

**Mental Health Ethics: Being a Trustworthy Professional**  
*Information from ACA, NASW, and APA codes of ethics*

**Trust is the cornerstone of the counseling relationship.**  
*(From ACA Ethics code intro)*

**What does it mean to be trustworthy??**

**Our role as a mental health provider is for therapeutic purposes**

- to alleviate behavioral/mental health disorders
  - to understand motivation
  - to resolve emotional, relational, attitudinal conflicts
  - to modify behaviors that interfere with functioning
- Methods: assessment, diagnosis, treatment, counseling  
Format: Planned procedure of intervention on a regular basis over time

**ACA's Fundamental Principles**

- Autonomy
- Nonmaleficence & beneficence
- Justice
- Fidelity
- veracity

**APA General Principles**

- Beneficence & Nonmaleficence
- Fidelity & responsibility
- Integrity
- Justice
- Respect for People's Rights & Dignity

**NASW Core Values:**

- Service
- Social Justice
- Dignity and Worth of the Person
- Importance of human relationships
- Integrity
- Competence

**Why do I act ethically?**

**ACA Section A: Counseling Relationship – trust is cornerstone (what can the public trust?)**

**NASW: Section 1: Social Worker’s Responsibility to clients**

**APA Section 3: Human Relations; Section 10: Therapy**

*Be frank about what you can provide and who you’re providing it to.*

*Who are your allegiances to?*

*What can the client expect in this professional relationship?*

*Be clear about money.*

**ACA Section B: Confidentiality (the information shared in counseling) & Privacy (the person)**

**NASW Section 1.07: Privacy & Confidentiality**

**APA Section 4: Privacy & confidentiality**

*Give your clients the right to share only what they want to. Don’t google them*

*What can the client expect regarding their confidentiality? Exceptions?*

*Collaborative relationship with parents of clients that can’t give consent*

*Records must be kept/kept & destroyed confidentially/given when requested*

**NOTE: Client access to records.** Don’t drag feet when records are requested. (ACA B.6.e.;

NASW 1.08 & 3.04; APA 6.02) Our procedures:

1) Verify with the client that they did in fact request the records.

2) Discuss the nature of the request.

3) Request to send a summary of the notes. (Ethical standard is that less is more.)

4) Send it to the client with 48 hours.

5) Try to let this whole process be 1 week or less.

**ACA Section C: Professional responsibility**

**NASW 1.04: Competence & Section 4: Responsibilities as Professionals**

**APA Section 2: Competence & Section 3: Human Relations**

*Be honest, open, and accurate. Be honest about what you can do.*

*Only do what you have been educated, trained, and supervised to do.*

*Consult. Continue to learn. Use evidence-based treatments.*

*Monitor impairment. Take care of yourself.*

*Know the ethics. Don’t discriminate.*

**ACA Section D: Relationships with other professionals**

**NASW Section 2: Responsibilities to Colleagues**

**APA Section 3: Human Relations**

*Work well with others to best serve clients – be respectful, be humble.*

*If something’s not good in our agency – talk to the leadership!*

*If formally consulting – clarify rights and responsibilities.*

**ACA Section F: Supervision, Training and teaching**  
**NASW 3.01: Supervision/Consultation**  
**APA Section 7: Education and Training**

*Supervisors: Evaluate fairly, accurately, honestly; be respectful and boundaried keep records, give feedback (informal and formal), endorse only when appropriate. Teach supervisee: client rights, ethical & legal standards, informed consent*

*Supervisees: know and follow ethics, monitor for impairment, disclose that you're a supervisee.*

**ACA Section H: Distance counseling**  
**NASW Section 1.06: Conflicts of Interest**

*Get to know technology resources and ethical/legal considerations  
Know the laws related to this – e.g. only counsel clients in states where you're licensed.  
Inform clients of unique considerations, including limitations on confidentiality.  
Stay within the counseling relationship.  
Put links on our website of professional boards, Use encrypted platforms...(ECC does this)*

**NASW Section 6: Responsibilities to Broader Society**  
**ACA Section A.7**

*Work to meet people's basic needs, improve living conditions  
Work to improve systems at all levels – within community to global systems.  
Engage in social and political action.*

**ACA Section I: Resolving ethical issues**  
**APA Section 1: Resolving ethical Issues**

*Learn ethics - be aware of how they may conflict with laws, organizational policies.  
Try to resolve ethical dilemmas. Communicate.  
Use a model to figure out dilemmas. Document.*

**Example Model:**

- Consider ethical standards and laws involved.
- Consult.
- Identify possible courses of action
- Deliberate possible risks and benefits
- Show how your choice considers the welfare of all