

## Ethical and Legal Viewpoint

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### **Introduction**

As a professional counselor, there will be times when one will be encounter ethical dilemma as there are situations where one has to decide whether maintaining standards of what is right and what is wrong is certain situations is the ideal thing to do. In that view, it is thus crucial that counselors are acquainted with professional ethical standards and make sure that they use the standards as a guide when there are offering their services to different types of people. This paper focuses on the practice of a counselor and highlights the ethical and legal dilemmas that might a counselor might encounter. In particular, the paper focuses of; the topic of volunteering and what one needs to uphold when engaging in volunteering work, self-disclosure, objectivity, self-care and spirituality.

#### **Volunteerism - standards to uphold when in a voluntary position**

Volunteerism entails offering services for free or without receiving any form of compensation for the services offered. In that view, in case of a counselor, a counselor who volunteers would be offering counseling services free of charge. Nevertheless, it can be explained that even if the services will be offered free of charge, the counselor has to ensure that there are certain standards that are upheld. For instance, according to the American Psychological Association (2002), it is crucial that the services that are been offered free of charge are not related to anything else. For example, it would be wrong for a counselor to claim to offer voluntary services while in real sense, the counselor is hoping to get the person whom the free services was offered at to pay for

some other services. Indeed, a great example would be that of a chemist who offers to conduct free laboratory test but then charges for the medication that he/she sells since in such a situation, it is most likely that the chemist might interfere with the test so that he/she will be able to sell the medication that earns high profit margins. In short, the counselor needs to ensure that there exists no form of relationship with those who are been counseled.

### **Self-Disclosure**

Self-disclosure consists of the counselor disclosing or rather sharing his/her personal details with the client that the counselor is attending to. Even though disclosing personal information is not wrong as there are times when the client who is been attended to might want to know more about the counselor, it would be wrong for the counselor to disclose himself/herself to the client with the hope that the client will get to calm down or change the clients views about the counselor. For example, a counselor who is helping a drug addict might disclose to the client that he/she was also a drug addict during the course of the counseling sessions. Nevertheless, it would be wrong for the counselor to hope that by making such disclosures, the client will have more trust on the counselor as that could be misleading.

As discussed by Zur (2011), the issue of disclosure is a common issue when it comes to counseling. According to Zur (2011) it is always crucial that the counselor ensures that the whenever he/she is disclosing his/her personal information to the client, the disclosure should not be aimed to be beneficial to the counselor but to the

client. For example, in the previous example of a drug addict, the counselor can disclose to the client that he/she was also an addict since by doing so; the recovering drug addict would be able to see that indeed he can also be able to get rid of drug addiction and live a meaningful life as is the case with the counselor.

### **Objectivity**

Whenever a counselor is providing counseling services it is crucial that the counselor ensures that he/she remains objective since as explained by Shippey (2013), when objectivity is lost, then the counselor might not be able to assist the client as might have been intended. On the other hand, by not being objective, the counselor will have a better understanding of the client's situation and be of great help unlike would be the case when the counselor is only thinking about the issue that is been addressed from his/her own viewpoint. As a trained counselor, anyone who is a practicing counselor should be able to give the client enough time to explain his/her opinions rather than the counselor only focusing on how to instill his/her views on the client's mind.

### **Self-care**

According to Shallcross (2011), it is critical that during the course of work, the counselor is able to take care of himself/herself both in view of physical and emotional health. Indeed, Shallcross (2011) explained that it would almost be impossible for a counselor to counsel anyone when he is not in good health. Thus, it is vital that a counselor ensures he divides his time well between work and personal life. According to Counseling Directory (2013), some of the strategies to enhance self-care comprises of

allocating sufficient time to carry out some personal chores on each day rather than just focusing on work. Indeed, self-care is very personal and depends on the circumstances of every individual and it is thus vital that as counselor works on his own in order to find a self-care recipe that is ideal for him.

### **Spirituality**

A counselor might find it hard to integrate spirituality in the counseling practice mainly to the differences that might exist. For example, a counselor who is a Christian will find it a challenge to try to include his Christian beliefs to counseling session that involve an individual who is a Muslim. In such situations, an ethical counselor will not try to instill his personal beliefs on the individual who is being counseled. Nevertheless, if it becomes clear in counseling that the client's beliefs are causing needless agony or if the clients explain difficulty integrating inconsistencies between personal values or goals and the limitations of spiritual beliefs, the counselor should take it upon himself to ensure that the client applies the option that is going to enhance his wellbeing.

On the other hand, the counselor also needs to ensure that he stays true to his spiritual beliefs by regularly practicing his spiritual beliefs as failure to do so will result to the counselor's spiritual beliefs weakening.

### References

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