

Changes Address Assessment and Evaluation, Diversity of Clients

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For Immediate Release

Addiction-focused professionals face challenges unlike almost any other profession. Lives hang in the balance. To help provide guidance, NAADAC has revamped its ethical guidelines to help professionals navigate the challenges of working in this profession.

With technical and scientific advances, communication has increased while the protection of privacy is often threatened. Liability and risk management are a major concern in the addiction and mental health professions.

As professionals, we are called upon to make quick decisions with limited time to evaluate and gather additional data. For these situations, we rely on a written set of standards to guide us. The NAADAC Code of Ethics is a statement of ideals to which a profession aspires and it provides guidelines for decision-making by professionals.

[Go to the Revised Code of Ethics](#)

Frequently Asked Questions About the 2011 Revision

Why is it Important for Professionals to Have a Code of Ethics?

A code of ethics is a statement of an organization's standards for professional behavior. All of us are likely to make mistakes in judgment unintentionally or when we are in stressful situations. The code of ethical standards provides a guideline to help navigate the situations in

which we find ourselves and helps us evaluate our choices. Rarely is an ethical dilemma a clear choice between right and wrong. Usually it is finding an option that works best; the code of ethics guides us in making a choice that more clearly fits the values of the profession and our own professional standards for behavior.

Why was the Code of Ethics Revised?

The NAADAC Ethics Committee is instructed to review the code of ethics and make revisions as needed every two years. Two years ago the committee recommended standards related to evaluation, assessment and interpretation of client data after a request from a NAADAC member who needed guidelines. A review of other codes of ethics found standards on evaluation, assessment and interpretation of client data while the NAADAC Code of Ethics did not address the issue. The committee worked diligently comparing the NAADAC Code of Ethics to the codes of ethics of other professional organizations working with similar populations. In addition, some of the committee members made suggested revisions based on the experience of being asked to respond to ethical dilemmas and grievances. We found that the current code of ethics did not describe ethical standards in a clear manner that would support us in addressing some of the grievances.

Some sections of the recommended code were re-written to fit with the situations most likely to face us in 2011 as compared with the situations that arose in 2008.

How can This Code of Ethics Help Professionals who are Facing Challenging Situations?

When faced with a situation that the addiction professional finds uncomfortable or questionable, the code of ethics provides a standards with which the possible actions can be compared. The code of ethics provides a guideline for members of the ethics committee when responding to a grievance filed against a member or an agency holding NAADAC provider status. The revised code of ethics provides more detail than the previous code to help provide clarity.

What did the Revision Address?

The NAADAC Ethics Committee evaluated the previous code of ethics and found that the basic requirements of a code. However, standards related to assessment and evaluation of clients were not included and the diversity in the population we serve was not adequately addressed. Standards in these two areas were re-written. The language of other standards was updated to make the code more consistent with that of other mental health professionals to whom we are often compared. The resulting code of ethics has nine principles under which standards that describe expectations of addiction professionals are provided in more detail than in the previous version. This code was written to provide sufficient detail to evaluate the behavior of addiction professionals against whom grievances have been filed as well as to support decision making among individuals and in agencies.

[Go to the Revised Code of Ethics](#)