

eEthics for eTherapy:

Emerging Counseling Practice Issues, Standards, Skills and Solutions

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Learning Objectives

- **At the completion of the workshop, participants will be able to:**
 - 1. Identify the minimal standards and practices necessary to provide ethical e-therapy services.**
 - 2. Demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and limitations of e-therapy methodologies.**
 - 3. List where current Codes of Professional Counselor Ethics are not adequate to guide clinicians in the provision of e-therapy.**

Training Assumptions

- Practitioner's want to improve skills and competence.
- Ethical Codes lag behind emerging practice.
- Change can be challenging: focus on what we do know and apply to new settings.

Scope of This Training

- Practice- Yes
- Clinical- Yes
- Training and Supervision-Yes
- Technical- No
- Regulatory- No

Past to Present Evolution eServices

- Decade of evidenced based practices, improved Tx outcomes, few still receive Tx.
- 2005- acknowledgement; technology innovations as viable Tx delivery systems.
- 2006-10: Outcome data/evidence; eServices, as or more effective, than traditional.
- Need to develop, implement and monitor consistent evidence based standards.

eServices Definition:

- Delivery of addiction, mental health and co-occurring services through telephonic and/or web based methodologies.
- Services include those traditionally delivered in face-to-face methods.

e-Therapy/Services

- Methods:
 - Phone and Fax
 - E-mail
 - Text
 - Chat
 - Video
 - On-line/Web based

What is a Code of Professional Ethics?

- ❖ Professional Conduct Standards
- ❖ Legal Responsibilities
- ❖ Ethical Principles
- ❖ Moral Guidelines
- ❖ Organizational Duties

Counseling Competencies

- Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) *TAP 21*:

– **Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes in:**

- **Counseling Theory**
- **Treatment Knowledge**
- **Application to Practice**
- **Professional Readiness**

Professional and Ethical Responsibilities (TAP 21 cont'd)

Knowledge Areas:

- Federal, state, agency and professional codes of ethics.
- Clients' rights and responsibilities.
- Professional standards and scope of competent practice.
- Boundary issues between client and counselor.

Professional and Ethical Responsibilities

(TAP 21, Knowledge Areas cont'd)

- Difference between role of professional and sponsor.
- Consequences of violating codes of ethics.
- Means for addressing alleged ethical violations.
- Nondiscriminatory practices.
- Mandatory reporting requirements.

Professional and Ethical Responsibilities (TAP 21 cont'd)

SKILLS

- Demonstrating ethical and professional behavior.
- Demonstrating competence.

Professional and Ethical Responsibilities (TAP 21 cont'd)

ATTITUDES

- **Openness** to changing behavior and beliefs that conflict with professional ethical guidelines.
- **Willingness** to participate in self, peer and supervisory assessment of clinical skills and practice improvement.
- **Respect** for professional standards.

How is Ethical Behavior Important

- ❖ **Always the professionals responsibility to act ethically and to the right thing:**
 - Intentional or Unintentional
 - Big or Small Act
 - Ambiguous or Clear Cut
 - Actual, potential or perceived harm

How is Ethical Behavior Important

- ❖ **Always professionals responsibility to protect clients:**
 - Commission (act) or Omission (fail to act)
 - Negligence or Misconduct
 - Trust and Credibility depends on it
 - Absolutely necessary for Tx success

Limitations of Professional Codes

- ❖ Reactive rather than Proactive.
- ❖ Standards reflects past research and best current, available practice standards.
- ❖ Conflicts can and do exist.

Limitations of Professional Codes

- ❖ Broad & General – Few specifics
- ❖ Offer Guidelines – Not absolutes
- ❖ Ambiguous – Interpretation necessary
- ❖ Ethnocentric – Often not reflective of diversity

eServices Benefits

- eServices:
 - Reduce barriers, increases choice and access.
 - More flexible, convenient, protection of privacy.
 - Avoids perceived stigma, greater sense of confidentiality.
 - Cost effective and efficient, max \$/staff

Emerging Standards

- General
- Accessibility
- Confidentiality
- Consents
- Rights
- Cultural Appropriateness

Emerging Standards con't

- Safety and Risk
- Screening, Assessment and Placement
- Treatment Plans and Documentation
- Coordination of Other Services
- Record Maintenance and Retention
- Staff Training and Supervision
- QA and CQI

General Standard Concepts

- eServices providers, Behavioral Health Care:
 - Licensed Provider under Florida Statutes.
 - Accredited Nationally Recognized body.
 - Comparable to On-site Services
 - Utilization; CI strengths, needs, abilities, preferences.
 - Clear criteria for inclusion, exclusion and appropriate placement/suitability.

General Standard Concepts, con't

- Establish effective, comparable P&P to onsite services.
- Standard and adequate Security, ensuring safe, confidential and authorized.
- Effective Screening and Referral for imminent crisis situations.
- Communication, Documentation, Records meet statute, rules and regulations.

Ethical Standards & Guidelines: Clinical eServices Provision

- At a **MINIMUM Practitioners/Programs must:**
 - Sufficient understanding of technology.
 - Work within Scope of Competence.
 - Seek out training, knowledge and supervision for new methodologies.

Ethical Standards & Guidelines: Clinical eServices Provision con't

- Display pertinent and necessary info.
- Determine appropriateness for eServices.
- Conduct Screening, Assessment and Informed Consent.

Ethical Standards & Guidelines: Clinical eServices Provision con't

- Informed Consent Process:
 - Begins when CI explores accessing services.
 - Clear and precise information accessible via website.
 - Risk Benefit discussion
 - Formal acknowledgement CI to practitioner, encrypted channels.

Ethical Standards & Guidelines: Clinical eServices Provision Con't

- Practitioners adequately and specifically trained/ supervised in delivery of eServices:
 - Benefits and risks.
 - Potential differences in interaction and process.
 - Procedures effectively managing disruptive, crisis or relapse or other situations requiring referral, intervention and/or support.

Application Implications

- Take information back, discuss it and use it.
- That the material will help you continue to improve your competence and practices.
- Feel valued for the important role you play, in moving our profession forward.