Code of Ethics

Code of Ethics for Victim Counselors and Certified Victim Advocates

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence expects victim counselors and certified victim advocates to act with integrity, to treat accused and accuser alike with dignity and compassion in an inclusive, equitable, anti-racist and accessible manner. To these ends, this code of ethnics will govern the conduct of victim counselors and certified victim advocates:

I. Victim counselors and certified victim advocates (hereinafter "advocates") have an ethical responsibility to victims who seek their assistance.

A. Advocates will be competent.

1. Advocates will have knowledge of the field of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and crisis intervention techniques and the skills to apply the knowledge.
2. Advocates will stay current on their certification and continue their learning to serve victims.
3. Advocates will operate within their competence limits, seek supervision if there is a question, and provide referrals for specializations and in areas where they require more knowledge.
4. Advocates will seek supervision and consult with colleagues to ensure services provided are in the best interest of victims.

B. Advocates will inform victims of the following:

1. Roles, responsibilities, and training for advocates.
2. Available services and resources that align with and may help the victim's needs and goals.
3. What victims can expect from sexual violence, domestic violence and dual programs.
4. All services are voluntary, and the victim may choose all, part or none of what is offered.
5. The victim's right to anonymity.
6. An explanation of confidentiality and privilege in accordance with IA code 915.20.
7. The procedures to report grievances.

C. Advocates will delineate between work and social relationships and will be aware of the inherent privilege and power differences. The Advocate will never exploit relationships with victims for personal advantage.

1. Prior and/or present social, familial or business relationships with victims should be disclosed in writing, in adherence with a written conflict-of-interest policy, which will be provided to a

supervisor and vote by supervisor and designated members of a conflict-of-interest committee for the purpose of establishing the best boundaries between advocate and victim.
2. Provision of services to persons related by consanguinity or affinity, within the third degree is prohibited; this means: intimate partners, children, parents, siblings, half-siblings, grandchildren, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, any step- version of the foregoing, or fictive kin that stand in these relationships. This prohibition may be waived if the relationship is disclosed in advance using the program's conflict of interest policy and appropriate boundaries have been put in place.

D. Advocates will not participate in sexual exploitation and abuse.

1. It is inappropriate to create a personal relationship with a victim who has requested, has received, or is receiving services. Victimization may be a long-term issue; therefore, a minimum of 1 year after the provision of services should be adhered to before creating a personal relationship with a victim.
2. Sexual/romantic relationships with a victim who has requested, has received, or is receiving services is inappropriate.

E. Advocates will adhere to the following standards of care:

1. Provide adequate information to the victim so that they can make informed choices.
2.Treat the client with respect and honesty in both verbal and nonverbal communication.
3. Create a nonjudgmental environment, where the victim feels free to share honestly.
4. Believe the victim's story and provide tools for healing.
5. Allow victims to guide their healing while informing them of varied approaches.
6. Provide education to victims related to what is beneficial for their own needs.
7.Advocates will do nothing to increase the victim's danger or harm.

F. Advocates will understand the multifaceted nature of culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths and risk factors of all cultures.

1. Advocates should seek learning opportunities, education and resources about the nature of social diversity and oppression while actively seeking to understand intersections of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical disability with gender-based violence.
2. Advocates will actively request and co-advocate with culturally specific programs/organizations that have expertise in working with communities that have been historically disenfranchised.
3. Advocates will be knowledgeable and prepared to accommodate individuals who face barriers to traditional services including language accessibility, and seen and unseen for physical accessibility and neurodivergence, etc.
4. Advocates will refer to another advocate internally, before referring externally, if there is a conflict between one victim's needs and another.
5. Advocates will fairly distribute goods, services, and time according to each victim's individual needs.

G. Termination of Services

1. Advocates will only initiate termination of services abruptly under significant and mitigating circumstances, considering all factors in the situation and taking care to minimize possible adverse effects.
2. Advocates who anticipate termination or interruption of service to victims should seek referrals and potential case management transfers, immediately notify those individuals, and provide referrals, potential transfers or terminate services based on victim's needs and preferences.

II. Advocates have an Ethical Responsibility to keep records.

A. Advocates will keep records documenting the type of service provided as mandated by funders in accordance with state and federal guidelines.
B. Advocates will record statistical and factual information only.
C. Advocates will allow victims access to their own records and expunge all or part of those records at

the victim's request.

III. Advocates have an ethical responsibility to themselves.

A. Advocates with education, training and experience have the right to be called professionals and to be treated professionally.
B. Advocates have an obligation to join with other professionals to promote and support recognition and fair treatment of the profession.
C. Advocates will see to their own empowerment and nurturing.
D. Advocates will recognize when personal circumstances may compromise professional abilities, performance, or judgment and will take steps to resolve those issues through employee resources, supervision, and other support offered by the program.

IV. Advocates will report violations of the Code of Ethics by fellow advocates by following the grievance procedures at their local program. Advocates may contact the coalition for further support.

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