behavior and best practices of association members” (p. 3).

NASW: “The Code summarizes broad ethical principles that reflect the profession’s core values and establishes a set of specific ethical standards that should be used to guide social work practice” (p.1).

APA: “This Ethics Code provides a common set of principles and standards upon which psychologists build their professional and scientific work. The Ethics Code is intended to provide guidance for psychologists and standards of professional conduct that can be applied by the APA and by other bodies that choose to adopt them” (p.2-3).
ACA: The mission of the American Counseling Association is to enhance the quality of life in society by promoting the development of professional counselors, advancing the counseling profession, and using the profession and practice of counseling to promote respect for human dignity and diversity.

APA: The mission of the American Psychological Association is to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people’s lives.

NASW: The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values.
Core Values and Principles
NASW
Core Values and Principles

• **Value:** Service
  - **Ethical Principle:** Social workers’ primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems.
    - Social workers are encouraged to volunteer some portion of their professional skills with no expectation of significant financial return.

• **Value:** Social Justice
  - **Ethical Principle:** Social workers challenge social injustice.
    - Pursue social change on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people
    - Issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice

• **Value:** Dignity and Worth of the Person
  - **Ethical Principle:** Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person.
    - Mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity
    - Seek to enhance clients’ capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs
    - Aware of their dual responsibility to clients and to the broader society
NASW
Core Values and Principles

• **Value:** Importance of Human Relationships
  - **Ethical Principle:** Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships.
    - Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change.
    - Social workers engage people as partners in the helping process.

• **Value:** Integrity
  - **Ethical Principle:** Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner.
    - Aware of the profession’s mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards

• **Value:** Competence
  - **Ethical Principle:** Social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise.
    - Strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills
    - Aspire to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession
**APA Principles**

**Principle A: Beneficence and Nonmaleficence**
- Do no harm
- Psychologists seek to safeguard the *welfare* and *rights* of those with whom they interact professionally.
- They are alert to and guard against personal, financial, social, organizational, or political factors that might *lead to misuse of their influence*.

**Principle B: Fidelity and Responsibility**
- Establish relationships of *trust*
- Aware of their professional and scientific responsibilities to *society*
- Consult with, refer to, or cooperate with other professionals and institutions to the extent needed to serve the *best interests* of those with whom they work
- Concerned about the *ethical compliance* of their colleagues’ scientific and professional conduct
- *Contribute* a portion of their professional time for little or no *compensation*
APA Principles

- **Principle C: Integrity**
  - Promote **accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness** in the science, teaching, and practice of psychology

- **Principle D: Justice**
  - Fairness and justice entitle all persons to **access** to and **benefit** from the contributions of psychology
  - Exercise reasonable **judgment**
  - Take precautions to ensure that their potential **biases**, the boundaries of their **competence**, and the **limitations** of their expertise do not lead to or condone unjust practices.

- **Principle E: Respect for People’s Rights and Dignity**
  - Rights of individuals to **privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination**
  - Respect cultural, individual, and role **differences**
ACA Principles

- **Section A: The Counseling Relationship**
  - Encourage client growth and development in ways that foster the interest and welfare of clients.
  - Promote the formation of healthy relationships.
  - Understand the diverse cultural backgrounds.
  - Contribute to society by devoting a portion of their professional activity to services for which there is little or no financial return.

- **Section B: Confidentiality, Privileged Communication, and Privacy**
  - Trust is a cornerstone of the counseling relationship.
  - Aspire to earn the trust of clients by creating an ongoing partnership, establishing and upholding appropriate boundaries, and maintaining confidentiality.
  - Communicate the parameters of confidentiality in a culturally competent manner.
ACA Principles

**Section C: Professional Responsibility**
- Open, honest, and accurate communication
- Practice in a nondiscriminatory manner
- Actively participate in local, state, and national associations that foster the development and improvement of counseling
- Engage in counseling practices that are based on rigorous research methodologies
- Engage in self-care activities

**Section D: Relationships With Other Professionals**
- Knowledgeable about colleagues within and outside the field of counseling

**Section E: Evaluation, Assessment, and Interpretation**
- Develop and use appropriate educational, psychological, and career assessment instruments
ACA Principles

- **Section F: Supervision, Training, and Teaching**
  - Aspire to foster meaningful and respectful professional relationships
  - Aim to be fair, accurate, and honest

- **Section G: Research and Publication**
  - Contribute to the knowledge base of the profession
  - Promote a clearer understanding of the conditions that lead to a healthy and more just society

- **Section H: Resolving Ethical Issues**
  - Hold other counselors to the same standards and to take appropriate action to ensure that these standards are upheld
  - Seek consultation
Ethical Standards
Ethical Standards

**NASW’s Standards address:**
- Responsibilities to Clients
- Responsibilities to Colleagues
- Responsibilities in Practice Settings
- Responsibilities as Professionals
- Responsibilities to the social work profession
- Responsibilities to the broader society

**APA’s Standards address:**
- Resolving Ethical Issues
- Competence
- Human Relations
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Advertising and Other Public Statements
- Record Keeping and Fees
- Education and Training
- Research and Publication
- Assessment
- Therapy

**ACA’s Standards address:**
- The counseling relationship
- Confidentiality, privileged communication, and privacy
- Professional responsibility
- Relationships with other professionals
- Evaluation, assessment, and interpretation
- Supervision, training, and teaching
- Research and publication
- Resolving ethical issues
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Similarities and Differences
Values and Principles

- All disciplines highlight contributing to society by contributing a portion of their time for little or no compensation.
- ACA and NASW underline contributing to the knowledge base of the profession.
- APA and NASW specifically identify both integrity and justice as their core principles.
- ACA and NASW emphasize the importance of relationships.
- ACA features the importance of self-care.
- ACA and APA emphasize the benefit of collaborating with other professionals and seeking consultation.
- All disciplines encourage respect of individual differences and diversity.
- All disciplines accentuate working for the interest and welfare of clients.
- All disciplines are concerned with the ethical compliance of colleagues within the profession.
Personal Impairment

- **ACA (C2g & C2d)**
  Counselors are alert to the signs of impairment from their own physical, mental, or emotional problems and refrain from offering or providing professional services when such impairment is likely to harm a client or others. They seek assistance for problems that reach the level of professional impairment, and, if necessary, they limit, suspend, or terminate their professional responsibilities until such time it is determined that they may safely resume their work.

- **APA (2.06a-b)**
  Psychologists refrain from initiating an activity when they know or should know that there is a substantial likelihood that their personal problems will prevent them from performing their work-related activities in a competent manner.

  When psychologists become aware of personal problems that may interfere with their performing work-related duties adequately, they take appropriate measures, such as obtaining professional consultation or assistance, and determine whether they should limit, suspend, or terminate their work-related duties.

- **NASW (4.05a-b)**
  Social workers should not allow their own personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance or to jeopardize the best interests of people for whom they have a professional responsibility.

  Social workers whose personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties interfere with their professional judgment and performance should immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional help, making adjustments in workload, terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others.
## Impairment of colleagues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACA (C2g)</th>
<th>APA</th>
<th>NASW (2.09a-b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counselors assist colleagues or supervisors in recognizing their own professional impairment and provide consultation and assistance when warranted with colleagues or supervisors showing signs of impairment and intervene as appropriate to prevent imminent harm to clients.</td>
<td>No mention.</td>
<td>Social workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleague’s impairment that is due to personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties and that interferes with practice effectiveness should consult with that colleague when feasible and assist the colleague in taking remedial action. Social workers who believe that a social work colleague’s impairment interferes with practice effectiveness and that the colleague has not taken adequate steps to address the impairment should take action through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, NASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, and other professional organizations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teamwork and Relationships with Colleagues

• “Counselors work to develop and strengthen interdisciplinary relations with colleagues from other disciplines to best serve clients. Counselors who are members of interdisciplinary teams delivering multifaceted services to clients, keep the focus on how to best serve the clients. They participate in and contribute to decisions that affect the well-being of clients by drawing on the perspectives, values, and experiences of the counseling profession and those of colleagues from other disciplines” (ACA D1c).

• “Psychologists consult with, refer to, or cooperate with other professionals and institutions to the extent needed to serve the best interests of those with whom they work” (APA Principle B: Fidelity and Responsibility).

• “Social workers who are members of an interdisciplinary team should participate in and contribute to decisions that affect the well-being of clients by drawing on the perspectives, values, and experiences of the social work profession. Professional and ethical obligations of the interdisciplinary team as a whole and of its individual members should be clearly established” (NASW 2.03a).
ACA (A2c, A11b, B1a, E5b, F11c)

- **Developmental and Cultural Sensitivity**
  Counselors communicate information in ways that are both developmentally and culturally appropriate. Counselors use clear and understandable language when discussing issues related to informed consent. When clients have difficulty understanding the language used by counselors, they provide necessary services (e.g., arranging for a qualified interpreter or translator) to ensure comprehension by clients. In collaboration with clients, counselors consider cultural implications of informed consent procedures and, where possible, counselors adjust their practices accordingly.

- **Inability to Assist Clients**
  If counselors determine an inability to be of professional assistance to clients, they avoid entering or continuing counseling relationships. Counselors are knowledgeable about culturally and clinically appropriate referral resources and suggest these alternatives. If clients decline the suggested referrals, counselors should discontinue the relationship.

- **Multicultural/Diversity Considerations**
  Counselors maintain awareness and sensitivity regarding cultural meanings of confidentiality and privacy. Counselors respect differing views toward disclosure of information. Counselors hold ongoing discussions with clients as to how, when, and with whom information is to be shared.
ACA (A2c, A11b, B1a, E5b, F11c) continued…

- **Cultural Sensitivity**
  Counselors recognize that culture affects the manner in which clients’ problems are defined. Clients’ socioeconomic and cultural experiences are considered when diagnosing mental disorders.

- **Multicultural/Diversity Competence**
  Counselor educators actively infuse multicultural/diversity competency in their training and supervision practices. They actively train students to gain awareness, knowledge, and skills in the competencies of multicultural practice. Counselor educators include case examples, role-plays, discussion questions, and other classroom activities that promote and represent various cultural perspectives.
APA (2.01b & 3.01)

- Where scientific or professional knowledge in the discipline of psychology establishes that an understanding of factors associated with age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status is essential for effective implementation of their services or research, psychologists have or obtain the training, experience, consultation, or supervision necessary to ensure the competence of their services, or they make appropriate referrals.

- In their work-related activities, psychologists do not engage in unfair discrimination based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or any basis proscribed by law.
Multicultural

NASW (1.05a-c & 6.04 c-d)

- Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.
- Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients’ cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients’ cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.
- Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disability.
- Social workers should promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within the United States and globally. Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.
- Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability.
Technology and Informed Consent (ACA A12g)

As part of the process of establishing informed consent, counselors do the following:

1. Address issues related to the difficulty of maintaining the confidentiality of electronically transmitted communications.
2. Inform clients of all colleagues, supervisors, and employees, such as Informational Technology (IT) administrators, who might have authorized or unauthorized access to electronic transmissions.
3. Urge clients to be aware of all authorized or unauthorized users including family members and fellow employees who have access to any technology clients may use in the counseling process.
4. Inform clients of pertinent legal rights and limitations governing the practice of a profession over state lines or international boundaries.
5. Use encrypted Web sites and e-mail communications to help ensure confidentiality when possible.
6. When the use of encryption is not possible, counselors notify clients of this fact and limit electronic transmissions to general communications that are not client specific.
7. Inform clients if and for how long archival storage of transaction records are maintained.
8. Discuss the possibility of technology failure and alternate methods of service delivery.
9. Inform clients of emergency procedures, such as calling 911 or a local crisis hotline, when the counselor is not available.
10. Discuss time zone differences, local customs, and cultural or language differences that might impact service delivery.
11. Inform clients when technology-assisted distance counseling services are not covered by insurance.
Sites on the World Wide Web (ACA A12h)

Counselors maintaining sites on the World Wide Web (the Internet) do the following:

1. Regularly check that electronic links are working and professionally appropriate.
2. Establish ways clients can contact the counselor in case of technology failure.
3. Provide electronic links to relevant state licensure and professional certification boards to protect consumer rights and facilitate addressing ethical concerns.
5. Obtain the written consent of the legal guardian or other authorized legal representative prior to rendering services in the event the client is a minor child, an adult who is legally incompetent, or an adult incapable of giving informed consent.
6. Strive to provide a site that is accessible to persons with disabilities.
7. Strive to provide translation capabilities for clients who have a different primary language while also addressing the imperfect nature of such translations.
8. Assist clients in determining the validity and reliability of information found on the World Wide Web and other technology applications.
There is no mention of Social Media within any of the three professions.

This leaves room for future research and implications as the times change and technology progresses.
Case study examples... How did examining ethics help?

- For our budget dilemma...
  - NASW states that social workers should be diligent stewards of the resources of their employing organizations, wisely **conserving funds** where appropriate and never misappropriating funds or using them for unintended purposes (3.09g).

- For our dilemma managing our case loads...
  - ACA states that counselors are to be **respectful** of approaches to counseling services that differ from their own, and that counselors are respectful of traditions and practices of other professional groups with which they work (D1a).
  - APA states that when indicated and professionally appropriate, psychologists **cooperate** with other professionals in order to serve their clients/patients effectively and appropriately (3.09).
  - NASW states that social workers should work to improve employing agencies’ **policies and procedures** and the efficiency and effectiveness of their services (3.09b).
Multidisciplinary collaboration

How did this exercise of analyzing ethical codes improve our professional collaboration and counseling services?

- Enabled us to better understand where we were each coming from
- Allowed us to better advocate for clients and students on different levels
- Revised and rewrote our Policies and Procedures Manual to reflect the Codes of Ethics
- Developed a stronger appreciation for the disciplines of counseling, psychology, and social work
- Improved our services through recognizing and better utilizing each others’ strengths
- Our improved collaboration as a team led to us collaborating with the university and the community at large
Break into 3 groups:

- Counselors
  - Use ACA Code of Ethics

- Psychologists
  - Use APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct

- Social Workers
  - Use NASW Code of Ethics
Further Implications

What *challenges* could these three different perspectives create in a multidisciplinary university counseling center?
Questions?

Comments?
Acknowledgements

Contact Information

Kristen Vaughn, LPC-MHSP
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Counseling and Personal Development Center
615 McCallie Ave., Dept. 1801
Chattanooga, TN 37403
423-425-4438
Kristen-e-vaughn@utc.edu
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