

A CODE OF ETHICS FOR AFRICAN STUDENT COUNSELLORS

Preamble

The Society for Student Counselling in Southern Africa (SSCSA) recognizes its responsibility to participate in the assurance of ethical behaviour on the part of student counsellors. This responsibility is to society in general, to members of society who become involved in the service, research and teaching activities associated with the field of student counselling, to the discipline of student counselling, and to its own members.

Assuring ethical behaviour includes the articulation of ethical principles, values and standards; promoting those principles, values and standards through education, peer modelling and consultation; developing and implementing methods to help student counsellors to monitor their ethical behaviour; adjudicating complaints of unethical behaviour; and, taking corrective action when such action is warranted.

This code articulates ethical principles, values and standards for members of the SSCSA.

Structure and Derivation of the Code

Structure

Four ethical principles, to be considered and balanced in achieving ethical behaviour, are presented. Each principle is followed by a statement of those values which are included in and give definition to the principle. Each values statement is followed by a list of standards which illustrate the application of the specific principle and values to the activities of student counsellors. The standards include both minimal behavioural expectations as well as more idealized attitudinal and behavioural expectations in counsellor preparation, professional relationships, hiring practices and research. In the margin, to the left of the standards, key words are placed to guide the reader through the standards and to illustrate the relationship of the specific standards to the values statement.

Derivation

The four principles represent those ethical principles considered to be most appropriate to the Southern African context by the Ethics Committee of the SSCSA. The principles are in keeping with the codes of a range of professionals who practise as student counsellors.

When Principles are in Conflict

Although the standards and values statements take positions on commonly encountered conflicts between values (e.g., the welfare of the research subject vs. the welfare of the student counsellors), and although the code advocates that all four principles be taken into account and balanced in ethical decision-making, there will be circumstances in which principles will come in conflict and it will not be possible to give each principle equal weight.

Although the complexity of ethical conflicts precludes a firm ordering of the principles, the four principles have been ordered according to the weight each generally should be given when they are in conflict, namely:

Principle I: Respect for the Dignity of Persons This principle generally should be given the highest weight except in circumstances in which there is a clear and imminent danger to the physical safety of any known or unknown individual.

Principle II: Responsible Caring This principle generally should be given the second highest weight. Responsible caring should be carried out only in ways that respect and promote the dignity of persons.

Principle III: Integrity in Relationships This principle generally should be given the third highest weight. In some circumstances, values such as honesty and straightforwardness will need to be tempered by the values contained in the Principles of Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Responsible Caring.

Principle IV: Responsibility to Society and Employing Institutions This principle generally should be given the lowest weight of the four principles when it is in conflict with one or more of them. Although it is necessary and important to consider responsibility to society and employing institutions in every ethical decision, adherence to this principle must be subject to and guided by Respect for the Dignity of Persons, Responsible Caring, and Integrity in Relationships.

Even with the above ordering of the principles, student counsellors will be faced with ethical dilemmas which are difficult to resolve. In such cases, resolution is recognized to be a matter of personal conscience. However, in order to ensure that personal conscience is a legitimate basis for the decision, student counsellors are expected to engage in an ethical decision-making process that is explicit enough to bear public scrutiny.

The Ethical Decision-Making Process

The ethical decision-making process may occur very rapidly, leading to an easy resolution of an ethical issue. This is particularly true of issues for which clear-cut guidelines or standards exist and for which there is no conflict between principles. On the other hand, some ethical issues (particularly those in which ethical principles are in conflict are not easily resolved by differential weighting) might require a time-consuming process of deliberation.

The following basic steps typify approaches to ethical decision-making:

1. Identification of ethically relevant issues and practices.
2. Development of alternative courses of action
3. Analysis of likely short-term and long term risks and benefits of each course of action on the individual(s)/group(s) involved or likely to be affected (e.g. client,

client's family or employees, employing institution, colleagues, profession, society, self).

4. Choice of course of action after conscientious application of existing principles, values and standards.
5. Action, with a commitment to assume responsibility for the consequences of the action.
6. Evaluation of the course of action.
7. Assumption of responsibility for consequences of action, including correction of negative consequences if any, or re-engaging in decision-making process if ethical issue is not resolved.

Student counsellors engaged in a time-consuming process of deliberation are encouraged and expected to consult with colleagues and/or advisory bodies when such individuals can add knowledge and/or objectivity to the decision-making process. Although the decision for action remains with the individual student counsellor concerned, the seeking and consideration of such assistance reflects an ethical approach to ethical decision-making.

Uses of the Code

This code is intended to be a guide to a student counsellor in their everyday conduct and in the resolution of ethical dilemmas; that is, it advocates the practice of both proactive and reactive ethics.

The third use of the code is to assist in the adjudication of complaints against student counsellors. A group charged with this responsibility is required to judge whether unethical behaviour has occurred and determine what corrective action should be taken. In determining corrective action, one of the judgments the adjudicating body needs to make is whether there was willful disregard of a section of the ethics code or whether there was an intent to be ethical, but poor judgment or other factors (e.g. naive incompetence) intervened. The articulation of the principles, values, standards and ethical decision-making process contained in this code provides a guideline for making such judgments.

Responsibility of the Individual Student Counsellor

Responsibility for the promotion of ethical action among student counsellors rests foremost with individual student counsellors. Acceptance to membership in the professional association of student counselling commits members:

1. to adhere to the ethical code adopted by the association;
2. to promote and be sensitive to discussion of ethical issues and practices among colleagues;

3. to bring concerns about perceived unethical actions directly to student counselling colleagues and to attempt to reach an agreement on the issue and, if needed, on the appropriate action to be taken;
4. to cooperate with duly constituted committees of the association which are concerned with ethics and ethical conduct; and,
5. to bring to the attention of the association ethical issues which require clarification or the development of new guidelines or standards.

Relationship of Code to Personal Behaviour

This code is intended to guide and regulate only those activities a student counsellor engages in by virtue of being a student counsellor. There is no intention, to guide or regulate a counsellor's activities outside of this context. Personal behaviour becomes a concern of discipline only if it is of such nature that it undermines public trust in the discipline as a whole or if it raises questions about the student counsellor's ability to carry out appropriately his/her responsibilities as a student counsellor.

Relationship of Code to Regulatory Bodies

In exercising its responsibility to articulate ethical standards for those who wish to become and remain members in good standing of the association, the SSCSA recognizes the multiple membership that some student counsellors have (both regulatory and voluntary). The code has attempted to encompass and incorporate those ethical principles most prevalent in related professions, thereby minimizing the possibility of being at variance with regulations and guidelines of such professions. Wherever regulatory bodies exist, student counsellors are expected to respect the legally mandated role of such bodies.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this code:

- a) "student counsellor" means any person who is a Full Member or Associate Member of the SSCSA.
- b) Client means a person, family, group, organization or industry receiving service from a student counsellor.
- c) Clients, research subjects, and students are "independent" if they can independently contract for service or give informed consent. Such persons are "partially dependent" if the decision to contract for service or give informed consent is shared between two or more parties (e.g., parents and student). Such persons are considered to be "involuntary" if they have little or no choice about whether or not to receive service or participate in an activity (e.g., patients who have been involuntarily committed to a psychiatric facility, very young children).

- d) "Legal or civil rights" means those rights protected under laws and statutes recognized by the State.
- e) "Moral rights" means fundamental and inalienable human rights which may not be fully protected by existing laws and statutes. Of particular significance to student counsellors, for example, are rights to equal justice and to developmentally appropriate privacy, self-determination and autonomy. Protection of some aspects of these rights may involve encouraging practices which are not contained or controlled within current laws and statutes. Moral rights are not limited to those mentioned in this definition.
- f) "Unjust discrimination" or "unjustly discriminatory" means activities which are prejudicial to persons because of differences such as culture, ethnicity, color, race religion, gender, marital status, sexual preference, physical or mental abilities, age, socio-economic status, and/or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition or status.

Review Schedule

In order to maintain the relevance and responsiveness of the code, it will be reviewed and revised, as needed, by the SSCSA every three years.

Principle 1: Respect for the Dignity of Persons

Values Statement

In the course of their work, student counsellors come into contact with many different individuals and groups, including: clients seeking help with personal, academic, career, family, organizational, industrial or community issues; research participants; students; employees; colleagues; employers; third party payers; and, the general public.

In these contacts, student counsellors accept as fundamental the principle of respect for the dignity of persons, that is, the belief that each person should be treated as a person or an end in him/herself, not as an object or a means to an end. In so doing, student counsellors acknowledge that all persons have the right to have their innate worth as human beings appreciated and that this worth is not enhanced or reduced by such differences as culture, ethnicity, colour, race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual preference, physical or mental abilities, age, socioeconomic status, and/or any other preference or personal characteristic condition or status.

Although student counsellors have a responsibility to respect the dignity of all persons with whom they come in contact in their role as student counsellors, the nature of their contract with society demands that their greatest responsibility normally be to those persons directly receiving or involved in the student counsellor's activities and, therefore, in a more vulnerable position (e.g. clients, students, research participants). This responsibility is almost always greater than their responsibility to those indirectly involved (e.g. parents of students, academic and administrative staff of institutions, fellow students, employers, third party payers, the general public).

Adherence to the concept of moral rights is an essential component of respect for the dignity of persons. Rights to privacy, self-determination, and autonomy are of particular importance to student counsellors who have a responsibility to protect and promote these rights in their service, research, and teaching activities. As such, student counsellors have a responsibility to provide services and develop procedures for informed consent and confidentiality that are consistent with those rights.

As individual rights exist within the context of the rights of others and of responsible caring (see Principle II) there may be circumstances in which the possibility of serious detrimental consequences to themselves or others, a diminished capacity to be self-determining or autonomous, or a court order might disallow some aspects of these rights. However, student counsellors still have a responsibility to respect the dignity of the person(s) involved to the greatest extent possible and to do what is necessary and reasonable to reduce the need for any future disallowances.

In addition, student counsellors recognize that as individual, family or group vulnerabilities increase and/or as the power of persons to control their environment or their lives decreases, student counsellors have an increasing responsibility to seek ethical advice and to establish safeguards to protect the rights of the persons involved. For this reason, student counsellors consider it their responsibility to increase safeguards to protect and promote the rights of persons involved in their activities proportionate to the degree of dependency and the lack of voluntary initiation. For example, this would mean that there would be more safeguards to protect and promote the rights of involuntary persons than partially dependent persons, and more safeguards for partially-dependent than independent persons.

Respect for the dignity of persons also includes the concept of equal justice. With respect to student counsellors, this concept implies that all persons are entitled to benefit equally from the contributions of student counselling and to equal quality in the processes, procedures and services being conducted by student counsellors. Although individual student counsellors might specialize and direct their activities to particular population's student counsellors must not exclude persons on a capricious or unjustly discriminatory basis.

Ethical Standards

In adhering to the Principle of Respect for the Dignity of Persons, student counsellors would:

General Respect

- 1) Demonstrate appropriate respect for the knowledge, insight, experience and areas of expertise of those persons with whom they come in contact in their role as student counsellors.
- 2) Not engage publicly in demeaning descriptions of others or in remarks or jokes, which reflect adversely on the dignity of others.
- 3) Abstain from all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment.

General Rights

- 4) Avoid or refuse to participate in practices inconsistent with respect for the legal, civil, or moral rights of others.
- 5) Refuse to advise, train or supply information to anyone who intends to use the knowledge or skills to infringe on human rights.
- 6) Make every effort to ensure that professional knowledge is not misused, intentionally or unintentionally to infringe on human rights.
- 7) Respect the right of recipients of service, research participants, and students to safeguard their own dignity.

Non-discrimination

- 8) Not practice, condone, facilitate or collaborate with any form of unjust discrimination.
- 9) Aim to prevent or correct practices that are unjustly discriminatory.

Recognition of cultural Diversity

- 10) Ensure counsellor preparation programmes, in their policies, procedures and curricula recognize and respond to the cultural diversity among students, faculty, and clients.
- 11) Ensure counsellor educators are prepared to teach and to supervise competently about cross-cultural factors in counselling practice.

Informed Consent

- 12) Seek as full and active a participation as possible from others in decisions which affect them.
- 13) Respect and integrate as much as possible the opinions and wishes of others regarding decisions which affect them.
- 14) Obtain informed consent from all independent and partially independent persons for any counselling services rendered to them.
- 15) Obtain informed consent for all research activities which involve obtrusive measures, invasion into the private lives of research participants, risks to the participant, or any attempt to change the behaviour of research participants.
- 16) Establish and use signed consent forms which specify the dimensions of informed consent or which acknowledge that such dimensions have been explained and are understood, if such forms are required by law or if such forms are desired by the student counsellor, the person giving consent, or the organization for whom the student counsellor works.
- 17) Recognize that informed consent is the result of a process of reaching an agreement to work collaboratively, rather than of simply having a consent form signed.

- 18) In obtaining informed consent, provide as much information as a reasonable or prudent person would want to know before making a decision or consenting to a counselling process, procedure, or service. The student counsellor would relay this information in language which the person understands and would take whatever reasonable steps are necessary to assure that the information was, in fact, understood.
- 19) In the process of obtaining informed consent, assure that at least the following points are understood: purpose and nature of the activity, mutual responsibilities, likely benefits and risks, alternatives, the likely consequences of non-action, the option to refuse or withdraw at any time, over what period of time the consent applies, and how to rescind consent if desired.
- 20) If providing services to clients at the request of or for the use of third parties, clarify the nature of the multiple relationships to all concerned parties before obtaining consent. This would include, but not be limited to, the purpose of the service, the use that will be made of information collected, and the limits on confidentiality. Third parties may include schools, courts, government agencies, insurance companies, police, and special funding bodies, administrative authorities, disciplinary courts, academics and helping professionals in private, governmental and non-governmental practices.

Freedom Consent

- 21) Take all reasonable steps to ensure that consent is not given under of conditions of coercion.
- 22) If consent is given under duress or conditions of extreme need, take all reasonable steps to confirm or re-establish the freedom of the consent.
- 23) Respect the right of the research participant or the recipient of service to discontinue participation or service at any time.

Vulnerabilities

- 24) Before making a decision to proceed, seek independent and abilities adequate ethical review of human rights issues and protections for any research involving vulnerable groups and/or persons of diminished capacity to give informed consent.
- 25) In research studies, not use children or any other persons of diminished capacity to give informed consent, if the research involved might equally well be carried out with persons who have a fuller capacity to give informed consent.
- 26) If fully informed consent cannot be carried out due to age or serious handicap, carry out the informed consent process with those persons who are legally appointed to give informed consent on behalf of the individual concerned.

- 27) Seek, the willing participation of any child or other person of diminished capacity to give informed consent, and proceed without this assent only, if the service or research activity is considered to be of direct benefit to that person.
- 28) Be particularly cautious in establishing the freedom of consent of any research participant who is in a dependent relationship to the student counsellor (e.g. student, client). This may include, but is not limited to, offering that person an alternative to fulfill their educational or employment goals, or offering a range of research studies from which the person can select.

Privacy

- 29) Explore and collect only that information which is germane to the purpose(s) for which consent has been obtained.
- 30) Record only that information which is necessary for the provision of continuous, coordinated service, or which is required by law.
- 31) Respect the right of students or student counsellors in training to reasonable personal privacy.
- 32) Store and handle all records, both written and unwritten (e.g. video-tapes), in a way that attends to the needs for privacy and security.
- 33) Take all reasonable steps to ensure that records over which they have control remain personally identifiable only as long as is necessary in the interests of those to whom they refer and/or to the research project for which they were collected, or as required by law, and render anonymous or destroy any records under their control that no longer need to be personally identifiable.

Confidentiality

- 34) Be careful not to relay information which they have gained about colleagues, students, and members of organizations gained in the process of their activities as student counsellors and which the student counsellor has reason to believe is considered confidential by those persons.
- 35) When engaged in services to individuals, families, or groups clarify what measures will be taken to protect confidentiality, and what responsibilities family and group members have for the protection of confidentiality.
- 36) Except as required or justified by law, or in circumstances of actual or possible serious physical harm or death, share confidential information with others only with the informed consent of those involved or if the individuals involved can not be identified.

Extended Responsibility

- 37) When appropriate, encourage others with whom they come in Response contact in their role as student counsellors to respect the dignity of others and to expect respect for their own dignity.

- 38) Assume overall responsibility for the professional activities of their assistants, students, supervisees, and employee with regard to Respect for the Dignity of Persons, all of whom, however, incur similar obligations.

Principle II: Responsible Caring

Values Statement

One of the most basic ethical expectations of any profession in our society is that its activities benefit members of society or at least, do no harm. Therefore, ethical conduct by student counsellors is characterized by an active concern for the welfare of any individual, family or group with whom they come into relationship in their role as student counsellors. This concern includes both those directly involved and those indirectly involved in their service, research and teaching activities. However, in keeping with their contract with society, as with Principle I, student counsellors' greatest responsibility normally is to protect the welfare of those directly involved in their activities and, therefore, in a more vulnerable position (e.g. clients, research participants, students). Their responsibility to those indirectly involved (e.g. employers, third party payers, institutional authorities, family and the general public) is a secondary one.

As individuals are the most likely persons to be concerned about their own welfare, obtaining informed consent (see Principle I) is one of the best methods for ensuring that their welfare will be protected. However, it is only when informed consent is combined with the responsible caring of the student counsellor that there is considerable ethical protection of the welfare of the person(s) involved.

Responsible caring leads student counsellors to "take care" to discern the potential harm and benefits involved, to predict the likelihood of their occurrence, to proceed only if the potential benefits outweigh the potential harm, to use and develop methods that will minimize harms and maximize benefits, and to take responsibility for correcting any harmful effects that have occurred as a result of their activities.

In order to carry out these steps, student counsellors recognize the need for and the value of competence and self-knowledge. They consider incompetent action to be unethical per se, as it is unlikely to be of benefit and likely to be harmful. They engage only in those activities in which they have competence, and they perform their activities as competently as possible. They expose themselves to, contribute to, and use the most appropriate existing knowledge, developing a base of understanding from which to act in the best interests of those concerned. They also engage in self-reflection with the purpose of determining how their own values and social context (e.g. culture, ethnicity, colour, religion, gender, sexual preference, physical and mental ability level, age, and socioeconomic status) influence their actions, interpretations, choices and recommendations. This is done with the intent of increasing the probability that their activities will be carried out in the best interests of individuals, families and groups with whom student counsellors are in relationship in their role as student counsellors.

Student counsellors define harm and benefit in terms of both the physical and psychological dimensions. They are concerned about such factors as feelings of self-worth, fear, humiliation,

interpersonal trust, cynicism, and both self-knowledge and general knowledge, as well as such factors as physical safety, comfort, pain, and injury. They are concerned about immediate, short-term, and long-term effects.

Responsible caring recognizes and acknowledges (e.g., through obtaining informed consent) the ability of individuals, families and groups to care for themselves and each other. It does not replace or undermine such ability. However, student counsellors recognize that vulnerabilities increase and/or as power to control one's own life decreases, they have an increasing responsibility to protect the wellbeing of the individual, family, or group involved. For this reason, as in Principle I, student counsellors consider it their responsibility to increase safeguards proportionate to the degree of dependence; and the lack of voluntary initiation on the part of the persons involved. However, for Principle II, the safeguards are for the well-being of persons rather than for the rights of persons.

Ethical Standards

In adhering to the Principle of Responsible Caring, student counsellors would:

General Caring

- 1) Protect and promote the welfare of clients, students, research participants, colleagues and others with whom they come in contact in their role as student counsellors.
- 2) Avoid doing harm to clients, students, research participants, colleagues and others with whom they come in contact in their role as student counsellors.
- 3) Accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions.
- 4) Refuse to advise, train or supply information to anyone who intends to use the knowledge or skills to harm others.
- 5) Make every effort to ensure that student counselling knowledge is not misused, intentionally or unintentionally, to harm others.

Competence/Knowledge

- 6) Only offer services or carry out activities (without supervision) for which they have established their competence and their ability to carry them out to the benefit of others.
- 7) If it becomes apparent that a client's problems are beyond their competence, refer the client to take immediate steps to obtain consultation or to a colleague or other appropriate propriety professional, whichever is more likely to result in providing the client with competent service.
- 8) Fully acquaint themselves with the relevant existing knowledge so as to better anticipate the consequences of their actions and to discern which activities are most likely to be of benefit to the individuals, families and groups with whom they are in contact.

- 9) Continually re-evaluate how their own backgrounds, values, social context, and individual differences influence their interactions with others, and iterate this awareness into all efforts to act to the benefit of others.

Risk Benefit Analysis

- 10) Assess the individuals, families and fit involved in their activities adequately enough to ensure that they will be able to discern what will benefit and not harm those persons.
- 11) Be sufficiently sensitive to vulnerabilities and individual differences to discern what will benefit and not harm persons involved in their service, research and teaching activities.
- 12) Carry out pilot studies to determine the effects of all-new procedures and techniques, which might carry some risks, before considering their use on a broader scale.
- 13) Before making a decision to proceed, seek an independent and adequate ethical review of the balance of risks and potential benefits of all research which involves procedures of unknown consequence, or where pain, discomfort and harm are possible.
- 14) Not carry out any activity unless the probable benefit is proportionately greater than the risk involved.

Maximize Benefit

- 15) Provide services which are coordinated over time and coordinated with other service providers to avoid duplication or working at cross-purposes thereby reducing the benefit to the service recipient. Such coordination would be promoted by the maintenance of adequate records and communication with other service providers.
- 16) Make themselves aware of the knowledge and skills of professionals from other disciplines (e.g. law, medicine) and make use of them or advise their utilization, where relevant, to the benefit of others.
- 17) Strive to obtain the best possible service for those needing and seeking student counselling service. This includes recommending professionals other than student counsellors where appropriate.
- 18) Monitor and evaluate the effect of their service, research, and teaching activities, record their findings and, where appropriate, communicate new knowledge to others in the field.
- 19) Debrief research participants in such a way that their knowledge is enhanced and they have a sense of contribution to the enhancement of knowledge.
- 20) Perform their teaching duties on the basis of careful preparation so that their instruction is current and scholarly.

- 21) Act on their obligation to facilitate the professional development of their students, employees, and supervisees by providing or arranging for adequate working conditions, timely evaluations, constructive consultation and experience opportunities.
- 22) Encourage and assist students in publication of worthy student papers.

Minimize Harm

- 23) Be acutely aware of the power relationship in therapy and, therefore, not encourage or engage in sexual intimacy with therapy clients.
- 24) Seek appropriate help and/or discontinue student counselling activity for an appropriate period of time when a physical or student counselling condition reduces their ability to act in the best interests of others.
- 25) Be careful not to engage in activities in a way that could place incidentally-involved individuals at risk.
- 26) Be acutely aware of the need for discretion in the recording and communication of information in order that the information not be interpreted or used to the detriment of others. This includes, but is not limited to: not recording information which could lead to misinterpretation and misuse, avoiding conjecture, clearly labelling opinion, and communicating information in language that can be clearly understood by the particular recipient of the information.
- 27) If unable to meet requests for needed student counselling services or activities, give reasonable assistance in helping to secure the needed service or activity.
- 28) If referring an individual, family or group to a colleague or other professional, maintain appropriate contact, support and responsibility for caring until the colleague or other professional begins service.
- 29) Before discontinuing services to a client, give reasonable notice and be reasonably assured that the discontinuation will cause no harm to the client.
- 30) When risk or harm to some participants is possible, screen appropriate researches participants and selects those not likely to be harmed by the research.
- 31) Act to minimize the impact of any of their research activities on the research participants' physical and mental integrity and on the personality of the participant.

Offset Correct Harm

- 32) Terminate an activity when it is clear that the activity is more harmful than beneficial, or when the activity is no longer needed.

- 33) Refuse to help individuals, families or groups to carry out or submit to activities which, according to current knowledge and/or legal and professional guidelines, would cause serious physical or emotional harm to themselves or others.
- 34) Do everything possible to stop or offset the consequences of actions by others when these actions are likely to cause serious physical harm or death. This may include reporting to appropriate authorities (e.g., the police.) or an intended victim, and would be done even when a confidential relationship is involved.
- 35) Act to stop or offset the consequences of clearly harmful activities being carried out by another student counsellor or professional when these activities have come to their attention outside of a confidential client relationship with the student counsellor or professional involved. This would include talking informally with the student counsellor or professional, obtaining objective information, and, if possible, the assurance that the harm will discontinue and be corrected. If the harm is serious and/or continues to persist, the situation would be reported to the appropriate regulatory body, authority, and/or committee for action.
- 36) Not place an individual, group, or family needing service at a serious disadvantage by offering them no service over an unreasonable period of time in order to fulfill the conditions of a control condition in a research study, and, where resources allow, would offer such person(s) the service found to be most effective after the research study is completed.
- 37) Debrief research participants in such a way that any harm caused can be discerned, and act to correct any resultant harm.

Extended Responsibility

- 38) When appropriate, encourage others with they come in contact in their role as student counsellors to care responsibly for themselves and for others.
- 43) Assume overall responsibility for the professional activities of their assistants, students, supervisees, and employees with regard to the Principle of Responsible Caring, all of whom, however, incur similar obligations.

Principle III: Integrity in Relationships

Values Statement

The relationships formed by student counsellors in the course of their work embody explicit and implicit mutual expectations of integrity. These expectations include: fairness, impartiality; straightforwardness; avoidance of misrepresentation; avoidance of conflicts of interest; and, the provision of accurate information. Student counsellors have a responsibility to meet these expectations and to encourage reciprocation. Student counsellors who fail to do so undermine the trust and mutual respect upon which professional relationships, are built. In addition, a lack of

honesty, the presentation of inaccurate information, and bias in reporting can distort and even invalidate scientific progress, which rests on the accumulated work of many investigators.

As the values of honesty and straight-forwardness exist within the context of Respect for the Dignity of Persons (Principle I) and Responsible Caring (Principle II), there will be circumstances in which honesty and straight-forwardness will need to be tempered. Full disclosure may not be needed or desired by others and, in some circumstances, may be a risk to their dignity or well-being. In such circumstances, however, student counsellors have a responsibility to ensure that their decision to withhold information is justified by higher-order values.

Of special concern to student counsellors is the use of deception in research or therapy (e.g. paradoxical intention). Although research which uses deception can lead to knowledge which is beneficial, and therapy which uses deception can lead to beneficial changes for the client, such benefits must be weighed against the individuals right to self-determination and the importance of public and individual trust in student counselling. For these reasons, student counsellors have a serious obligation to consider the need for, the possible consequences of, and their responsibility to correct any harmful effects of deception.

In addition to the above issues, integrity in relationships also implies that, in as much as functioning as student counsellors presumes specialized knowledge and expertise, student counsellors have a responsibility to maintain competence in their declared area(s) of practice. It also requires that student counsellors, in as much as they present themselves as members and representatives of a specific profession, have a responsibility to actively rely on and be guided by their professional community and its guidelines and requirements.

Ethical Standards

In adhering to the Principle of Integrity in Relationships, student counsellors would:

Accuracy / Honesty

- 1) Not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or misrepresentation in their professional practice.
- 2) Accurately represent their own and their associates' professional qualifications, education, experience, competence and affiliations, in all spoken, written or printed communications.
- 3) Carefully protect their own and their associates, professional credentials from being misrepresented by others, and act quickly to correct any such misrepresentation.
- 4) Maintain competence in their declared area(s) of student counselling competence, not just in their current area(s) of activity (see Principle II).
- 5) Accurately represent their activities, functions, and likely outcome of their work in all spoken, written or printed communication.

- 6) Ensure that their activities, functions and likely outcomes of their activities are not misrepresented by others and act quickly to correct any such misrepresentation.
- 7) Take credit only for the work that they have actually done and give credit for work done by others in proportion to their contribution.
- 8) Acknowledge the limitations of their knowledge, findings, interventions and views.
- 9) Not suppress disconfirming evidence of their findings and views acknowledging alternative hypotheses and explanations.

Straight Forwardness/Openness

- 10) When establishing written or unwritten contracts, be clear and straightforward about all information needed to establish a valid agreement (e.g., fees, concerns, mutual responsibilities, ethical responsibilities of student counsellors, purpose and nature of the relationship, alternatives, likely experiences, possible conflicts, possible outcomes, and expectations for sharing and using information generated).
- 11) When appropriate and/or when asked, provide suitable information about the results of assessments or findings to the persons involved. This information would be communicated in understandable language.
- 12) When appropriate and/or when asked, fully explain reasons for their actions to persons who have been affected by their actions.
- 13) Honour all promises and commitments included in any agreement unless serious and unexpected circumstances intervene. If such circumstances occur, then the student counsellor would make a full and honest explanation to other parties involved.
- 14) When making statements or when involved in public activities, make clear whether they are acting as private citizens, as members of specific organizations or groups, or as representatives of the student counselling profession.
- 15) Conduct research in a way that is consistent with a commitment to honest, open inquiry, and to clear communication of sponsorship and research aims.
- 16) Submit their research in some accurate form to independent colleagues for their comments and evaluations.
- 17) As teachers, encourage the free exchange of ideas between themselves and their students.
- 18) Make no attempt to conceal the status of a trainee.

Bias

- 19) Continually re-evaluate how their personal values influence their activities and thinking, integrating this awareness into all attempts to be accurate and fair.

- 20) When communicating their knowledge, findings and views, do so as completely, accurately and fairly as possible, taking care to distinguish what is supported by objective evidence and what is personal interpretation or opinion.
- 21) As teachers, present information accurately, avoiding bias in the selection and presentation of the information, and publicly acknowledging any personal bias which influences the selection and presentation of information.
- 22) Act quickly to clarify any distortion by a sponsor, client, or other persons of the findings of their research.

Conflict of Interest

- 23) Not exploit any professional relationship to unethically further personal, political, or business interests. This includes, but is not limited to: soliciting clients of one's employing agency for private practice; taking advantage of trust or dependency to engage in sexual activities or to frighten clients into receiving services, using the resources of one's employing institution for purposes not agreed to; and, securing or accepting significant financial or material benefit for services which are already awarded by salary.
- 24) Avoid situations which would present a conflict of interest or an appearance of a conflict of interest and/or situations which would reduce their ability to be objective.
- 25) If actual or possible conflicts of interest arise, inform all parties of the need to resolve the issue(s) in a just and fair manner, and take all reasonable steps to resolve the issue(s) in such manner.

Withholding Information/Temporary Deception

- 26) Not engage in withholding of information or temporary deception if there are alternative Procedures available and/or if the negative effects of the deception cannot be predicted or offset.
- 27) Not engage in withholding of information or temporary deception if it would interfere with the clients' or research participants' understanding of facts which clearly might influence their decision to give informed consent.
- 28) Use the minimum of withholding of information or temporary deception necessary.
- 29) If withholding of information or temporary deception has occurred in research, provide research participants during debriefing with a full clarification of the nature of the study and remove any misconceptions which might have arisen, assuring the participant that the withholding or deception was neither arbitrary nor capricious.
- 30) If withholding of information or temporary deception has occurred in service activities, act to re-establish any trust which might have been lost.

- 31) Before making a decision to proceed, seek an independent and adequate ethical review of the risks to public or individual trust and of safeguards to protect such trust for any research which uses withholding of information or temporary deception.

Reliance on Profession

- 32) Familiarize themselves with their profession's rules and regulations and abide by them, unless they perceive a serious conflict with the Principles of Respect for the Dignity of Persons or Responsible Caring. (See Principle IV regarding the resolution of such conflicts).
- 33) Familiarize themselves with and demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the standards of their profession.
- 34) If faced with difficult situations (ethical, or otherwise), unless in an emergency, seek consultation from colleagues and/or appropriate professional groups and committees, and give due regard to their advice in arriving at a responsible decision.

Extended Responsibility

- 35) When appropriate, encourage others with whom they come in contact in their role as student counsellors to relate with integrity.
- 36) Assume overall responsibility for the professional activities of their assistants, students, supervisees, and employees with regard to the Principle of Integrity in Relationships, all of whom, however, incur similar obligations.

Principle IV: Responsibility to Society and Employing Institutions

Values Statement

Student counselling exists as a profession within the context of human society. Student counsellors, both as professionals and as private citizens, have responsibilities to the societies in which they live and work, such as the neighborhood or city, and to the welfare of all human beings in those societies.

Two of the legitimate expectations of student counselling as a discipline are that it will increase knowledge and that it will conduct its affairs in such ways that it will promote the welfare of all human beings.

In the context of society, the above expectations imply that counselling knowledge, when used in the development of social structures and policies will be used for beneficial purposes. Within the context of this document, social structures and policies which have beneficial purposes are defined as those which more readily support and reflect respect for the dignity of persons, responsible caring, and integrity in relationships. If counselling knowledge is used against these purposes, student counsellor ethical responsibility to comment on and try to correct the misuse. Although this is a collective responsibility, those counsellors having direct involvement in social development and/or in the theoretical or research databases that is being used have the greatest responsibility to

act. Other counsellors must decide for themselves the most appropriate and beneficial use of their time and talents to help meet this responsibility.

In carrying out their work, student counsellors acknowledge that many social structures have evolved slowly over time in response to human need and that they are valued by society and are primarily beneficial. In such circumstances, student counsellors convey respect for these social structures and avoid unwarranted or unnecessary disruption. Suggestions for and action toward changes or enhancement of such social structures are carried out only through an educational process which seeks to achieve a consensus within society through democratic means.

On the other hand, some social structures ignore or oppose the principles of respect for the dignity of person, responsible caring, and integrity in relationships to such an extent that it would be irresponsible for counsellors involved in work within or concerning these social structures not to be critical nor advocate for change to occur as quickly as possible.

* Society is used here in the broad sense of a body of individuals living as members of one or more human communities, rather than in the limited sense of state or government.

In order to be responsible to society and to contribute constructively to its ongoing evolution, student counselling as a whole needs to be self-reflective about its place in society and about the ways in which it might be contributing to or detracting from beneficial societal changes. It also needs to engage in an even-tempered observation and interpretation of social structures and policies, their effects, and their process of change, developing its ability to avoid misuse of counselling knowledge and increase its beneficial use. Once again, individual student counsellors must decide for themselves the most appropriate and beneficial use of their time and talents in helping to meet this collective responsibility.

In order to be responsible to their employing institutions and to contribute constructively to the mission, policies, and practices of these institutions, student counsellors have the obligation to work in harmony with their employers, while they simultaneously uphold the ethical principles of the profession of student counselling.

Ethical Standards

In adhering to the Principle of Responsibility to Society and Employing Institutions, student counsellors would:

Development of Knowledge

- 1) Contribute to the profession of student counselling and to society's understanding Knowledge of itself and human beings generally through a free pursuit of knowledge, unless such pursuit of ledge conflicts with other basic ethical requirements.
- 2) Keep informed of progress in their area(s) of student counselling activity, take this progress into account in their work, and try to make their own contributions to this progress.

Beneficial Activities

- 3) Participate in, and contribute to, continuing education and professional growth of self and colleagues.
- 4) Participate in the process of critical self-evaluation of the profession's place in society and about the ways the profession might be contributing to or detracting from beneficial societal functioning and changes.
- 5) Uphold the profession's responsibility to society by maintaining the highest standards of the profession.
- 6) Protect the skills, knowledge and interpretations of student Counselling from being misused, used incompetently, or made useless (e.g loss of security of assessment techniques) by others.
- 7) Contribute to the general welfare of society by offering a portion of their time to work for which they receive little or no financial return.
- 8) Uphold the profession's responsibility to society by bringing incompetent or unethical behaviour to the attention of appropriate regulatory bodies, authorities, and/or committees if informal resolution or correction of the situation is not appropriate or possible.

Respect for Society

- 9) Acquire an adequate knowledge of the culture, social structure, and customs of the community before beginning any major work there.
- 10) Convey respect for prevailing community laws, mores, social customs and cultural expectations in all professional activities provided that this does not contravene respect for the dignity of persons, responsible caring, and integrity in relationships.
- 11) Abide by all governmental and institutional laws and regulations unless those laws and regulations seriously conflict with ethical principles contained herein. If such conflict exists, decision for action is considered a matter of personal conscience.
- 12) In any apparent conflict between keeping a law and following a professional ethical principle, unless in an emergency consult with colleagues and seek consensus as to the most ethical course of action and the most responsible, knowledgeable, effective and respectful way to carry it out.

Development of Society

- 13) When appropriate and possible, act to change those aspect of the profession of student counselling which detract from beneficial societal changes.

- 14) In research and service activities, be sensitive to the needs and problems of society when determining what questions will be asked or what kind of services will be developed, what information will be collected, and how results or findings will be interpreted.
- 15) If working in, and extending the boundaries of student counselling to societal issues, be especially careful to keep well informed through consultation with colleagues, professional reading, and continuing education about the issues involved.
- 16) Speak out when they possess expert knowledge that bears on important societal issues being studied or discussed.
- 17) Provide thorough discussion of the limits of their data if their work touches on social policy and structure.
- 18) Make themselves aware of the current social and political climate and of previous and possible future societal misuses of counselling knowledge, and exercise due discretion in communicating counselling information (e.g. research results, theoretical knowledge) in order to discourage any further misuse.
- 19) Exercise particular care if reporting the results of any work with vulnerable groups, ensuring that results are not likely to be misinterpreted or misused in the development of social policy and practices (e.g. used to manipulate the persons concerned).
- 20) When involved in public policy issues, provide the public with any counselling knowledge relevant to their informed participation in the shaping of social policies and structures.
- 21) When involved in work within or concerning specific social structures, speak out if the policies or practices of the social structure seriously ignore or oppose the principles of respect for the dignity of persons, responsible caring, and integrity in relationships.

Extended Responsibility

- 22) When appropriate, encourage others with whom they come in contact in their role as student counsellors to exercise responsibility to society.
- 23) Assume overall responsibility for the professional activities of their assistants, students, supervisees and employees with regard to the Principle of Responsibility to Society and Employing Institutions, all of whom, however, incur similar obligations.

Institutional Promotion

- 24) Make contributions to their employing institution in support of its goals, missions and policies.
- 25) Ensure accurate presentation of institutional goals, services, programmes, and policies to the public, students, prospective students, colleagues and subordinates.

- 26) Inform appropriate officials of conditions that may be potentially disruptive or damaging to the institution's mission, personnel, and property.
- 27) Inform employers of conditions which may curtail their effectiveness.
- 28) Acknowledge responsibilities to both the individuals served and the institution within which the service is performed, ensuring that professional activities are in accord with the mission of the institution.
- 29) In situations of substantial disagreement and conflict between student counsellors and employing institutions regarding professional or personal values, take responsibility to directly and constructively seek resolution of the conflicts. Resolution of such conflicts may result either in sustained efforts to modify institutional policies and practices or in a decision to terminate institutional affiliation.
- 30) Regularly and systematically evaluate those programmes, services, and courses for which they are responsible in accordance with sound evaluation principles and make these evaluation results available to appropriate institutional personnel.

This draft code of ethics for the SSCSA is to a large extent a modification and brief extension of the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists. It was compiled by the Ethics Committee of the SSCSA, comprising Ms Sheri Beerlall, Dr Ravi Naidoo and Mr. Rubin Hare. The Committee acknowledges the much-valued efforts of Mr. Andrew Swart in the pursuit of an ethical code for the Society.