

IRISH COUNCIL FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY ETHICAL GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION:

The Irish Council for Psychotherapy is the professional umbrella organisation for psychotherapists in Ireland. It is comprised of a range of organisations representing different modalities within the profession. These Ethical Guidelines outline the general standards of professional conduct to which member organisations subscribe. Our membership is comprised of a variety of unique and diversely oriented psychotherapists who come together to share general ethical principles by which they identify themselves. Each organisation may expand on these standards in their separate Codes of Ethics in a manner which is compatible with these guidelines. All member organisations are required to have their own Complaints Procedure. They should also have an Appeals Procedure which is approved by ICP.

The Irish Council for Psychotherapy prioritises the continuing development of ethically responsible and self-reflective psychotherapists. The ethical practice of psychotherapy requires that practitioners be responsible for their part in the therapeutic alliance. The work of psychotherapy is based on the principles of alleviating suffering, promoting the well-being of clients and fundamentally not doing harm. Psychotherapists are responsible for developing and maintaining the level and range of competence appropriate to their area of professional specialisation, using their skills and judgement for the benefit of the client, being adequately aware of their limitations and prejudices and for having due recognition of the value and dignity of every human being.

1. GENERAL PRINCIPLE

Members Sections of the Irish Council for Psychotherapy must ensure that each of their accredited psychotherapists (ICP Registrants), must:

- 1.1 Conduct their professional practices with honesty and integrity.
- 1.2 Ensure the client's welfare is always the prime consideration for the psychotherapist. The psychotherapist is expected to uphold the highest ethical and professional standards, maintain the therapeutic relationship without exploiting it for social, personal, or financial gain.
- 1.3 Maintain awareness of the impact of their behaviour both during the course of therapy and afterward.
- 1.4 Recognise and respect the diversity to be found among themselves and clients and uphold the value of freedom of expression.
- 1.5 Recognise and respect that their diverse personalities, styles and training backgrounds contribute to positive therapeutic opportunities for clients and to the growth of the profession.
- 1.6 Recognise the value of constructive dissent to enhance clinical research and personal professional development.

1.7 Help and respect colleagues in working towards developing a better knowledge of psychotherapy in the Irish multi-cultural and economic society.

1.8 Seek appropriate advice, from the Ethical Committee of the appropriate section, where difficulties or doubts arise as to whether a course of action is ethical.

1.9 Disclose to their clients, upon request, appropriate details of their training and qualifications.

1.10 Restrict their practice within the limits of their own training and competence.

2. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND CONDUCT

2.1 Each organisation of the ICP must have a published Ethical Guidelines and Practice and Complaints Procedure approved by ICP, and which is applicable to practitioners of that section and their clients.

2.2 All psychotherapists on ICP Register are required to adhere to the Ethical Guidelines and Practice of their own sections, which will be consistent with the following points:

2.2.1 **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Sections are required to ensure that members preserve confidentiality, to indicate the limitations on confidentiality offered and, if appropriate, any circumstances under which it might be broken.

2.2.2 **PUBLICATION:** Sections are required to ensure that psychotherapists safeguard the welfare and anonymity of clients when any form of publication is being considered, and to obtain the client's consent whenever possible.

2.2.3 **ADVERTISING:** Sections are required that they, and their members, ensure that promotion and publicity material re their work reflects a true description of their work, and is not misleading by statement, implication or omission.

2.2.4 **QUALIFICATIONS:** Sections are required to ensure that their members disclose their qualifications, when requested, and not claim, or imply, qualifications which they do not have.

2.2.5 **PRACTITIONER COMPETENCE:** Sections are required to ensure that their members maintain their ability to practice competently and take the necessary means to do so.

2.2.6 **TERMS AND CONDITIONS AND METHODS OF PRACTICE:** Sections are required to ensure that their members disclose, on request, their terms, conditions and, where appropriate, methods of practice at the outset of psychotherapy.

2.2.7 **RELATIONSHIP WITH CLIENTS:** Sections are required to ensure that their members maintain appropriate boundaries with their clients, and do not exploit current or past clients in any way.

2 .2.8 **RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS:** Sections are required to ensure that their members consider the client's best interests when making appropriate contact with other relevant professionals with the client's knowledge. Psychotherapists should be aware of their own limitations.

2 .2.9 **RESEARCH:** Sections are required to ensure that their members clarify with clients the nature, purpose and conditions of any research in which clients are to be involved, and to obtain their full and informed consent before commencement.

2 .2.10 **PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE:** Sections are required to ensure that their members have adequate and appropriate Professional Indemnity Insurance.

2 .2.11 **RIGHT TO DIGNITY AND RESPECT:** All psychotherapists working under the ICP umbrella work from models of therapy that have built in a deep respect for the persons with whom they work. Notwithstanding this, the ICP wish to enshrine the key principle of right to dignity for all persons attending for psychotherapy and working with them. In this regard, the ICP note that no person should be discriminated against on grounds of ethnicity, colour, beliefs/religion, gender, sexual orientation, or member of minority group or any other distinction that might be cause for discrimination. Each person has a right to be treated with dignity and respect. All organisations who are members of the ICP ascribe to these principles.

3. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

3.1 Each organisation of the ICP must have published a Complaints Procedure. The purpose of a Complaints Procedure is to ensure that practitioners and their clients have clear information about the procedures and process involved in dealing with complaints. All psychotherapists on the ICP Register are required to adhere to the Complaints Procedure of their own organisation.

3.2 **MAKING A COMPLAINT:** A client wishing to complain shall be advised to contact the Member Organisation.

3.3 **RECEIVING A COMPLAINT:** A Member Organisation receiving a complaint against one of its psychotherapists, shall ensure that the therapist is informed immediately and that both complainant and therapist are aware of the Complaints Procedure.

3.4 **APPEALS:** After the completion of the Complaints Procedure within an organisation, provision must be made for an appeal, stating time limits, grounds and procedures.

3.5 **REPORTS TO THE ICP REGISTRATION BOARD:** Organisations are required to report without delay to the ICP Registration Board, the names of members who have been suspended or expelled.

3.6 **COMPLAINTS UPHeld IN ANOTHER ORGANISATION:** Psychotherapists are required to inform, without delay, each Organisation of which they are a member, if any complaint is upheld against them in another Member Organisation.

3.7 **CONDUCT OF COLLEAGUES:** Psychotherapists concerned that a colleague's conduct may be unprofessional, should initiate the Complaints Procedure of the relevant Member Organisation.

3.8 **RESIGNATION**: The resignation of a member of an Organisation shall not be allowed to impede the process of any investigation as long as the alleged offence took place during that person's membership.

3.9 **SANCTIONS**: Psychotherapists who are suspended by, or expelled from a Member Organisation, are automatically deleted from the ICP Register. Organisations who are deemed by the ICP Board to have failed to adhere to ethical practice or procedures in administration of their affairs, and who have failed to rectify their shortcomings, shall automatically cease to be a Member Organisation of the ICP.

3.10 **MONITORING COMPLAINTS**: Member Organisations shall report to the ICP annually concerning the number of complaints received, the nature of the complaints and their disposition.