



Family Therapy Association of Ireland

## **FAMILY THERAPY ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND CODE OF ETHICS**

### **PREAMBLE**

FTAI is the body that represents family therapists in Ireland. FTAI members share an understanding of the individual as a relational being rather than a discrete separate identity. Family therapists interact with individuals and with family, community and other systems. Family therapists respect the integrity and rights and foster the health well-being and competence of systems and of individuals within systems. Family therapists are committed to relational processes that emphasize co-operation, dialogue and participation as well as justice, equality and fairness.

To this end:

The ethics of family therapy include a view of individual rights and responsibilities and a relational view of ethics that emphasizes dialogue and relationality, care and mutuality.

FTAI are dedicated to maintaining high standards of professional competence and integrity. Family Therapists are involved in the production and use of knowledge and practices that impact on users of their services and the wider society. Therefore family therapists have a responsibility to utilize their knowledge and skills for the common good and to avoid practices that could give rise to harm. This code arises from a systemic framework and therefore is particularly concerned with interactional processes and with contextual influences on meaning production. Family therapists recognize that our understanding of ethics is embedded in the social, cultural and professional contexts in which we practice. Family therapists recognize the interconnectedness between personal experiences and social meanings and structures and therefore recognize the need for dialogue between therapists, and between therapists and clients, research participants and the wider society about the meaning of this code. Family therapists recognize the need for ethical vigilance, and the need for sensitivity to issues of culture, class, race, gender, age and disability in interpreting and applying this code.

This code also recognizes the necessity of establishing standards of practice and process of decision making that enhance the goals of FTAI. Therefore this code establishes its authority as a document binding on all members of FTAI by way of its production through dialogical process, and through a consideration of the consequences of actions to clients and the wider society. This code recognizes that changes in theoretical, social and legal ways of describing ethical and legal principles will necessitate changes in this code. This code is therefore a living document. Where possible, members should bring any difficulties, discrepancies or other uncertainties to the attention of FTAI.

FTAI seeks to enhance ethical practice by outlining principles and setting standards for Family Therapists within this code. This code is binding on members belonging to the classes of Registered Family Therapist and Registered Family Therapy Supervisors (in this guide referred to as "Family Therapists") This code consists of principles that are of general application, and all Family Therapists are under an obligation to inform themselves of the contents of this code, apply this code in their practice, and bring breaches of this code to the attention of the Committee in writing. This guide is one part of ethical practice, and it is neither exhaustive in its descriptions of ethical practice, nor sufficient in itself to ensure ethical practice. In addition to utilizing this code, members are encouraged to utilize a decision-making process in particular where ethical dilemmas arise. Where family therapists encounter difficulties in applying the code or resolving ethical dilemmas, family therapists are encouraged to utilize all available resources, including textual, interpersonal and personal resources. Members are also encouraged to consider ethical issues and the ethical implications of their practices during the course of all of their activities as family therapists.

Enforcement of this ethical code is governed by Article 6 of the Articles of Association of FTAI.



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## STATEMENT OF VALUES

Values are prized beliefs and preferences that guide decision making. In addition to evaluative and effective components, they contain an existential element; that is, they help define the nature of reality for those who hold them." (Maddock, J.W. (1993) *Ecology Ethics and Responsibility in Family Therapy. Family Relations* 42 pp116-123, p.1)

**The need for a statement of core values:** Family therapists recognize that core values are implicit in all relationships. Family therapists recognize the connection between the values that shape family therapy in Ireland and the construction of the responsibilities of therapists and the rights of clients. The values that underpin family therapy shape how ethical processes are seen and described and how conflicts between values are resolved. Family therapists strive to make explicit their value systems and the connections between their values and ethical practice in order to foster dialogue about the implications of their practice.

**Statement of core values:** Family therapists recognize that the ethics of professional practices go beyond that which is recognized by any code of conduct, and are committed to developing a relational ethic that sees ethics as an integral part of everyday practice. To this end, family therapists recognize the values of respect, responsible caring and integrity. Family therapists also recognize that the values of integrity, respect and responsible caring shape their relationship with society. To this end Family therapists recognize the value of social justice, including a commitment to the human rights of all people.

These principles of Respect, Responsible Caring, Integrity and Social Justice are the core values on which the Code of Ethics of Family therapists is based. These principles also govern interactions between family therapists and clients, research participants, students, supervisees, colleagues and others in the course of any professional relationship.

Family therapists recognize the importance of ongoing dialogue within therapeutic, research and training contexts about the meaning and practical application of this code and its underlying values.

## DESCRIPTION OF CORE VALUES

### RESPECT:

Family therapists respect the rights, dignity, integrity and worth of all people. Family therapists oppose prejudice with respect to gender, marital status, family, religion, national or ethnic origin, socio-economic status, age, sexual preference, race, or disability. Family therapists strive to foster understanding of and respect for difference and diversity. Family therapists recognize that ethical beliefs and values are embedded within social, cultural and community values, and make every effort to respect diversity and differences in beliefs subject to the legal and professional obligations and limitations.

In particular, family therapists acknowledge and respect the rights and values identified in national and international law and established through professional practices. Family therapists respect individual rights to health, safety and well being; and dignity, autonomy and self-determination. Family therapists respect interactional values of relationality, care, and mutuality.

Family therapists recognize that no right or value is absolute, that all relationships involve both rights and responsibilities, and all values need to be advanced in a balanced way that takes into account individual, family, community and social contexts. In fostering and promoting individual and family rights and values, family therapists are mindful of their responsibilities to aspire to, foster and promote the values of responsible caring, integrity and social justice. Family therapists endeavor to clarify individual and group rights and responsibility in so far as is useful, necessary or required. Family therapists endeavor to provide useful and appropriate information to recipients of their services when seeking informed consent.



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## RESPONSIBLE CARING

Family therapists privilege interconnectedness, relationships and dialogue as a way of fostering individual and community well-being. Family therapists acknowledge the primacy of relationships in the lives of individuals, and acknowledge the importance of caring and responsibility in relationships. While caring and responsibility are elements of all professional relationships the particular balance that is required is influenced by the type of professional relationship – therapeutic, research, training, supervisory, inter-professional – and by the principle of distributive justice. Distributive justice requires that the particular personal, social, material and historic positioning of the parties to a relationship be taken into account when balancing the principles of caring and responsibility. Family therapists acknowledge that these principles require that they recognize, acknowledge, and respond to differences in perspectives, needs and positions and therefore family therapists promote mutual recognition and respect of differences.

Family therapists recognize that their practices occur within a wider social context, and reflect interpersonal, social and institutional power differentials. In their multiple professional roles family therapists take care to recognize and acknowledge these differentials, and associated competing needs and interests. In particular, family therapists are mindful of the need to be aware of the power inherent in their own positioning in therapeutic, training and research contexts. Family therapists strive to manage their power within these relationships in ways consistent with this code.

Family therapists acknowledge their professional responsibility to position themselves in ways that foster well-being, equality and justice and avoid unethical behavior. Family therapists do not engage in, encourage or condone harmful, illegal or discriminatory actions. To this end Family therapists take reasonable steps to address ethical issues that arise in practice, and remain accountable for how they manage and prioritize different ethical requirements.

Family therapists are aware of their own responsibilities and commitments, perspectives, rights and needs. They are aware of the place their own self plays in professional relationship, and take positive steps to foster and maintain their own well being.

## INTEGRITY

Family therapists acknowledge the importance of honesty, justice, fairness, and reflexivity in all professional relationships

**Honesty:** Family therapists take care to demonstrate and uphold the principles of honesty and openness in all professional interactions. In particular, family therapists take care to ensure that information about the qualifications, areas of competence and expertise of the therapists is honest and accurate. Family therapists take care to understand and acknowledge the boundaries of their own and their professions' areas of competence. Family therapists strive to maintain in so far as is possible, just, honest and respectful positions in relations to others in all interprofessional and interdisciplinary communication. Family therapists strive to ensure that all interested parties in any professional relationship are identified and are aware of their rights and responsibilities within such a relationship. Family therapists acknowledge the particular ethical dilemmas around conflict of interest that can arise when working with systems and strive to respond fairly and justly to multiple relationships.

**Justice:** Family therapists take care to avoid practices that violate the civil or human rights of any person or group or are exploitative of any person or group. Family therapists do not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, color, class, race, culture, religion, physical or mental ability. While respecting the views, beliefs, perspectives of others, family therapists strive to utilize their skills, resources and power in ways that promote the values contained in this code. Where reasonable, family therapists individually and collectively strive to challenge unjust and harmful practices in a manner consistent with their other obligations and responsibilities. Family therapists take care to acknowledge and fulfil their professional responsibilities arising from legal, ethical or contractual sources.



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Family therapists take reasonable care to ensure that differences in language, culture, age, ability and understanding are attended to and that their practices are responsive to different needs based on vulnerability or difference.

**Fairness:** Family therapists recognize the need to attend to family systems and social systems as well as individual systems. Therefore family therapists have a particular responsibility to ensure that the rights and integrity of individuals and systems are respected. Family therapists strive to attend to issues of power and inequality within systems including within therapeutic systems.

**Self-reflexivity:** Family therapists recognize the connections between the person of the therapist and the therapeutic process. Therefore, family therapists recognize the importance of self-awareness and self care. Family therapists take care to be aware of how their own sense of well being, belief systems and personal experiences impact on their role as a professional. Family therapists are aware of their limitations and do not exceed their competence.

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Family therapists recognize that the personal is embedded within the social, and that personal meaning and experiences are intricately connected with social structures, institutions, values and attitudes. Family therapists therefore acknowledge the value of social justice. Family therapists endeavor to understand issues of diversity, oppression, and power and to develop non-discriminatory and empowering practices. Family therapists acknowledge that values are cultural constructions and are mindful of the need for awareness of issues of power positions and appreciation of diversity and difference. Family therapists recognize their position of power within meaning production and their consequent responsibility to position themselves in ways that avoid harmful consequences.

Family therapists are aware of their professional commitment to the values contained in this code, and uphold and foster these values when acting in their diverse professional roles. Family therapists are committed to utilizing their knowledge and skills for the greater good, and for upholding and furthering the interests of the profession. Family therapists engage in dialogue and action that promotes the values of this code, and that examines the usefulness and limitations of this code. Family therapists recognize that ethical practice is not always clearly definable or distinguishable, and that developing ethical process, practices and procedures is an ongoing aspect of professional development. Family therapists are accountable for their ethical decisions.

## **APPLICATION OF VALUES IN PRACTICE:**

Family therapists encounter ethical questions to which there is no simple or unquestionably right solution. Family therapists recognize that the application of values in professional practice, the interpretation of values and the resolution of conflicts between values are ongoing processes within the daily activities of family therapists. Therefore family therapists recognize the importance of ethical decision making processes. Family therapists utilize all reasonable resources in addressing the practical application of ethical requirements. These include but are not confined to:

- textual resources such as this code, legislation, regulations, policies, procedures, and professional literature in family therapy, ethics and related disciplines;
- interpersonal resources including supervision, consultation, support and discussion;
- personal resources including intuition, belief, and knowledge.

Family therapists also recognize that ethical and practice knowledge, rules and guidelines are contextual, and limited by current professional knowledge and practices. Changes in theoretical, social and legal ways of describing ethical and legal principles will necessitate changes in this code. Where possible, members should bring any difficulties, discrepancies or other uncertainties to the attention of the ethics committee.

These values are generally applicable and ground the ethical standards that govern the professional actions of family therapists in relation to clients, the profession and the wider social system.



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## THE CODE IN DETAIL

### RESPECT

Family therapists respect the rights, dignity, integrity and worth of all people, and are aware of and respectful of diversity and difference. Family therapists are responsible for managing differences and conflicts between values.

Family therapists acknowledge and honor the dignity, well-being and human rights of everyone; and interrelatedness, care, and mutuality between all people; consistent with other professional and legal responsibilities.

To this end, family therapists

- 1.1.1. do not engage in, encourage or condone any practices that infringe the human rights of others.
- 1.1.2. do not engage in, encourage or condone discrimination against any person including discrimination on the basis of religion, gender, race, marital status, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, health status, age or socio-economic status.
- 1.1.3. do not engage in, encourage or condone practices that cause harm.
- 1.1.4. Strive to foster awareness of their particular responsibilities to vulnerable clients.
- 1.1.5. strive to maintain and foster responsible caring and integrity in all relationships.
- 1.1.6. respect and show due regard for diversity and difference.

Family therapists recognize the complexities of systemic work with multiple parties and take reasonable care to clarify to all parties the rights and responsibilities of each party.

Family therapists respect the right of individuals to self-determination and autonomy. However, family therapists recognize that no right is absolute and that individual rights need to be balanced with reference to principles of integrity, responsible caring and social justice.

### PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

#### **Privacy**

The practice of family therapy invites involvement in the personal and private space of others. Family therapists are guided by principles of respect, responsible caring and integrity in relation to the privacy of others

Family therapists take positive steps to understand, acknowledge and respect different constructions of privacy, and to enter into the private space of others only where useful or deemed necessary for the purposes for which they have gained informed consent

Family therapists acknowledge any multiple roles they might have with individuals, in particular therapeutic, training and research roles, and take care to distinguish privacy and confidentiality requirements within these roles.

#### **Confidentiality**

Family therapists treat all information obtained in the course of their professional work with dignity and respect. Family therapists recognize that confidentiality is an essential element of respect for the privacy of the other. Family therapists acknowledge that the confidentiality of their professional relationships is limited by agreement, by law and by good practice, and make every reasonable attempt to ensure that all parties to professional relationships are aware of and agree to the boundaries of confidentiality.

Confidential information may be discussed with or divulged to others where informed consent has been obtained, or in exceptional circumstances. When considering making an exception in regard to confidentiality, Family Therapists are expected to consider the following:

- relevant legal, ethical, organizational and practice positions
- The health, safety, well-being of any person that could reasonably be foreseen as being effected by their decision



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- The impact on the therapeutic relationship of any course of action they might take

Family Therapists are expected, where possible, to consult with a colleague and maintain the anonymity of the client during consultation.

Where confidential information is divulged or disclosed, family therapists take all reasonable care to ensure that this information is divulged or disclosed in an appropriate manner.

Family therapists take all reasonable steps to clarify the nature and limitations of individual confidentiality when working with families or groups.

Family therapists acknowledge that decisions regarding the confidentiality of information, its limitations are neither settled nor precise, and that legal professional and social norms and expectations are constantly changing. Therefore family therapists facing decisions about the nature of confidentiality within a specific situation take care to employ available resources including reviewing of relevant written documents and consultation with colleagues, in so far as the circumstances of the case allows. Family therapists are encouraged to document all stages of their decision making.

#### RECORDS

Family therapists take reasonable and appropriate steps to develop practices and procedures around record keeping that respect the rights of all parties and adhere to their professional, legal and ethical responsibilities.

Family therapists ensure that records of their professional activities are accurate and honest.

Family therapists produce, store and dispose of records in ways that respect the privacy, confidentiality and dignity of others.

Family therapists take care to clarify with all interested parties the existence and limitations on rights of access to records.

In the course of their record keeping, family therapists take care to show respect, to accurately record and to distinguish opinion from fact.

Family therapists make adequate plans for records in circumstances of their own death or incapacity.

It is recommended that Family Therapists make provision for the retention of hard copies of their records for a period of at least six years after the completion of a case.

#### CONSENT:

Family therapists recognize that consent is a process involving all parties within a professional relationship, and that social, institutional and legal rules, regulations and practices impact upon this process.

Family therapists make reasonable efforts to obtain informed consent from all persons with the capacity to consent, as soon as is reasonable practicable within a professional relationship. However, circumstances may arise where in the professional judgement of the family therapists a particular course of action is required in the absence of full informed consent. In considering whether action should be taken without obtaining informed consent, family therapists are required to consider and document the following

- Whether in the professional opinion of the family therapist the health, safety or welfare of a person may be at risk;
- The courses of action available that may reduce that risk, and the likely consequences of any such course of action;
- The possible consequences of seeking informed consent ;
- Family therapists are accountable for their decisions regarding the course of action to be taken in the absence of informed consent



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When persons are legally incapable of giving informed consent family therapists strive to obtain informed permission in a manner consistent with their legal, professional and ethical obligations. In addition to obtaining such permission, family therapists make reasonable efforts given the age and level of understanding of the client and the particular circumstances of the case to ensure that the client understands the process and agrees to taking part. Where such a person is unwilling to take part then the family therapist proceeds only where, in their professional opinion, the benefits of continuing justify such a course of action.

Where reasonable and possible family therapists seek consultation in any case where they intend to proceed without informed consent and the direct benefits are unclear or such action or failure to act may result in harm to any person.

When providing information for the purposes of obtaining informed consent, family therapists strive to provide information that is accurate and reasonably comprehensive to all involved persons. The type of information that may be required, given the circumstances of the case and taking into account the age ability and level of understanding of each person includes the following

The reasons for the activity;

- the nature of any multiple relationships ;
- evident consequences of lack of consent;
- rights and obligations of all parties;
- probable and foreseeable benefits and risks;
- how to withdraw consent;

Family therapists strive to ensure that consent is given freely and without undue influence subject to other legal and ethical considerations.

Where recording equipment or third party observation is intended to be utilized in any professional activity family therapists take all reasonable steps to ensure that all parties are aware of and provide consent to such use. Where therapeutic clients are unwilling to consent to such a procedure, family therapists advise clients of alternative approaches.

Family therapists considering using therapeutic cases for research or training purposes discuss the possibility with clients as soon as is reasonably possible. Family therapists are particularly aware of the need for consent to be freely given by all clients in such circumstances.

Family therapists ensure that consent is appropriately documented.

#### RESPONSIBLE CARING

*Family therapists acknowledge the principles of caring and responsibility, and the interconnectedness of these principles, within relationships. Family therapists strive to foster the principles of responsible caring within families, groups organizations and communities. Family therapists demonstrate responsible caring in their professional relationships and enter into, continue and end professional relationships with due regard to individual, family and group interests and rights, the integrity of the relationship and issues of social justice. Family therapists are accountable for their professional decisions and actions and accept appropriate responsibility for their behavior.*

Family therapists strive to establish professional relationship based on an appropriate balance and integration of principles of respect, integrity, trust, caring, compassion and responsibility. Family therapists recognize that these principles are interactional and context dependent. Family therapists strive to balance these principles in ways that take account of the individual, family, professional, organization and social contexts in which professional interactions take place.



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Family therapists endeavor to promote and foster the health, safety, integrity, well-being and rights of others.

Family therapists take particular care to ensure that the knowledge or skills of the profession are not used in developing or using methods of torture, or other procedures and techniques that threaten or violate individual or collective human rights.

Family therapists, in so far as is reasonable, take care to foresee the consequences of their professional practice and to avoid and where required oppose the misuse of their professional knowledge and skills in ways that are likely to cause harm.

Family therapists are aware of the power differential in therapeutic, research, supervisory and training relationships, and take particular care to define and maintain boundaries with their clients, research participants, students and supervisees.

Family therapists continue therapeutic relationships only so long as their professional judgement, in consultation with clients, indicates that clients are benefiting from the relationship.

When carrying out research, family therapists respect the dignity and endeavor to protect the welfare of research participants. Family therapists are aware of and apply relevant laws and regulations governing the conduct of research.

Family therapists respect the dignity and endeavor to protect the welfare of students and supervisees. Family therapists are mindful of the importance of openness, honesty and transparency in their professional practices with and in relation to students and supervisees.

### **Self Protection and Self Care**

Family therapists are responsible for protecting and preserving their own safety, health, integrity and well being, maintaining competence, and continuing personal and professional growth.

Family therapists engage in self-care to promote their own well-being and avoid harm to the person of the therapist or any other person. Where appropriate, family therapists seek support, consultation and/or supervision from colleagues when issues of self care conflict with other professional responsibilities

Family therapists take active steps to cultivate awareness of and acknowledge the limits of their competence and to maintain and cultivate their knowledge and skills, in accordance with the principles of integrity.

Family therapists, individually and collectively, aspire to develop principles of self care and mutuality of care in ways that promote the well being of family therapists.

### **Continuity of services**

Family therapists end professional relationships with due regard to individual, family and group welfare, interests and rights.

Where family therapists have reasonable cause to end a therapeutic relationship without the agreement of all parties then they take reasonable care to ensure that the ending is managed in a fair and just manner. This includes ensuring that reasonable notice is given and appropriate alternatives are offered if the circumstances of the case warrants.

Family therapists take into account a clients' age, ability and level of vulnerability when ending a professional relationship and/or referring to other professionals and services.

Family therapists seek adequate and reasonable informed consent when referring to other services and do not receive any personal gain or benefit for such referrals.





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### **Reimbursement for services**

Family therapists strive to ensure that arrangements regarding fees and related financial matters are made in a fair and equitable manner.

Family therapists discuss fees and related financial matters with recipients of services as soon as is practicable in the relationship.

Family therapists make all reasonable efforts to ensure that financial arrangements are clearly explained and are understood.

Changes in fees are made in a fair and equitable manner.

Family therapists do not charge excessive fees, and are encouraged to consider principles of fairness and social justice when making arrangements about fees.

Family therapists are encouraged to provide some services for low fees.

Family therapists are required to offer receipts for all professional fees received.

Family therapists do not offer or accept personal payments for referrals.

Co-operation with other professionals. Family therapists promote interdisciplinary collaboration and mutual respect. Family therapists co-operate with other professionals, services and disciplines in a manner consistent with this code.

Family therapists respect individual, family and group rights with respect to privacy, confidentiality and informed consent when interacting with other professionals

Family therapists discuss confidential information only in so far as in the professional judgement of the family therapist, it is required, useful or relevant to the purpose of the activity.

Family therapists refuse to co-operate with practices or procedures that infringe national or international law or that could reasonable be expected to infringe the human rights of others.

Family therapists take reasonable and appropriate steps to prevent harmful or unethical behavior by colleagues, or by other professionals or services.

Where conflicts of ethical principles arise in relation to co-operation with colleagues, other professionals, or other services, family therapists are accountable for their professional judgement in deciding whether to co-operate.

### **INTEGRITY**

*Family therapists acknowledge the importance of honesty, justice, fairness, and reflexivity in all professional relationships. Family therapists' concern with interactive and systemic processes and their focus on networks of significant relationships require that particular attention is paid to integrity within multiple relationships.*

**HONESTY** Family therapists take care to ensure that they are honest in all professional interactions. Family therapists take care to understand and acknowledge the limits of their own and their professions' areas of competence. Family therapists ensure in so far as is possible that interprofessional and interdisciplinary communication maintain just, honest and respectful positions in relations to others. In particular



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Family therapists are aware of the areas of usefulness of the discipline of family therapy, and take care to honestly portray the discipline in all public and professional communications

Family therapists take all due care to ensure that they are honest in their portrayal of their services, including the limits imposed by legal, institutional, organizational, professional or other contexts on their services.

Family therapists take all reasonable care to only contract for services that they can provide, and to honor those commitments.

Family therapists take care to ensure that all professional interactions, in so far as is feasible, contain honest information about their qualifications, areas of competence and expertise and the usefulness and limitations of their service

Family therapists abide by legal, professional and ethical prohibitions on dishonesty, fraud and deception.

Family therapists take care to appropriately and honestly portray their research findings. In particular, family therapists:

Acknowledge appropriately those who have contributed to the research

Acknowledge any interests whether personal, professional or material that might impact substantially on the research

Avoid plagiarism and infringement of ownership or copyright

Take appropriate action to prevent the distortion or misuse of their research findings.

Family therapists take positive steps to ensure that all that contribute to an activity are appropriately acknowledged.

### **Competence:**

Family therapists take care to cultivate awareness of the limits of their own competence and to act within the boundaries of their competence. In particular

Family therapists ensure that in all professional interactions they are honest in portraying their qualifications and areas of competence.

Family therapists do not act outside the recognized boundaries of their competencies without adequate supervision.

Family therapists seek to maintain abreast of new developments in family therapy knowledge and practice through both educational activities and clinical experience.

Family therapists are aware of applicable legal, ethical professional and organizational standards and practices.

### **JUSTICE**

Family therapists take care to avoid practices that violate the civil or human rights of any person or are exploitative of any person, and may take reasonable steps to challenge such practices. Family therapists take care to acknowledge and fulfil their professional responsibilities arising from legal, ethical or contractual sources. Family therapists foster the principles of justice in their professional activities. In particular

Family therapists recognize and respect the rights of individuals, families and communities to self-determination and autonomy, subject to due consideration of and respect for the needs, rights and welfare of others.



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Family therapists acknowledge and respect difference and diversity. Family therapists are particularly aware of differences in language, culture, age, ability and understanding and strive to ensure that these differences are attended to

Family therapists take care to acknowledge and fulfil their professional responsibilities arising from legal, ethical or contractual sources.

Family therapists are subject to prevailing legal, social professional and organizational descriptions of justice, and take care to ensure that the rights and responsibilities of all parties are recognized and understood within professional interactions

Family therapists recognize and respect individual, community and cultural differences and diversity in understanding of justice, subject to legal, organizational and professional requirements.

Family therapists recognize the rights of clients, research participants, trainees, students, supervisees and employees to fair procedures.

Family therapists do not engage in the harassment of supervisees, students, employees or colleagues.

Family therapists do not support, condone or collude with practices that are unethical or harmful. Family therapists may take reasonable steps to offset or prevent harm.

#### FAIRNESS

Family therapists recognize the principles of fairness and equity, and uphold and promote these principles in their diverse professional roles.

Family therapists recognize the need to attend to family systems and social systems as well as individual systems. Therefore family therapists have a particular responsibility to ensure that the rights and integrity of individuals within systems are respected.

Family therapists have a particular responsibility to attend to issues of power and inequality within therapeutic systems.

Family therapists acknowledge credit for publication in accordance with customary professional publication practices and in accordance with principles of fairness and justice.

Family therapists do not plagiarize or fail to cite persons to whom credit is due.

#### REFLEXIVITY

Family therapists recognize the connections between their personal and professional selves. Therefore, family therapists recognize the importance of self-awareness and self care.

Family therapists recognize their own limits, professionally and personally, and actively engage in personal care and professional development.

Family therapists are aware of the part their own self plays in their professional practice and take care to monitor and foster their own well being.

Family therapists take appropriate action where their state of health or well-being might impact detrimentally on their professional activities.



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Where useful or appropriate, and with due regard to the nature and circumstances of the professional relationship, family therapists acknowledge the impact of their beliefs, experiences and circumstances on their professional activities  
Family therapists provide reasonable and appropriate support to colleagues

#### MULTIPLE RELATIONSHIPS

##### **Conflicts of Interest and avoidance of harm**

Family therapists make reasonable efforts to avoid multiple relationships where the potential for conflict of interest could arise. However, family therapists are also members of complex social and community systems and recognize that it may not be possible or useful to avoid such relationships. Where such relationships exist, family therapists make reasonable and adequate efforts to prevent harm, exploitation and abuse and to promote respect, integrity and justice.

Family therapists are aware of the complexities of multiple relationships and take reasonable steps to clarify to all parties the rights and responsibilities of each party within each relationship.

Family therapists take all reasonable steps to protect the rights, interests and welfare of others within multiple relationships

Family therapists do not exploit their professional relationships for their own purpose or to obtain any material benefit beyond that which has been justly and contractually agreed upon.

Family therapists are aware of the potential for disparate and conflicting needs and rights within multiple relationships, and utilize their professional judgement in managing these disparate and conflicting needs.

When engaged in multiple professional roles with therapeutic clients, family therapists take all reasonable care to ensure that the therapeutic relationships and processes are not adversely affected, and that clients freely consent to such roles.

##### **Sexual relationships**

Family therapists are aware of the power differential within relationships with therapeutic clients, students and trainees, and do not exploit these relationships or condone the exploitation of these relationships for gratification of sexual desires, either during the professional relationship or for a reasonable period after its termination.

Family therapists do not engage in sexual relationships with current or former clients for a period of 2 years.

Family therapists do not engage in sexual relationships with current students or trainees.

Family therapists do not engage in sexual or other harassment of supervisees, students, employees or colleagues.



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## SOCIAL JUSTICE

*Family therapists strive to utilize their professional knowledge and skills for the benefit of society. Family therapists actively engage with social, moral and ethical issues. Family therapists are responsible for upholding the integrity, standards and ethics of the profession.*

### **Social responsibility**

Family therapists strive to utilize their professional knowledge and skills for the benefit of society. In particular, family therapists abide by and promote the values of this code within professional and social contexts. To this end,

Family therapists may support activities that promote the values contained in this code.

Family therapists are particularly concerned with activities that promote co-operation and dialogue, foster the appreciation of diversity and promote equality and justice.

Family therapists as a professional body are concerned with developing laws and regulations pertaining to their areas of professional concern and influencing legislation, policies and practices that promote the values of this code.

Family therapists recognize the importance of supporting activities that promote the interests of the community.

Family therapists encourage the participation of the wider community in the designing and delivery of services.

Family therapists encourage the participation of the wider community in the regulation of practitioners.

### **Avoidance of Harm.**

Family therapists take due care to avoid and may, where reasonable, challenge oppressive discriminatory or harmful practices.

Family therapists remain accountable to the standards of the profession when acting as members or employees of organisations.

Family therapists act to improve practices, policies and procedures of the organisations in which they work or are affiliated to in so far as is appropriate and reasonable

Where the policies procedures or practices of such organisations conflict with this code, family therapists make known their responsibility under this code and take all reasonable courses of action to resolve such conflict.

### **Responsibility to the profession**

*Advertising, Public Statements and Media.*

Family therapists are mindful of the need to properly represent their competence, education, training and experience relevant to their practice of family therapy.

Family therapists do not use any professional identification material that contains a statement or claim that is false, fraudulent, misleading, or deceptive.

Family therapists correct false, misleading or inaccurate information and representations made by others concerning his or her qualifications or services.

Family therapists ensure that the qualifications of their employees and trainees are represented in a manner that is not false misleading or deceptive.



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Family therapists may represent themselves as specialists in particular areas of family therapy only where they can provide appropriate evidence of training education and experience in such specialised areas in accordance with recognised standards.

Only registered family therapists may identify their membership of FTAI in public information or advertising materials.

Family therapists do not use the initials FTAI following their name in the manner of an academic degree. They may be used in the following manner only

Name of Therapist  
Reg. Family Therapists (FTAI)

Or Name of supervisor  
Reg. Family Therapist Supervisor (FTAI)

They may not be used as follows  
Name of Therapist FTAI

The logo for FTAI may not be used without permission.

Family therapists use their membership of FTAI only in connection with activities that are consistent with the values of the profession. Family therapists are bound by this code during the course of their use of their membership of FTAI

Family therapists are aware of their potential for influencing others and take particular care when making public statements to ensure that

- their statements are based on appropriate professional literature and practice;
  - their statements are consistent with the Code of Ethics
- Family therapists make efforts to prevent the distortion or misuse of their clinical and research findings.

### **Utilisation of code**

Family therapists take positive steps to utilise and apply this code and to foster the values of this code.

Family therapists have an obligation to be familiar with this code. Lack of awareness is not a defence to a charge of unethical conduct.

Family therapists utilise this code in their daily practice, and take reasonable steps to provide for the dissemination of this code through training, discussion and practice.

Family therapists engage in ethical reviews of their work.

Family therapists who are uncertain about the ethics of a particular course of action are encouraged to utilise textual, interpersonal and personal resources as appropriate.

Both law and ethics govern the practice of family therapy. When making decisions regarding professional behaviour, family therapists consider this Code and applicable laws and regulations and therapeutic principles. Family therapists are responsible for the manner in which they resolve differences, discrepancies and conflicts.



**FTAI**

Family Therapy Association of Ireland

Family therapists are required to inform FTAI and may be subject to disciplinary proceedings where any of the following circumstances arise

- A family therapist is convicted of a criminal offence that could reasonably be considered to be a breach of this code
- A complaint is upheld against a family therapist by any court, tribunal, organisation or professional association
- A family therapist continues to practice while no longer competent to do so due to illness, impairment or substance abuse
- A family therapist fails to co-operate with the investigation of a complaint by FTAI.

Family therapists do not condone or facilitate the unethical behaviour of others.

Where family therapists have reasonable cause to believe that colleagues, services or other professionals are infringing legal or ethical requirements, they engage in an appropriate consultation process in order to determine a reasonable and appropriate course of action]

Family therapists are advised to ensure that their professional work is adequately covered by appropriate indemnity insurance.

This Code of Ethics was adopted at the AGM of the Family Therapy Association of Ireland on May 28th 2005. This Code of Ethics now replaces any previous Codes of Ethics.

