

The Ethics Committee: What is Its Role – How Does It Serve NAADAC Members

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Being “ethical” is complicated; professional ethics are not based on societal norms of the day, nor are they based on feelings or law. Ethical codes are standards of practice and standards of competence that guide what we as providers of services ought to do. There is an expectation that addiction professionals and other service providers have personal morals, ethics, and values that they examine and hold themselves accountable to. Professional and organizational ethical codes prescribe specific obligations towards nonmaleficence while promoting beneficence. As an institution, NAADAC is committed to reviewing and updating its Code of Ethics on a regular basis to reflect advances in the delivery of addictions services that promote client-centered, evidence-based, outcome-driven, culturally-sensitive, trauma-informed, gender-responsive care.

The NAADAC Ethics Committee works diligently to develop, publish, and update clear, understandable, pragmatic standards of care for co-occurring addiction and mental health services. The NAADAC Code of Ethics is meant to guide clinicians towards excellence in the delivery of services. The Ethics Committee drafts annotations to the Code on a regular basis. The Committee establishes protocols for responding to grievances brought forth by a member of NAADAC, a member of a state regulatory board, a consumer, or other interested person. The members of the Ethics Committee ensure that complaints are handled in accordance with procedures for handling complaints of unethical conduct. The Committee provides consultative services to members who are inquiring about ethical concerns and conflicts, and their options. The Committee offers educational opportunities specific to ethical practice for its members, affiliates, and other interested individuals, organizations or committees. NAADAC is committed to providing resources to its Ethics Committee as the Committee meets its mission of case review, code and policy development, and education.

Over the last decade, organizations in the field have seen complete paradigm shifts in how services are delivered. Traditional roles are being redefined by the Affordable Care Act, moving us towards collaborative care teams and comprehensive health care. With such paradigm shifts come appropriate concerns about how to best serve the needs of the client. The Ethics Committee acknowledges its role in promoting sound ethical practice by endorsing values-driven ethical client-centered care. NAADAC’s Ethics Committee supports and strengthens ethical leadership behaviors by examining the values that underlie macro- and micro-decision making, stressing the need for an ethical view of organizational activities, and promoting transparency in decision making. Ethics committees can



assist anyone who has a question about professional behaviors, privacy and confidentiality, and workplace practices.

For individual clinicians, an ethics committee can help with ethical dilemmas by providing case-related consultation services as well as feedback specific to organizational practice. An ethics committee can help a member and others look at contextual concerns such as conflicts of interests professionally, interprofessionally, and institutionally. It can be useful to receive guidance on confidentiality concerns, the role of family members in clinical decision-making, financial conflicts, workplace harass-

ment, sub-standard care, etc. All of these concerns affect clinical decisions and client welfare. At NAADAC, the Ethics Committee seeks to provide guidance, support, and case-review related to a grievance.

The Ethics Committee values the contributions that addiction professionals like you make to individuals, families, and communities. We value your hard work and the efforts that you made towards professional credentialing. The Ethics Committee is here to serve NAADAC and its members by publishing a Code of Ethics and supporting policies to act as guides for practice and competency. NAADAC holds its members accountable for delivering the best in client care while acting as an esteemed professional within the addiction counseling and allied disciplines. The Committee seeks to be a resource to its members when ethical dilemmas arise that could use neutral discussion and guidance. The Committee seeks to be a resource to you whenever there is an ethical concern or question. You entered the profession of addictions counseling and services because you want to make a real difference in peoples’ lives. The mission of NAADAC’s Ethics Committee is to serve you in your work while promoting excellence in clinical care.

Visit www.naadac.org/code-of-ethics for the full version of the NAADAC Code of Ethics.



Mita M. Johnson, EdD, LAC, MAC, SAP, has a doctorate in Counselor Education and Supervision, an MA in Counseling, and a BA in Biology. She is a licensed professional counselor, licensed marriage and family therapist, and licensed addiction counselor, along with earning the national Master Addiction Counselor (MAC) and Department of Transportation Substance Abuse Professional (SAP) certifications. Johnson has two supervisory credentials (ACS and AAMFT) and is an NCC. In addition to being a core faculty member at Walden University, she maintains a private practice where she sees clients and supervises who are working on credentialing. Johnson is the Past-President of the Colorado Association of Addiction Professionals (CAAP) and an the Ethics Chair and Southwest Regional VP for NAADAC. She speaks and trains regionally and nationally on topics specific to counseling skills, ethics, supervision, and addiction-specific services. She has been appointed by the Governor of Colorado to two committees working on behavioral health integration and transformation, is a consultant to the state regulatory agency that regulates our professions, and is a consultant and committee member at the state Office of Behavioral Health.