



**CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF COUNSELING
IN NIGERIA**



CODE OF ETHICS & PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT HANDBOOK

TABLE OF CONTENT

Section A: Preamble	01
Section B: Why Code Of Ethics?	02
Section C: Ethics Of Purpose	03
Section D: Core Ethical Principles	04
Section E: Standards Of Professional Practice	07
Section F: Distance Counseling, Technology & Social Media	09
Section G: Evaluation, Assessment & Interpretation	11
Section H: Responsibilities To Clients	13
Section I: Responsibilities To The Profession	14
Section J: Responsibilities In Training & Research	15
Section K: Responsibilities To Society	16
Section L: Enforcement & Disciplinary Procedures	18
Section M: Artificial Intelligence (Ai) In Counseling	20
Section N: Ethical Decision-Making Model	21
Section O: Case Scenarios	22
Section P: Frequently Asked Questions	24
Section Q: Case Scenarios With Answers	26
Section R: Ceremonial Pledges & Oaths	30
Ethical Guidelines for Tele-Counseling	32

Preamble

The Chartered Institute of Counseling in Nigeria (CICN) exists to provide professional, global-standard regulation of the counseling profession. Counseling is a sacred trust: clients open their lives, pain, and vulnerabilities to counselors, who must in turn serve with competence, integrity, and compassion.

This Handbook was created to:

- Define the ethical framework for professional counseling practice.
- Protect the dignity, safety, and rights of clients.
- Ensure consistency in training, licensing, and service delivery.
- Equip counselors with practical tools to navigate ethical challenges.
- Position Nigeria's counseling profession within global best practices while reflecting African cultural contexts. It applies to:
 - All members of CICN (students, associates, fellows, licensed practitioners).
 - Accredited institutions and training centers under CICN.
 - Any professional delivering counseling services under CICN's name.

Through this Code, CICN affirms its commitment to empowering minds, unlocking professionalism, and promoting wholeness in individuals, families, and society.

Why Code Of Ethics? □

1. **Professional Standard-Setting:**

Since CICN is the body regulating training, membership, licensing, and practice, it must define the ethical framework that every counselor under its umbrella must follow. Without it, there's no clear benchmark for professionalism.

2. **Regulatory Authority:**

As a chartered institute, CICN doesn't just provide training, it oversees the practice of counseling in Nigeria. That means it must guide and discipline members where ethical breaches occur.

3. **Global Best Practice:**

Every credible counseling institute worldwide (e.g., BACP in the UK, ACA in the US, CCPA in Canada) publishes its own Code of Ethics. This helps align local practice with international standards and gives credibility to the profession.

4. **Protection of Clients & Members:**

Ethical guidelines safeguard clients from exploitation or harm and protect counselors from legal or reputational risks.

5. **Guidance for Gray Areas:**

Counseling often involves sensitive, complex, and cross-cultural issues. Having CICN's official ethics provides clarity where religious, cultural, or personal beliefs may clash with professional practice.

Ethics Of Purpose

The Ethics of Purpose reminds us that counseling is not merely a career, it is a calling to empower humanity.

Counselors must:

- Promote Wholeness – aim not only to solve problems but to restore balance in emotional, social, spiritual, and psychological life.
- Empower, Not Control – help clients make their own choices instead of imposing personal or cultural agendas.
- Protect Human Dignity – no counseling practice should demean or exploit.
- Serve Society – counselors contribute to national healing by addressing mental health stigma, family breakdown, trauma, and conflict.
- Align with CIGN's Vision – “Empowering Minds, Unlocking Professionalism.”

Core Ethical Principles

Introduction

The foundation of counseling lies in universal ethical values that guide professional practice. Members of CIGN are expected to uphold the dignity of all persons, promote wellbeing, and ensure integrity in every professional encounter. These principles serve as the moral compass of the counseling profession.

1. Respect for Human Dignity

Every client has equal value regardless of age, tribe, gender, religion, disability, or status.

Example: A counselor must treat a rural farmer with the same respect as a corporate executive.

2. Confidentiality & Trust

Counselors must safeguard what clients share in trust.

Exceptions: if the client poses a risk to self/others, child abuse is suspected, or law requires disclosure.

Example: If a client admits suicidal intent, confidentiality may be limited to save their life.

3. Professional Competence

Counselors practice only in areas where they have training. Ongoing learning (CPD, supervision) is mandatory.

Do's

- Uphold respect for human rights, dignity, and autonomy.
- Practice beneficence (do good) and non-maleficence (avoid harm).
- Ensure justice, fairness, and equity in service delivery.
- Maintain fidelity, honesty, and trustworthiness in all relationships.

Example: A counselor without addiction training must refer a substance abuse case to a specialist.

4. Non-Maleficence & Beneficence

Non-maleficence: Do no harm. Beneficence: Take proactive steps to benefit the client. Example: Avoid interventions that could retraumatize survivors of violence.

5. Justice & Fairness

No discrimination based on culture, faith, or socioeconomic status. Example: Charging exploitative fees to vulnerable clients violates justice. Integrity & Accountability

6. Be honest in credentials, services, and boundaries.

Example: Claiming a "PhD" you do not hold is unethical.

7. Cultural Sensitivity

Nigeria's diversity requires awareness of language, traditions, and beliefs. Example: A marriage counselor must respect both Christian and Islamic marital values while applying professional principles.

8. Purpose-Driven Practice

All practice must align with the deeper purpose of restoring dignity, growth, and healing.

9. Practice accountability and transparency in decision-making.

Don'ts

- Do not engage in discrimination, exploitation, or abuse of power.
- Do not allow personal, cultural, or religious biases to impair professional judgment.
- Do not misrepresent qualifications, training, or professional competence.

Standards of Professional Practice

Introduction

Counseling requires professional competence, continuous development, and adherence to best practices. Standards ensure uniformity, reliability, and the safeguarding of clients' welfare.

- **Confidentiality:** Counselors must use secure storage for files, whether paper or digital.
- **Informed Consent:** Clients must sign or verbally agree to counseling after understanding the process, risks, and limits.
- **Boundaries:** No romantic, sexual, or financial entanglements with clients. Even “gifts” must be handled cautiously.
- **Dual Relationships:** Avoid counseling close friends, relatives, or business partners.
- **Record-Keeping:** Keep notes factual, respectful, and secured.
- **Competence & Referral:** Never “experiment” with a client. If unsure, consult or refer.
- **Duty of Care:** Always prioritize safety – e.g., report domestic violence if lives are in danger.

Do's

- Provide services within the boundaries of your competence, education, and training.
- Engage in continuous professional development and supervision.
- Maintain accurate and confidential client records.
- Seek consultation or referral when a client's needs exceed your competence.

Don'ts

- Do not practice without valid certification or licensure.
- Do not exploit clients for financial, sexual, or personal gain.
- Do not breach client confidentiality unless legally or ethically justified.

Distance Counseling, Technology & Social Media

Introduction

With the rise of global connectivity, distance counseling has become essential. Ethical considerations must be applied to ensure effectiveness, confidentiality, and professional boundaries in virtual practice.

Technology and social media shape modern interactions. Counselors must maintain professionalism, confidentiality, and ethical responsibility while navigating digital spaces.

- **Informed Consent:** Clients must know about risks (e.g., data breaches, power failures).
- **Confidentiality:** Use encrypted tools and avoid public Wi-Fi.
- **Competence:** Counselors must train in online counseling methods.
- **Social Media Boundaries:**
No friending clients on personal accounts.
No posting case details even anonymously.

Case Example: A counselor who posts a client's "success story" on Facebook without consent breaches ethics.

Do's

- Use secure, encrypted platforms to protect client privacy.

- Obtain informed consent specifically for online sessions.
- Clarify limitations of virtual counseling and provide emergency contacts.
- Ensure cultural sensitivity across cross-border counseling.
- Maintain clear boundaries in online interactions with clients.
- Separate personal and professional accounts.
- Use social media to educate and advocate responsibly.
- Ensure digital content aligns with CICN values.

Don'ts

- Do not use unverified platforms that compromise confidentiality.
- Do not engage in online counseling without proper digital competence.
- Do not neglect to verify client identity and location when required.
- Do not accept client "friend requests" or engage in dual relationships online.
- Do not share confidential client information on digital platforms.
- Do not post misleading, false, or unprofessional content.

Evaluation, Assessment & Interpretation

Introduction

Assessment tools are vital for accurate understanding of clients. Ethical practice demands fairness, reliability, validity, and cultural appropriateness in their use.

- **Use Standardized Tools:** Only employ instruments validated for the Nigerian context where possible.
- **Cultural Consideration:** Some Western tools may not fit African realities; adapt responsibly.
- **Consent:** Always explain purpose before testing.
- **Feedback:** Provide results in simple, empowering language.

Case Example: Labeling a child "mentally retarded" from a test without context is unethical; instead, discuss support strategies.

Do's

- Use scientifically validated and reliable assessment instruments.
- Provide interpretations that are accurate and understandable.
- Consider cultural, social, and contextual factors in assessment. Ensure informed consent before testing.

Don'ts

- Do not manipulate or misrepresent assessment results.
- Do not use outdated, biased, or inappropriate tools.
- Do not disclose assessment outcomes without client consent.

Responsibilities to Clients

Introduction

Clients are the primary focus of counseling services. Counselors must safeguard their wellbeing, rights, and dignity above all.

- Client welfare must come first, not counselor's personal beliefs.
- Do not exploit financially, emotionally, or sexually.
- Respect the client's right to discontinue counseling.

Do's

- Prioritize client welfare, autonomy, and informed choice.
- Maintain strict confidentiality.
- Respect boundaries and avoid dual relationships.
- Ensure clients are informed of their rights and responsibilities.

Don'ts

- Do not exploit or manipulate clients.
- Do not impose personal values on clients.
- Do not abandon clients without proper referral or termination procedures.

Responsibilities to the Profession

Introduction

Counselors must uphold the integrity and advancement of the profession through collaboration, mentorship, and ethical leadership.

- Promote counseling as a respected, credible field.
- Report colleagues who breach ethics.
- Engage in professional development annually.

Do's

- Promote professional unity, integrity, and credibility.
- Report unethical practices of colleagues responsibly.
- Engage in continuous professional education and research.
- Contribute to the growth of the counseling profession locally and globally.

Don'ts

- Do not slander, defame, or undermine colleagues.
- Do not plagiarize or misrepresent professional work.
- Do not obstruct professional advancement of others out of personal interest.

Responsibilities in Training & Research

Introduction

Counselor training and research are essential for growth of the field. Ethics ensure fairness, integrity, and safety in both.

- Students and supervisees must be treated fairly.
- Research participants must give informed consent.
- Plagiarism, data falsification, and exploitation of supervisees are forbidden.

Do's

- Conduct research with integrity, transparency, and respect for participants.
- Ensure informed consent in training and research activities.
- Mentor trainees with professionalism and fairness.
- Give proper credit in publications and training materials.

Don'ts

- Do not falsify data, results, or research findings.
- Do not exploit trainees or research participants.
- Do not deny rightful acknowledgment of contributions.

Responsibilities to Society

Introduction

Counselors play a role in building healthy, ethical, and responsible societies. Their duty extends beyond clients to advocacy, justice, and social development.

- Counselors are advocates for mental health awareness.
- They must challenge stigma, exploitation, and harmful cultural practices.
- Example: Speak against female genital mutilation, domestic abuse, or exploitative marriage practices.

Do's

- Advocate for mental health awareness and accessibility.
- Promote equality, inclusiveness, and social justice.
- Offer pro bono or community service where possible.
- Report abuse, neglect, or threats to life when ethically or legally required.

Don'ts

- Do not participate in harmful or discriminatory social practices.

■ SECTION K

- Do not misuse the profession for political or financial gain.
- Do not remain silent in the face of systemic injustice.

Enforcement & Disciplinary Procedures

Introduction

Ethics are only effective if enforced. CICN holds its members accountable through:

1. Transparent and fair disciplinary mechanisms.

- Ethics & Disciplinary Committee:
 - i. Investigates complaints.
 - ii. Sanctions:
 - iii. Warning
- Mandatory retraining or/and supervision
- Suspension
- License withdrawal

2. Appeals: Members may appeal decisions through CICN's governing council.

Do's

- Comply with all CICN ethical investigations and rulings.
- Report breaches of ethics promptly and responsibly.
- Support restorative practices when possible.

■ SECTION L

Don'ts

- Do not obstruct or falsify evidence in disciplinary proceedings.
- Do not retaliate against whistleblowers or complainants.
- Do not disregard sanctions or corrective measures issued by CICN.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Counseling

Introduction

AI is reshaping mental health services, offering new opportunities and risks. Ethical use ensures technology complements, not replaces, the human essence of counseling.

Do's

- Use AI responsibly to enhance, not replace, professional judgment.
- Ensure AI tools are evidence-based, reliable, and culturally sensitive.
- Disclose AI usage to clients with transparency.
- Protect client data when using AI-assisted platforms.

Don'ts

- Do not rely solely on AI for diagnosis or therapeutic decisions.
- Do not use unregulated or biased AI tools.
- Do not mislead clients about the role of AI in services.

Ethical Decision-Making Model

1. Identify the ethical dilemma.
2. Review CIGN principles and standards.
3. Consider laws and cultural realities.
4. Consult a supervisor/colleague.
5. Explore possible actions.
6. Choose the option that best protects dignity, purpose, and client safety.
7. Document the decision process.

Case Scenarios

1. **Faith & Neutrality**

A client asks the counselor to join in prayer during a session. The counselor shares the same faith but must decide how to balance spirituality and professional neutrality.

2. **Child Abuse Disclosure**

A 12-year-old reveals sexual abuse by a relative and begs the counselor not to tell anyone. The counselor must weigh confidentiality against legal and protective duties.

3. **Online Therapy Across Borders**

A Nigerian counselor is contacted by a client living in the UK. The counselor must consider licensing, jurisdiction, and data protection laws.

4. **Dual Relationship**

A counselor is approached by a close family friend for therapy. Accepting may compromise objectivity; declining may strain family ties.

5. **Social Media Boundary**

A former client “friends” the counselor on Facebook and shares personal struggles publicly. The counselor must decide how to respond ethically.

6. Gift from a Client

A client gives the counselor an expensive wristwatch as a token of appreciation. The counselor must decide whether accepting it compromises professional boundaries.

7. Assessment & Labeling

A school counselor uses an IQ test and reports a child as “mentally slow” to teachers and parents. The ethical issue lies in interpretation and harmful labeling.

8. Cultural Conflict

A woman reports domestic violence but insists she cannot leave because “culture does not allow divorce.” The counselor must respect culture while prioritizing safety.

9. Confidentiality vs. Public Safety

A client admits plans to poison a co-worker. The counselor must decide how to act in light of duty to protect others.

10. Counselor Burnout

A counselor overwhelmed with personal issues notices declining performance in sessions. The ethical issue is practicing without self-care and risking harm to clients.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can I counsel my relatives or close friends? Generally discouraged due to lack of objectivity and risk of dual relationships. Refer to another counselor if possible.
2. Can I accept gifts from clients? Small, symbolic gifts may be accepted with caution. Expensive or frequent gifts should be declined to avoid dependency or exploitation.
3. Can I share client success stories in training or publications? Only with written informed consent and strict anonymization.
4. What if my client cannot pay? Counselors may offer reduced fees, sliding scales, or pro bono services, but must establish clear agreements to avoid exploitation.
5. Can I share counseling advice on social media? Yes, but never disclose identifiable client information. Posts should be general, educational, and professional.
6. How should I handle clients from faith-based backgrounds? Respect their beliefs without imposing yours. Integrate faith ethically only if client requests it.
7. What if I suspect a client is lying during assessment? Approach with curiosity and empathy; avoid confrontation. Document concerns and consider further evaluation.

■ SECTION P

8. Can I provide counseling outside Nigeria? Yes, if you understand the host country's licensing rules, legal implications, and use secure platforms. Otherwise, refer to a local professional.
9. How do I manage confidentiality if family members request information? Client consent is required before sharing. Without it, only legally mandated disclosures (e.g., child abuse, suicide risk) are allowed.
10. What should I do if I face an ethical dilemma? Follow the CICN Ethical Decision-Making Model: identify the issue, review ethical standards, consult, consider options, choose the action that best protects dignity and safety, and document the process.

Case Scenarios with Answers

1. Faith & Neutrality Scenario:

A client asks the counselor to pray with them during a session.

Answer:

The counselor should first clarify the client's needs and boundaries. If prayer aligns with the client's request and the counselor is comfortable, they may join briefly, but the focus should remain on therapeutic goals. Counselors must avoid imposing personal faith. If the counselor does not share the same belief, they can respectfully decline while validating the client's spiritual needs and encouraging faith-based support outside counseling.

2. Child Abuse Disclosure Scenario:

A 12-year-old reveals sexual abuse by a relative but begs the counselor not to tell.

Answer:

The counselor must prioritize the child's safety. Confidentiality is limited when a minor is at risk. The counselor should reassure the child that their disclosure is important, then report the abuse to appropriate authorities (child protection services, police) while providing emotional support. Protecting the child outweighs absolute confidentiality.

3. Online Therapy Across Borders

Scenario: A Nigerian counselor is contacted by a client in the UK for online sessions.

Answer:

The counselor must confirm licensing and legal regulations in the client's country. If not permitted to practice there, the counselor should either: (a) provide supportive sessions clearly framed as coaching/consultation while recommending a licensed local counselor, or (b) decline and refer to a UK professional. In all cases, secure, encrypted platforms and informed consent about online risks must be used.

4. Dual Relationship

Scenario: A close family friend asks for therapy.

Answer:

Dual relationships risk bias and exploitation. The counselor should politely explain the ethical concerns and offer referral to another professional. Only in emergencies or when no alternative exists (e.g., in rural settings) may the counselor proceed, but with strict boundaries, documented consent, and supervision.

5. Social Media Boundary

Scenario: A former client "friends" the counselor on Facebook and shares personal struggles.

Answer:

The counselor should not engage via personal social media. Instead, they may respond privately with professional boundaries (e.g., “I cannot provide counseling through Facebook. If you'd like support, please schedule a session.”). Counselors should maintain professional online pages separate from personal accounts.

6. Gift from a Client

Scenario: A client gives the counselor an expensive wristwatch.

Answer:

Accepting valuable gifts may create dependency or imply obligation. The counselor should politely decline, explaining professional boundaries. If refusing risks offending the client culturally, the counselor may accept only symbolic, low-value gifts while documenting the decision and discussing its meaning in therapy.

7. Assessment & Labeling

Scenario: A school counselor labels a child “mentally slow” after an IQ test.

Answer:

This is unethical. Counselors must interpret assessments cautiously and never use derogatory or harmful labels. Instead, they should communicate results in supportive terms (“the child may need additional learning support”) and involve parents, teachers, and specialists in constructive intervention planning.

8. Cultural Conflict

Scenario: A woman reports domestic violence but insists she cannot leave because “culture does not allow divorce.”

Answer:

The counselor must respect cultural beliefs while prioritizing safety. They can validate the client's feelings and explore harm-reduction options (safety planning, seeking community/ family support, legal protections). The goal is not to impose divorce but to ensure the client's dignity and security.

9. Confidentiality vs. Public Safety

Scenario: A client admits planning to poison a co-worker.

Answer:

The counselor has a duty to warn and protect. They must break confidentiality, inform the potential victim/authorities, and document actions taken. Before disclosure, the counselor should encourage the client to reconsider and voluntarily seek help, but public safety overrides confidentiality.

10. Counselor Burnout

Scenario: A counselor struggles with personal issues and notices poor performance in sessions.

Answer:

Counselors must practice self-care as an ethical duty. The counselor should reduce caseload, seek supervision, or take a temporary break. Continuing to practice while impaired risks harm to clients and breaches professional responsibility. Chartered Institute of Counseling in Nigeria (CICN)- Ceremonial Pledges & Oaths.

CICN Student Graduate Pledge

For Graduating Students

As a graduate of the Chartered Institute of Counseling in Nigeria,

I (your name) pledge to uphold integrity in learning and in life.

I will honor the dignity and uniqueness of every person I encounter.

I will respect confidentiality in all supervised practice and training.

I will seek knowledge with humility, discipline, and dedication.

I will respect my teachers, colleagues, and the profession of counseling.

I will prepare myself for the responsibilities of professional practice.

I commit to lifelong learning, ethical conduct, and the pursuit of excellence.

This I pledge, as I step forward into my professional journey.

(To be recited at Convocation/Graduation Ceremonies)

CICN Professional Oath of Conduct (Ceremonial Version)

For Inducted Members / Licensed Counselors

I (your name) solemnly pledge to uphold the dignity and worth of every person.

I will protect confidentiality and place my clients' wellbeing above all personal interest.

I will act with integrity, honesty, and fairness in every professional duty.

I will respect cultural values while challenging practices that harm human dignity.

I will use my skills, knowledge, and technology responsibly, always with care and accountability.

I will maintain healthy boundaries, avoid exploitation, and honor the trust placed in me.

I will pursue lifelong learning, seek supervision when needed, and care for my own wellbeing.

In all these, I commit to advancing the vision of the Chartered Institute of Counseling in Nigeria and upholding the honor of the counseling profession.

So I pledge, and so I will uphold.

(To be recited at Induction & Licensing Ceremonies)

Ethical Guidelines for Tele-Counseling

Tele-counseling is the provision of counseling services using telecommunication technologies. Telecommunications is the preparation, transmission, communication, or related processing of information by electrical, electromagnetic, electromechanical, electro-optical, or electronic means. Telecommunication technologies include but are not limited to telephone, mobile devices, interactive videoconferencing, email, chat, text, and Internet (e.g., self-help websites, blogs, and social media). The information that is transmitted may be in writing, or include images, sounds or other data. These communications may be synchronous with multiple parties communicating in real time (e.g. interactive videoconferencing, telephone) or asynchronous (e.g. email, online bulletin boards, storing and forwarding information).

Need for the Guidelines:

The expanding role of telecommunication technologies in the provision of counseling services and the continuous development of new technologies that may be useful in the practice of counseling support the need for the development of guidelines for practice in this area. Technology offers the opportunity to increase client access to counseling services.

Service recipients limited by geographic location, medical condition, may gain access to high quality counseling services through the use of technology. Technology also facilitates the delivery of counseling services by new methods (e.g., online psycho-education, therapy delivered over interactive videoconferencing).

Competence of the Counselor:

1. Counselors who provide tele-counseling services strive to take reasonable steps to ensure their competence with both the technologies used and the potential impact of the technologies on clients, supervisees or other professionals.
2. Counselors should assume responsibility to continually assess both their professional and technical competence when providing tele-counseling services.
3. Counselors who utilize or intend to utilize telecommunication technologies when delivering services to clients should strive to obtain relevant professional training to develop their requisite knowledge and skills.
4. Counselors are to find out which specific telecommunication technologies are suitable for a client.
5. Counselors should make reasonable effort to understand the manner in which cultural, socioeconomic and other individual characteristics (e.g., physical/cognitive disability, personal preferences), may impact effective use of telecommunication technologies in their service delivery.

6. Counselors who are trained to handle emergency situations in providing traditional in-person clinical services, to discuss with and provide all the clients with clear written instructions as to what to do in an emergency like suicide risk. Service delivery:
7. Counselors delivering tele-counseling services must apply the same ethical and professional standards of care and professional practice that are required when providing in-person counseling services.
8. Counselors in delivering tele-counseling services, are urged to conduct an initial assessment to determine the appropriateness of the tele-counseling service to be provided for the client.
9. Counselors should review the most appropriate medium (e.g., video teleconference, text, email, etc.) or best options available for the service delivery.
10. When providing tele-counseling services, considering client's preferences for such services is important.
11. Counselors are encouraged to carefully examine the unique benefits of delivering tele-counseling services (e.g., access to care, access to consulting services, client convenience, accommodating client special needs, etc.) relative to the unique risks (e.g., information security, emergency management, etc.) when determining whether or not to offer tele-counseling services.
12. Counselors are encouraged to communicate any risks and benefits of the tele-counseling services to be offered to the client/patient and document such communication.

13. Counselors are endeavor to follow the best practice of service delivery described in the empirical literature and professional standards (including multicultural considerations) that are relevant to the tele-counseling service modality being offered.
14. Counselors are encouraged to reflect on multicultural considerations and how best to manage any emergency that may arise during the provision of tele-counseling services.
15. Counselors are encouraged to assess carefully the remote environment in which services will be provided, to determine what impact, if any, there might be to the efficacy, privacy and/or safety of the proposed intervention offered via tele-counseling.
16. Counselors are encouraged to discuss fully with the clients their role in ensuring that sessions are not interrupted and that the setting is comfortable and conducive to making progress to maximize the impact of the service provided since the counselor will not be able to control those factors remotely.
17. Counselors are urged to monitor and assess regularly the progress of their client when offering tele-counseling services in order to determine if the provision of tele-counseling services is still appropriate and beneficial to the client.
18. Where it is believed that continuing to provide remote services is no longer beneficial or presents a risk to a client's emotional or physical well-being. Counselors are

encouraged to thoroughly discuss these concerns with the client, appropriately terminate their remote services with adequate notice and refer or offer any needed alternative services to the client.

Informed Consent:

19. Prior to providing tele-counseling services, Counselors are aware of the importance of obtaining and documenting written informed consent from their clients that specifically addresses the unique concerns relevant to those services that will be offered.
20. When developing such informed consent, Counselors are to make reasonable effort to use language that is reasonably understandable to their clients.
21. Counselors are to address cultural, linguistic considerations, and other issues that may impact on a client's understanding of the informed consent agreement.
22. Counselors are encouraged to discuss with their clients those issues surrounding confidentiality and the security conditions when particular modes of telecommunication technologies are utilized.
23. As part of informed consent, Counselors are mindful of the need to discuss with their clients what the fee structure for each relevant tele-counseling service (e.g., video chat, texting fees, telephone services, chat room group fees, emergency scheduling, etc.).

24. Counselors are to discussed about the charges incurred for any service interruptions or failures encountered, and any other costs associated with the tele-counseling services that will be provided.

Confidentiality:

25. Counselors both understand and inform their clients of the limits to confidentiality and risks to the possible access or disclosure of confidential data and information that may occur during the counseling process.
26. Counselors should inform clients if they to proactively do any research activities of them online and also inform the client the need for such activity.
27. Counselors are encouraged to weigh the risks and benefits of dual relationships that may develop with their clients, due to the use of telecommunication technologies, before engaging in such relationships.
28. Counselors who use social networking sites for both professional and personal purposes are encouraged to review and educate themselves about the potential risks to privacy and confidentiality and consider utilizing all available privacy settings to reduce these risks.

Security and transmission of data and information:

29. The use of telecommunication technologies in the provision of counseling services presents unique potential threats to the security and transmission of client data and information.

30. Counselors are encouraged to be mindful of these potential threats, and take reasonable steps to ensure that security measures are in place for protecting and controlling access to client/patient data within an information system.
31. Counselors are encouraged to conduct an analysis of the risks to their practice setting, telecommunication technologies, and administrative staff, to ensure that client data and information is accessible only to appropriate and authorized individuals.
32. Counselors are to strive to ensure that policies and procedures are in place to secure and control access to client information and data within information systems.
33. If there is a breach of unencrypted electronically communicated or maintained data, counselors are urged to notify their clients and other appropriate individuals/organizations as soon as possible.

Disposal of Data and information and Technologies:

34. Counselors are encouraged to develop policies and procedures for the destruction of data and information related to clients.
35. They also strive to securely dispose of software and hardware used in the provision of tele-counseling services in a manner that insures that the confidentiality and security of any client information is not compromised.

■ Ethical Guidelines for Tele-Counseling

36. Counselors are aware of and understand the unique storage implications related to telecommunication technologies.
37. Counselors are encouraged to document the methods and procedures used when disposing of the data and information and the technologies used to create, store, or transmit the data and information, as well as any other technology utilized in the disposal of data and hardware.

Testing and Assessment:

38. When an assessment is conducted via tele-counseling, counselors are encouraged to ensure that the integrity of the assessment procedure (e.g., reliability and validity) and the conditions of administration indicated is preserved when adapted for use with such technologies.
39. Counselors are also encouraged to consider other possible forms of distraction which could affect performance during an assessment and which may not be obvious or visible when utilizing telecommunication technologies.
40. Counselors are encouraged to be cognizant of the specific issues that may arise with diverse populations when providing tele-counseling and make appropriate arrangements to address those concerns (e.g., language or cultural issues; cognitive, physical or sensory skills or impairments; or age may impact assessment).

41. Counselors, who offer psychological tests may consider the use of a trained assistant (e.g., proctor) to be on premise at the remote location in an effort to help verify the identity of the client, provide needed on-site support to administer certain tests or subtests, and protect the security of the psychological testing and/or assessment process.
42. When administering psychological tests and other assessment procedures when providing tele-counseling services, counselors are encouraged to consider the quality of those technologies that are being used and the hardware requirements that are needed in order to conduct the specific psychological test or assessment approach.
43. Counselors are encouraged to specify that a particular test or assessment procedure has been administered via tele-counseling, and describe any accommodations or modifications that have been made.
44. Counselors are encouraged to recognize the potential limitations of all assessment processes conducted via tele-counseling, and be ready to address the limitations and potential impact of those procedures.

Supervision:

45. Counselors using tele-counseling to provide supervision remotely are to consult others who are knowledgeable about the unique issues telecommunication technologies poses for supervision.

▪ Ethical Guidelines for Tele-Counseling

46. Counselors providing tele-counseling services must strive to be familiar with professional literature regarding the delivery of services via telecommunication technologies, as well as competent use of technological modalities.
47. Counselors should make reasonable effort to be proficient in the professional service being offered during supervision.

Inter-jurisdictional Practice:

Guideline 1

It is important for counselors to be aware of the relevant laws and regulations that specifically address the delivery of professional services by Counselors via telecommunication technologies within and between jurisdictions.

Guideline 2

Counselors to strive to keep abreast of developments and changes in the licensure and other inter-jurisdictional practice requirements that may be pertinent to their delivery of tele-counseling services across jurisdictional boundaries.

Guideline 3

Counselors strive to obtain and document informed consent that specifically addresses the unique concerns related to the tele-counseling services they provide by making reasonable effort to offer a complete and clear description of the tele-counseling services they provide, and seek to obtain and document informed consent when providing professional service.

Guideline 4

Counselors who provide tele-counseling services make reasonable effort to protect and maintain the confidentiality of the data and information relating to their clients and inform them of the potentially increased risks to loss of confidentiality inherent in the use of the telecommunication technologies, if any.

Guideline 5

Counselors who provide tele-counseling services take reasonable steps to ensure that security measures are in place to protect data and information related to their clients/patients from unintended access or disclosure.

Guideline 6

Counselors who provide tele-counseling services make reasonable efforts to dispose of data and information and the technologies used in a manner that facilitates protection from unauthorized access and accounts for safe and appropriate disposal.

Guideline 7

Counselors are encouraged to consider the unique issues that may arise with test instruments and assessment approaches designed for in-person implementation when providing tele-counseling services.

Guideline 8

Counselors are encouraged to be familiar with and comply with all relevant laws and regulations when providing tele-counseling services to clients/patients across jurisdictional and international borders.

