

Ethical Principles and Standards

Introduction: Ethical Principles for Processworkers

This ethics code applies to activities that are part of the educational and/or professional roles of Processwork practitioners associated with the Process Work Institute. Areas covered include but are not limited to the clinical, counseling and educational practice of Process Work, research, teaching, supervision of trainees, public service, social intervention, organizational consulting, program design and evaluation, and administration. This ethics code applies to these activities across a variety of contexts, such as in-person, postal, telephone, internet and other electronic transmissions. These activities shall be distinguished from the purely private conduct of Process Workers, which is not within the purview of the ethics code.

This document consists of an introduction, preamble, general principles, and specific ethical standards.

The preamble and general principles describe aspirational goals that are intended to guide Processworkers toward the highest ideals of its practice. Although the general principles are not themselves enforceable rules, they should be considered by Processworkers in arriving at an ethical course of action. The ethical standards set forth enforceable rules for conduct as Processworkers.

As used in this document, the term reasonable means the prevailing professional judgment of practitioners engaged in similar activities in similar circumstances, given the knowledge the practitioner had or should have had at the time.

The following resources are available for registering a concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of PWI faculty or students:

- **Ethics Complaint Procedure**

Preamble

Processwork is the practice of tracking and working with the flow of process in individuals, relationships, groups, culture and society. It is a broad-spectrum awareness modality that spans a range of applications, from individual counseling, psychotherapy, and body work modalities to group facilitation, community development and conflict resolution. Process Work seeks to elicit the core of potential meaning and growth that lies at the heart of even the most disturbing human situations.

Processwork recognizes a commitment to core values of awareness, learning, relationship and wholeness as integral to ethical conduct. The practice of Processwork is a discipline that encourages the practitioner's willingness to work on his or her own process to benefit the whole. To this end Processworkers are encouraged to continue their personal growth through therapy, inner work, study, research, community involvement, and through working on their personal and professional relationships.

This ethics code has as its goal the welfare and protection of the individuals and groups with whom Processworkers work and the education of faculty,

students, and other interested parties regarding ethical standards of Process Work.

Ethical Principles

Principle A: Beneficence and Nonmaleficence

Process Workers strive to both benefit those with whom they work and to do no harm. In their professional actions, Process Workers seek to safeguard the welfare and rights of both those with whom they interact professionally and other affected persons. When conflicts occur among Process Workers' obligations or concerns, they attempt to resolve these conflicts in a responsible fashion that avoids or minimizes harm. Because Process Workers' professional judgments and actions may affect the lives of others, they are alert to and guard against personal, financial, social, organizational, or political factors that might lead to misuse of their influence. Process Workers strive to be aware of the possible effect of their own physical and mental health on their ability to help those with whom they work.

Principle B: Integrity and Competence

Process Workers seek to promote accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness in the practice and teaching of Process Work. In these activities Process Workers do not steal, cheat, or engage in fraud, subterfuge, or intentional misrepresentation of fact. Process Workers strive to keep their promises and to avoid unwise or unclear commitments. In situations in which deception may be ethically justifiable to maximize benefits and minimize harm, Process Workers have a serious obligation to consider the need for, the possible consequences of, and their responsibility to correct any resulting mistrust or

other harmful effects that arise from the use of such techniques. Process Workers aspire to recognize and promote wholeness in themselves, their clients and in groups with which they work.

Principle C: Professional Responsibility

Process Workers establish relationships of trust with those with whom they work. They are aware of their professional responsibilities to society and to the specific communities in which they work. Process Workers uphold professional standards of conduct, clarify their professional roles and obligations, accept appropriate responsibility for their behavior, and seek to manage conflicts of interest that could lead to exploitation or harm. Process Workers consult with, refer to, or cooperate with other professionals and institutions to the extent needed to serve the best interests of those with whom they work.

Process Workers strive to maintain a high level of competence in their work. They are expected to continue growing both professionally and in their personal development. They regard the study of Process Work as a lifelong process and recognize the need for continuing education, and/or therapy, and/or consultation, and/or supervision. Because Process Work interfaces with disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, the arts, theology, medicine, and various physical and life sciences, Process Workers strive to recognize the limitations of their own competence and take reasonable measures to seek assistance and/or to refer clients to practitioners from other disciplines.

Principle D: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity

Process Workers respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination. Process Workers are aware that special safeguards may be necessary to protect the rights and welfare of persons or communities whose vulnerabilities impair autonomous decision making. Process Workers are aware of and respect cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status and consider these factors when working with members of such groups. Process Workers try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone activities of others based upon such prejudices.

Principle E: Social Responsibility

Process Workers strive to be aware of the broader social context and consequences of their work with individuals, couples, families and groups. When conflicts occur between Process Workers' explicit responsibility to clients and implicit responsibility to wider social groups, they attempt to resolve these conflicts in a responsible fashion that avoids or minimizes harm to either. To this end Process Workers aspire to learn about the broader social contexts in which they work on which their work has an impact.

Principle F: Relationships

Process Workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change. Process Workers engage people as partners in the helping process. Process Workers seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore,

maintain, and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities.

Ethical Standards

1. Responsibility to Clients

1.02 Nondiscrimination

Process Workers do not discriminate against clients on the basis of age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or any other basis included in and/or proscribed by law. In addition, Process Workers make reasonable effort to maintain awareness around social and other forms of rank and privilege.

1.03 Boundaries of Competence

When Process Workers find themselves in situations that reach beyond their knowledge, they are expected to make a reasonable effort to obtain the competence required by using relevant research and/or training and/or consultation and/or study.

1.04 Rank and Power

Process Workers make a reasonable effort to both be aware of the dynamics of rank and power in their professional relationships, and to insure that the client's best interests are thereby served.

1.05 Sexual Relationships

Process Workers do not enter into sexual relationships with current clients. Process Workers do not enter into sexual relationships with former clients for a period of at least two years following termination of therapy.

Even after a period of two years following termination of therapy, Process Workers do not enter into sexual relationships with former clients except in the most unusual circumstances.

Process Workers who engage in such relationships after two years following termination of therapy bear the burden of demonstrating that there has been no coercion or exploitation of the former client as a result of the sexual relationship, and that the former client has made an informed and consensual decision to embark on the relationship. The Process Worker, together with a competent and disinterested third party/parties, will sort out her or his own motivations and/or relationship history, and/or any therapeutic issues. With the help of a competent and disinterested third party, both the Process Worker and the former client will sort out issues of power and/or rank and/or privilege.

1.06 Sexual Harassment

Process Workers are aware of the seriousness of sexual harassment and its potential for abuse. Consequently, Process Workers do not engage in sexual harassment, which is perceived as soliciting sexual favors and/or making physical advances either verbally or non-verbally that is sexual in nature.

1.07 Physical Contact

The therapeutic value of touch has been recognized and well-documented. See, for instance, "Touching: The Human Significance of the Skin" by Ashley

Montagu (Harper Collins, 1986). As a therapeutic modality, Process Work recognizes the therapeutic value of touch, and may include various forms of bodywork involving physical contact. Physical contact is used only with the client's consent. The appropriate use of physical contact depends on a number of considerations, including the client's history and/or background and/or morality and/or mental state and/or diagnosis and/or condition and/or culture.

1.08 Multiple Relationships

It is well recognized that multiple relationships are an inherent and unavoidable aspect of life in small communities and subcultures, for example rural communities, university counseling centers, or ethnic and non-ethnic subcultures such as the disabled and the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender communities, training institutes, specialized educational centers, and learning communities. Process Workers avoid multiple relationships that are harmful, and/or exploitative and/or involve a conflict of interest.

A Process Worker refrains from entering into a multiple relationship if the multiple relationship could reasonably be expected to impair the Process Worker's objectivity, competence, or effectiveness in performing his or her functions as a Process Worker, or otherwise risks exploitation or harm to the person with whom the professional relationship exists.

Multiple relationships that would not reasonably be expected to cause impairment or risk exploitation or harm are not unethical.

In those cases or situations where there may be some question, lack of clarity, or confusion, it is the Process Worker's responsibility to seek

assistance through supervision and/or therapy and/or consultation with a third party.

When a conflict of interest arises or judgment is impaired, the Process Worker must withdraw from the dual relationship taking care to minimize harm to the client

1.09 Exploitative Relationships

Process Workers do not exploit clients for personal or professional gain.

1.10 Confidentiality and Records

Process Workers do not disclose information entrusted to them in their professional capacity by clients. At the onset of a Process Worker/client relationship, issues of confidentiality should be discussed unless it is not feasible, and thereafter as new circumstances may warrant. Where the Process Worker seeks supervision and/or consultation about their work with a client, or where information is used for educational and publication purposes, reasonable care must be taken to protect the client's identity (also, see 1.11 and 2.2 below).

1.11 Confidentiality and Supervision

When consulting with colleagues, Process Workers do not disclose confidential information that reasonably could lead to the identification of a client, or other person or organization with whom they have a confidential relationship unless they have obtained the prior consent of the person or organization, or the disclosure cannot be avoided. When consulting with

colleagues they disclose information only to the extent necessary to achieve the purposes of the consultation.

1.12 Fees and Financial Arrangements

As close as possible to the onset of a Process Worker/client relationship, fees and/or other financial issues should be discussed, and an agreement specifying compensation and billing arrangements should be reached.

Process Workers take reasonable care to ensure that fees are fair, reasonable, and in general commensurate with the going rate for services rendered. Process Workers do not misrepresent their fees.

Barter, the acceptance of goods, services or other nonmonetary remuneration from clients in return for professional services, is permissible only if: 1) It is not clinically contraindicated, and 2) the resulting arrangement is not exploitative.

1.13 Continuity and Termination of Services

Process Workers should make reasonable efforts to ensure continuity of services, and to inform current and prospective clients of their availability and and/or interruptions to their availability. Services to the client may terminate when either the client, the Process Worker or both agree that it is time to stop. If the Process Worker chooses to terminate, he or she is responsible for taking reasonable steps to make an appropriate referral.

2. Responsibilities to Students

2.1 Multiple Relationships in the Process Work Learning Community

The Process Work learning community is a “small community” in the sense already noted in 1.08. As is typical of such communities, multiple role relationships are inherent and unavoidable, and all reasonable measures must be taken to avoid harm and/or exploitation and/or conflict of interest in such relationships. Process Workers must make reasonable effort to be sensitive to power differences in light of the vulnerability of students and/or their potential difficulties in unequal power relationships. Process Workers who evaluate trainees must take all reasonable precautions to avoid conflicts of interest in evaluation, as well as avoiding situations that impair judgment.

Because the potential for harm and/or exploitation and/or conflict of interest is greatest when power differentials remain covert, the Process Work learning community makes available a variety of procedures and opportunities for sorting out issues of power, equity and fairness. They include: periodic meetings open to all students and faculty in which power issues can be addressed; a Dean of Students who functions as an ombudsperson to help sort out student-faculty power issues; an Ethics Committee to act as a mediation body in case of student claims of unequal, unfair and/or exploitative treatment.

2.2 Sexual relationships between faculty, students, and administrative staff

The Process Work Institute is committed to fostering a learning environment characterized by professional behavior and fair and impartial treatment. The Process Work Institute recognizes that relationships between Process Work Institute students and faculty/staff are potentially detrimental in that they can contain conflict of interests, abuse of power and compromised judgment when the faculty member or staff member has supervisory, evaluative or other power over the student. The power differential may also make the

student's consent to a sexual or romantic relationship suspect. The relationship can also create an apparent conflict of interest that can adversely affect other members of the community by favoring the interests of the student at the expense of other third parties.

In view of the vulnerability of students to exploitation by faculty or staff due to the unequal power relationship, sexual relationships between faculty/staff and students are strongly discouraged. In the event that a faculty or staff member and student are contemplating a sexually intimate relationship, the faculty or staff member must make prompt and appropriate arrangements to address this conflict of interest prior to entering into such a relationship with the student. Prompt arrangements means an action reasonably calculated to remove or substantially mitigate a conflict of interests, potential conflict of interest, or abuse of power. These actions will include withdrawal of all supervisory, evaluative or other power relationships with the student. They will include, but are not limited to, withdrawal from any study committee on which they serve with the student, not participating at faculty evaluations of the student, and withdrawal from examination, supervision, class teaching and dissertation evaluation of the student. This withdrawal from all supervisory, evaluative and other power relationships with the student will occur until the student has completed their training, irrespective of whether the relationship continues to this time or not. In the case of an administrative staff member, the staff member will also withdraw from any position involving a conflict of interest, such as granting scholarships or supervising work-study positions.

The faculty or staff member is required to report the intention to have an intimate relationship immediately to a designated member of the ethics

committee who, as a disinterested third party, will inform the faculty or staff member of relevant ethical principles and legal statutes, and monitor his or her withdrawal from all above mentioned supervisory, evaluative and power positions in relation to the student. Both the student and faculty member are also required to have at least one individual session each with any faculty member to determine that the relationship is consensual and no concerns are present. This faculty member will then report back to the designated ethics committee member managing the case.

2.3 Therapist and Student Evaluation

A student's therapist will not have any evaluative role of that student in the training program, such as study committee member, examiner, main supervisor, or in any other capacity in which the student's performance may be subject to evaluation. The only exception to this is when the student consents to having her/his therapist share information about the student in meetings where the student's professional development is discussed. (See 2.4 below)

2.4 Confidentiality and Supervision of Student Work

It is an intrinsic part of Process Work training that students' personal issues that bear on their professional development be discussed among faculty in meetings to evaluate the students' progress. Nevertheless such discussions may only be conducted with the student's informed consent. The faculty will make reasonable effort to disclose feedback from such meetings at the

student's request. The student is entitled to be informed of any decisions pertinent to her/his personal or professional development.

3. Resolving Ethical Issues

3.1 Familiarity with the "Ethical Principles and Standards for Process Workers" document

Process Workers must familiarize themselves with the "Ethical Principles and Standards for Process Workers". They cannot claim lack of awareness of ethical standards as a defense against a charge of unethical conduct.

3.2 Confronting Ethical Issues

When Process Workers have an ethical issue that they cannot readily resolve by themselves, they seek out the counsel and/or advice of fellow Process Workers and/or consultants and/or members of the Process Work Ethics Committee. If deemed necessary, external experts may be consulted.

3.3 Informal Resolution of Ethical Issues

A Process Worker who believes that a colleague has violated the ethical code of Process Work may attempt to reach an informal resolution by bringing it to the colleague's attention. In doing so, confidentiality may not be breached.

3.4 Reporting Ethical Violations

If an adequate informal resolution of an ethical issue, as described in 3.3 above, cannot be reached the Process Worker must report the matter to the

Process Work Ethics Committee, taking reasonable steps to ensure that confidentiality is preserved.

3.5 Cooperating with the Ethics Committee

It is incumbent upon Process Workers who have been charged, either by another Process Worker or by a client, student, or supervisee, with a violation of the Ethical Principles and Standards of Process Work, to cooperate with the Ethics Committee in its efforts to seek an appropriate resolution to the charge. Failure to do so will itself be regarded as a violation of the Ethical Principles and Standards and the violator will be subject to whatever action the Committee deems appropriate.

In the event it is shown that the person charged is in fact the one to be held accountable, it is incumbent upon that person to comply with the recommendations of the Ethics Committee.

3.6 Financial Responsibility

When a Process Worker appears before the Ethics Committee and is found to have violated an ethical standard, then the Process Worker is responsible for expenses incurred to deal with the case.

3.7 Improper Complaints

Process Workers do not file or encourage the filing of frivolous complaints.

4. The Ethics Committee

4.1 Responsibilities of the Ethics Committee

It is the primary responsibility of the Ethics Committee to receive complaints of unethical conduct against Process Workers, to investigate the grounds of these complaints, and to document and respond to them appropriately. If the committee finds that the Ethics Code has been breached, appropriate action may include, but is not restricted to, any or all of the following: reprimand, censure, ameliorative prescriptions, education, rehabilitation, and termination of certification to practice Process Work.

4.2 Process Work Students and Clients

It is also the responsibility of the Ethics Committee to receive complaints of unethical conduct from clients of students in formal training to become Process Workers. "Students in formal training" refers to those students in good standing who are registered in one of the Process Work Institute training programs, who have neither withdrawn nor been formally dismissed from a program.