



FTAI CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND PRACTICE 2017

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PREAMBLE

The Family Therapy Association of Ireland (FTAI) is the body that represents Family/Systemic Therapists in Ireland. It is affiliated to The Irish Council for Psychotherapy (ICP), the national umbrella body for psychotherapy in Ireland, which represents psychotherapists within the European Association for Psychotherapy.

FTAI members share an understanding of the individual as a relational being rather than a discrete separate entity and therefore work with individuals, couples, families and client systems.

Family/Systemic Therapists recognise the complexities of systemic work and take reasonable care to clarify everyone's rights and responsibilities.

Family/Systemic Therapists realise that each person understands difficulties in his/her own way, and respectfully try to open up new possibilities for service users to manage their situation. In dealing with groups Family/Systemic Therapists stay impartial and work to help each person to understand everyone else's experience and perspective, and together find a way to resolve issues.

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND PRACTICE 1

1. The Duty of Registered Family/Systemic Therapists

In order to protect the public, the registrant¹ shall adhere to this Code.

2. Ethical awareness

When ethical issues arise registrants are obliged to implement the provisions of this Code.

3. Acting at all times in the best interests of service users²

¹ "Registrant" denotes a fully qualified, registered member of the FTAI

Each registrant must:

- 1) Take responsibility for promoting and protecting the best interest of the service user.
- 2) Work in partnership/collaboration with service users.
- 3) Comply with Child Protection Guidelines.
- 4) Take every care not to do anything, or allow anything to be done, that the registrant has good reason to believe will put the health or safety of a service user or client system at risk.
- 5) Take responsibility for his/her professional conduct, any care or advice s/he provides and any failure to act. The registrant must be able to justify his/her decisions.
- 6) Protect the service user if the registrant believes that any situation puts him/her in danger or at risk. This includes the conduct, performance or health of a colleague. The safety of service users must at all times come before any personal and professional loyalties.
- 7) Not transfer public service users to his/her private practice for reasons of commercial gain.

If a registrant becomes aware of any situation that puts a service user at risk, s/he must discuss the matter with an appropriate supervisor, senior or professional colleague or other appropriate professional.

4. Respecting the rights and dignity of all service users and protecting their right to appropriate confidentiality

4.1 Each registrant must show through his/her practice and conduct a respect for the rights and dignity of all individuals, with due regard to:

- Gender
- Family status
- Marital status
- Age
- Disability

² In this document, the term “service users” is used to include clients and service users.

- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Race
- Membership of the Traveller Community.

4.2 The confidentiality of service users.

Excluding any exceptions provided by law or professional practice obligations of a registrant, and in accordance with the protection from disclosure of personal data provisions contained in the Data Protection Acts, each registrant must treat information about service users as confidential. S/he must not knowingly release any personal or confidential information to anyone who is not entitled to it and should check that people who ask for information are entitled to it. The registrant must only use information about service users:

- To continue to provide service for them
- For purposes where they have given their specific permission to use the information.

Registrants must keep to the conditions of any relevant data protection legislation and follow best practice for handling confidential information relating to individuals at all times. Best practice is likely to change over time, and registrants must stay up to date.

Registrants must be particularly careful not to reveal, deliberately or accidentally, confidential information that is stored on computers.

5. Communications with service users

5.1 Each registrant must take all reasonable steps to make sure that s/he communicates properly and effectively with service users, their carers and families.

5.2 Registrants must also communicate effectively, co-operate, and share their knowledge and expertise with professional colleagues and students for the benefit of service users, with due regard to confidentiality and consent of service users.

6. Laws and regulations governing the practice of the profession

Each registrant must be familiar with laws and regulations governing the profession and keep abreast of changes.

7. Carrying out duties in a professional and ethical way

Each registrant must carry out duties and responsibilities in a professional and ethical way. The FTAI aims through this Code to protect the public from unprofessional behaviour. Registrants must be familiar with the standards they are expected to meet. The purpose of these standards is to protect the public and the practitioner. Each registrant must make sure that s/he behaves with integrity and honesty.

8. Advertising

Registrants must ensure that all advertising regarding therapy is truthful, accurate, not misleading and complies with any relevant legislation

9. Ethical research and training.

9.1 Proposed research projects should be submitted to the appropriate Research Ethics Committees or other appropriate authority for approval prior to commencing research. Research should not under any circumstances proceed without the necessary ethical approval. Such approval should be identified in the research documentation, e.g. participation, recruitment, communication.

9.2 Prior informed consent must be obtained and recorded if service users are to be involved in any form of research. The aims and methods of the proposed research, together with any potential hazards or discomfort, and information about how their details will be used, should be explained to the potential participants. Particular care must be taken when conducting research with minors and vulnerable adults.

9.3 Research activity must preserve anonymity and/or confidentiality unless permission has been given by the potential participant to use his/her name after possible long term implications have been fully discussed.

9.4 Refusal to participate in research must not influence the delivery of service to the service user in any way.

9.5 Written consent should be obtained prior to using case studies in teaching and training. All names and identifying data should be anonymised and treated confidentially when case studies are used in teaching and training.

9.6 Written consent is necessary for the use of any recordings (audio, video, etc.) and client's art work in teaching and training (see 9.2). The registrant and participant must agree a limit in relation to their use and storage.

10. Standards of Performance

Each registrant must make sure that his/her knowledge, skills and performance are of a high quality, up to date, and relevant to the member's practice.

Each registrant must:

- 1) Maintain and develop professional competence by undertaking relevant education/training to maintain and improve knowledge and skills;
- 2) Keep up to date with relevant knowledge, research methods, and techniques, for example, through the reading of relevant literature, peer consultation and continuing educational activities in order that the registrant's service and/or research activities and conclusions will benefit and not harm others;
- 3) Participate in and contribute to the registrant's own continuing professional development (CPD) and maintain clear and accurate records of it.
- 4) Act within the limits of knowledge, skills and experience and, if necessary, refer on to an appropriate professional. A registrant should only practise in those fields in which s/he has competence by reason of appropriate education, training and experience. When accepting a service user, the registrant has a duty of care.

11 Responsibility of registrants regarding professional supervision

Registrants are responsible for ensuring that they have sufficient supervisory arrangements in place and any other supports deemed necessary to enable them to meet their obligations to any service user.

12. Informed consent

12.1 Each registrant must make sure that the service user's informed consent for any treatment/intervention to be carried out has been received. The registrant must explain to the service user the therapeutic process that s/he is planning to carry out, the risks involved, and other appropriate forms of therapy. Account must be taken of the person's capacity to understand the information and to give his/her consent.

12.2 If a service user refuses assessment/treatment/intervention and the registrant believes that it is necessary for his/her wellbeing, reasonable efforts must be made to persuade the person, particularly if it is thought that there is a significant or immediate risk to his/her life. Registrants must, however, respect a person's right to refuse treatment.

12.3 Employers' procedures on consent must be adhered to and registrants should also be aware of any guidance issued by appropriate authorities and legislation in this jurisdiction.

13 Accurate service user records

13.1 Each registrant must maintain clear and accurate records as required by the FTAI, and also policy and procedures established for the workplace.

Each registrant must keep records for each person, couple, family or group who receives or requests professional advice or services.

All records must be complete and legible and all entries should be written, signed and dated.

13.2 If records are updated, information that was previously there must not be erased or made difficult to read. Instead, the registrant must mark it in some way (for example, by drawing a line through the old information).

13.3 Each registrant must protect information in records against loss, damage or use/access by unauthorised persons. Computer-based systems may be used for keeping records only if they are protected against unauthorised access or tampering.

13.4 Records should be held in accordance with relevant legislation.

13.5 Registrants must make arrangements for the disposal of records in the event of their death, or incapacity due to illness, or retirement from professional practice. These arrangements must protect the rights of service users to confidentiality.

14 Health and safety.

14.1 Each registrant must follow legal requirements and the requirements of their work-place in relation to health and safety.

14.2 Each registrant must follow risk assessment policy and procedures to assess potential risks in the workplace and area of practice.

14.3 Each registrant must limit work or stop practising if his/her performance or judgement is affected by health issues

15 Standards of professional conduct

Registrants must maintain high standards of professional conduct. If they do not feel competent in carrying out any aspect of their work, or if they are not sure how to proceed in a work matter, they should obtain the necessary support and/or assistance from their employer.

Registrants must not:

- 1) Form inappropriate personal relationships with service users;
- 2) Condone any unlawful or unjustifiable discrimination by service users, carers or colleagues;
- 3) Put themselves or other people at risk;
- 4) Behave in a way which would call into question the registrant's suitability to work in health and social care professional services;

5) Get involved in any conduct which is likely to damage the public's confidence in the registrant or the profession.

16. Disclosure of information about conduct, competence or health of therapists to the relevant authorities

16.1 Registrants must inform FTAI, their employer and other relevant regulators and professional bodies if they have any important information about their own conduct or competence, or about the conduct or competence of other registrants and health professionals they work with.

16.2 In particular, a registrant must let FTAI know as soon as is practicable if s/he has been:

- 1) Convicted of a criminal offence (other than a Fixed Charge driving offence under the Road Traffic Acts) or given an Adult Caution from the Garda Síochána;
- 2) Disciplined by any organisation outside of Ireland responsible for regulating or licensing health or social care professionals;
- 3) Suspended or placed under a practice restriction by an employer or similar organisation because of concerns about his/her conduct or competence.

16.3 Registrants must co-operate with any investigation or formal inquiry into their professional conduct. Subject to any legal right of the registrant not to provide the information, the registrant should give any relevant information in connection with his/her conduct or competence to anyone who is legally entitled to it.

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