Multiple Relationships with Clients: Applying the Concept of Potentially Beneficial Interactions to the Practice of Addiction Counseling

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Multiple Relationships

• Also known as dual relationships

• Definition: “...when helping professionals take on two or more roles simultaneously or sequentially with a help seeker.”
  (Herlihy and Corey, 2006)
American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2014)


• 2005 Code: Section A.5.D.
ACA Code of Ethics 2014

A.6: Managing and Maintaining Boundaries and Professional Relationships

a. Previous Relationships

b. Extending Counseling Boundaries ★

c. Documenting Boundary Extensions

d. Role Changes in the Professional Relationship ★

e. Nonprofessional Interactions or Relationships (Other than Sexual or Romantic Relationships)
ACA Code of Ethics 2014

• A.7. Roles and Relationships at Individual, Group, Institutional, and Societal Levels

• A. Advocacy

• B. Confidentiality and Advocacy
NAADAC Code (2011)

- Does not speak specifically to the concept of “potentially beneficial interactions”
- Section 1: The Counseling Relationship, Standard 3, Dual Relationships:
  - 7. The addiction professional recognizes that there are situations in which dual relationships are difficult to avoid. Rural areas, small communities and other situations necessitate discussion of the counseling relationship and taking steps to distinguish the counseling relationship from other interactions.
ACA Code of Ethics 2005

• Used the phrase “Potentially beneficial interactions”
• Section A.5.D.
• Same as much of what is in 2014 Code Section but not the wording around membership in a professional association, organization or community
Literature Review

• Counselors in Recovery (Doyle, 1997)
• Social Workers in Recovery (Kaplan, L., 2005)
• Counselors’ Beliefs (Hollander et al., 2006)
• ACA Code Issues (Kaplan, D., 2006)
• Relevant Issues (Hecksher, 2007)
• Proposed Guidelines (Doyle, in press)
Multiple Relationships and Substance Abuse Counselors

- Counselors in Recovery
- Staff/Collegial Relationships
- Social Issues
- Issues for Supervisors
- Other
Counselors in Recovery

• Issues such as:
  - Speaking/sharing at meetings
  - Sponsoring current/former clients
  - Acknowledging current/former clients

• Pros and Cons
Staff/Collegial Relationships

• Former clients may come to work in the field, perhaps even where they received tx

• Former clients may become treating professionals’ colleagues, supervisees, or even supervisors
Social Issues

• Encountering current or former clients in social situations
• Particularly common in more rural areas
• Concept of avoidability
• What about the use of alcohol (or other substances) in these settings
Issues for Supervisors

• SAMHSA TAP 21 challenges supervisors to be aware of important things in their supervisees’ lives

• What is more important than recovery status?

• How can supervisors broach this, support this, understand this? And help their supervisees?
Proposed Guidelines (PG)

• Counselors in Recovery

• Staff/Collegial Relationships

• Social Issues

• Issues for Supervisors
PG: Counselors in Recovery

• Consider sharing in more general terms at mtgs. with current/former clients
• Do not sponsor current clients
• Avoid sponsoring former clients if possible, but regardless allow generous amount of time
• Follow employer policy, of course (or work to change it!)
• Acknowledge current and former clients judiciously/vaguely if needed
PG: Staff/Collegial Relationships

- Former clients have every right to be employed
- If they return, have a private conversation with them if needed
- Consider an “informed consent” discussion
- Review supervisory options if needed
- Prioritize objectivity in supervision
PG: Social Issues

• Again, issues of avoidability

• Use of alcohol (or other substances)

• Avoid when possible

• Use high amount of discretion out of respect for current/former clients’ recovery
PG: Issues for Supervisors

• Educate yourselves
• Be responsive to supervisees
• Consult with colleagues
• Stay current on the literature
• Offer appropriate guidance to supervisees
• Be familiar with local culture of recovery
Discussion

- What issues are you seeing?

- What issues have supervisees brought to you?

- Are there hypothetical scenarios that you could envision developing?

- Does the legalization of marijuana affect this issue at all?
References

About Your Presenter

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