

# **Association of Educational Therapists**

## **CODE OF ETHICS AND STANDARDS FOR THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE OF EDUCATIONAL THERAPY**

**The main goal and purpose of educational therapy is to optimize learning and school adjustment, with recognition that emotional, behavioral, and learning are intertwined. The Association of Educational Therapists has defined the role of the Educational Therapist as follows:**

**An Educational Therapist works in the educational domain with persons who exhibit learning concerns.**

An Educational Therapist is skilled in:

- formal and informal educational assessment;
- synthesis of information from other specialists, and from parents/guardians;
- development and implementation of appropriate intervention programs;
- strategies for addressing social and emotional aspects of learning;
- formation of supportive relationships with the individual and with those involved in his or her educational development;
- facilitation of communication between the individual, the family, the school, and involved professionals.

### **CODE OF ETHICS**

The Code of Ethics of a profession states the basis for all professional conduct of its members. Guiding Principles encourage continued development of the profession and assist in advancing professionalism, promoting discussion, and encouraging research. The following Guiding Principles and standards for professional practice comprise the Code of Ethics for Educational Therapists. Members of the Association of Educational Therapists are responsible for upholding and advancing these principles.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- I. Educational Therapists are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the fundamental dignity of every person seeking their services and are committed to developing the highest educational potential of their clients.
- II. Educational Therapists discharge their responsibilities in the field of special and rehabilitative education by exemplifying the highest standards of competence, excellence, and integrity.
- III. Educational Therapists are committed to the development of professional skills appropriate to the special needs of clients and devoid of false claims or guarantees.

- IV. Educational Therapists serve the profession of educational therapy by validating ethical practice, discouraging misconduct, and working to expand the body of professional knowledge.
- V. Educational Therapists understand that technology is a rapidly evolving field and those conducting an e-practice must stay current.
- VI. Educational Therapists accord due recognition to and collaboration with colleagues and allied professionals.

## **STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE**

### **SECTION ONE. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES**

#### **1. REPRESENTATION**

Educational Therapists:

- A. accurately represent in an ethical and legal manner their competence, education, training, and experience.
- B. provide professional services only within the boundaries of their competence based on their education, training, supervised and professional experience while operating within the scope of practice and ethics of the Association of Educational Therapy. Those engaged in e-practice operate within the scope of practice and ethics of the Association of Educational Therapists, as when providing services to clients in-person.
- C. claim as evidence of professional qualifications, in accord with the requirements described in the Bylaws of the Association of Educational Therapists, only those transcripts, documents, and training experiences which they have duly earned.
- D. adhere to the Association of Educational Therapist's ethical guidelines as well as all applicable laws of the state(s) in which they practice when deciding which services they are qualified to provide.
- E. follow specialized standards when engaged in e-practice.

E-practice is defined as services using telecommunication technologies which include the preparation, transmission, communication, or related processing of information (writing, images, sounds, or other data) by electrical, electromagnetic, electromechanical, electro-optical, or electronic means. \*

Telecommunication technologies include but are not limited to telephone, mobile devices, interactive videoconferencing, e-mail, chat, text, and Internet (e.g., self-help websites, blogs, and social media). Services may be synchronous or asynchronous (e.g., e-mail, online bulletin boards, storing and forwarding of information). Technologies may augment traditional in-person services or be used as a standalone service model. \*

## 2. RESPONSIBILITIES

### Educational Therapists:

- A. provide only those professional services for which they have been adequately trained. Those engaged in e-practice strive to take reasonable steps to ensure their competence with both the technologies used and the potential impact of the technologies on clients, their families, supervisees, or other professionals.
- B. clearly state, describe, present, and adhere to the conditions of a contract or terms of an agreement prior to the initiation of services, and give notice of fee and policy revisions in advance of their implementation. As part of this informed consent contractual process, Educational Therapists shall explain to clients whether and how they intend to use electronic devices or communication technologies to gather, manage, and store client information.
- C. understand that educational therapy services are based on the unique needs of each individual client and conduct an initial assessment/screening to inform their treatment plan.
- D. use published materials ethically and only for the purposes intended.
- E. seek assistance, including the services of other professionals, in instances where personal problems threaten to interfere with their job performance.
- F. recognize and resolve situations involving potential conflict of interest in their practice.
- G. do not discriminate in hiring on the basis of race, color, creed, gender identity, national origin, age, political practices, family or social background, sexual orientation, or exceptionality.
  - a. strive for objectivity in evaluating prospective employees.
  - b. adhere to the policies and procedures established in their places of employment when in the employment of others.
- H. use their leadership positions, professional credentials or standing, volunteer capacities, or perceived authority, to forward the stated goals of the association in keeping with the AET Bylaws. When functioning in a professional capacity, educational therapists keep personal views and opinions, unrelated to the practice of educational therapy, private and separate in all professional communications in written statements and/or on electronic forums. Personal statements may create boundary confusion and be damaging to professional relationships and to the public perception of the profession.

## 3. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- A. strive toward self-evaluation and continuous improvement of professional performance.
- B. systematically advance their knowledge and skills by pursuing a program of continuing education including but not limited to participation in such activities as professional

conferences / workshops, professional meetings, continuing education courses, and the reading of professional literature.

- C. support and facilitate professional development and encourage research efforts among colleagues.

## **SECTION TWO. PROFESSIONALS IN RELATION TO CLIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

### **1. INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND COMPETENCIES**

Educational Therapists shall apply professional expertise to ensure the provision of quality education for all clients in keeping with clients' legal, civil, and educational rights.

Educational Therapists strive to:

- A. develop and interpret individual goals and objectives for educational therapy, based upon appropriate assessment procedures and/or local school mandates, in cooperation with clients, their parents/guardians, and allied professionals.
- B. select and use appropriate assessment instruments, recognizing their limitations with respect to reliability, validity, and bias.
- C. use only those assessment instruments for which they have been adequately trained.
- D. seek interpretation of assessment data from professionals in related fields (e.g. medical, psychological, speech/language, neuropsychological).
- E. select and use appropriate instructional methods, curricula, materials, and other resources to meet the unique needs of each client.
- F. assess and continuously evaluate their technological competencies, training, consultation, experience, and risk management practices to assure competency when engaging in e-practice.
- G. create safe and effective learning environments which contribute to the fulfillment of needs, motivation to learn, and enhancement of self-concept.
- H. recognize that additional factors must be examined when considering providing services via e-practice, including consideration of:
  - a. The appropriateness, benefits, and limitations of e-practice and whether or not it is appropriate for the client before initiating e-services.
  - b. The client's culture, education level, age, and other relevant characteristics including the individual's familiarity, comfort with technology, and access to the internet.
  - c. The client's remote environment where e-services would take place, including regular monitoring of such environment as it might change.
- J. maintain confidentiality of information except where information is released under specific conditions of written consent and/or statutory requirements.

- K. establish and maintain confidentiality policies and procedures consistent with relevant statutes, regulations, rules, and ethical standards.
- L. provide adequate security and security controls for client information and data within information systems when engaging in e-practice.

Adequate security is defined as security commensurate with the risk and magnitude of harm resulting from the loss, misuse, or unauthorized access to or modification of information. \*

Security controls are defined as “the management, operational, and technical controls (i.e. safeguards or countermeasures) prescribed for an information system to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the system and its information.” \*

- M. recognize the possibility that any electronic communication can have a high risk of public discovery.
- N. educate themselves about the potential risks to privacy and confidentiality and consider utilizing all available privacy settings to reduce these risks.
  - a. periodically review the types of precautions they use to ensure that they are appropriate and strive to be aware of malware, cookies, and so forth and to dispose of them routinely on an ongoing basis.
  - b. adhere to privacy and security standards in compliance with HIPAA regulations and other relevant federal and state laws when using cloud storage.
  - c. notify clients and other appropriate individuals/organization as soon as possible in the event of a breach of unencrypted electronically communicated or maintained data,
  - d. follow current environmental protection guidelines and relevant statutes and regulations related to record retention and disposal of records and electronics and take steps to prevent data leaks and unauthorized access to confidential information when disposing of electronic devices.
- O. establish base-line data about the skills and needs of new clients and maintain accurate data for the purpose of decision making and consultation.
  - a. establish ways to measure and determine client progress towards those goals at regular intervals.
  - b. be especially cognizant about determining whether e-practice is achieving those goals.
- P. terminate services based on criteria mutually agreed upon by the client/parent and Educational Therapist.

It is recommended that the final termination session(s) be held in the manner in which sessions have typically been conducted throughout the educational therapy process to allow time for any final assessments and for closure between student/client and educational therapist.
- Q. participate with allied professionals and parents/guardians in an interdisciplinary effort in the management of behavior and take adequate measures to discourage, prevent, and intervene when a colleague’s behavior is perceived as being detrimental to clients.

## **2. PARENT/GUARDIAN/FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

Educational Therapists seek to develop relationships with parents/guardians based on mutual respect for their roles in achieving benefits for the client.

Educational Therapists:

- A. seek and use parents'/guardians' perspective and expertise in planning, conducting, and evaluating services, as well as determining optimum time for termination of services to clients.
- B. develop effective communication with parents/guardians, avoiding or interpreting technical terminology, using the primary language of the home and other modes of communication when appropriate.
- C. inform parents/guardians of the educational rights of their children, and of any proposed or actual practices which violate those rights.
- D. recognize and respect cultural diversities in the implementation of professional practices.
- E. recognize that the relationship of home and community environmental conditions affects the behavior and outlook of the client.
- F. facilitate the understanding among parents/guardians, school personnel, and other professionals regarding the realistic limitations of each one's function and role.
- G. facilitate referral to other appropriate professionals for services as needed.
- H. maintain communication between parents/guardians and professionals with appropriate respect for privacy and confidentiality.
- I. take extra care to avoid breaches in confidentiality when using electronic media.

## **3. ADVOCACY**

Educational Therapists who serve as advocates for clients by speaking, writing, and acting in a variety of situations may, on their client's behalf:

- A. inform themselves, counsel, and (when called upon) represent client and family regarding current local, state/provincial, and federal laws and regulations.
- B. consult with the family in evaluating the appropriateness, initiation, continuation and/or termination of related services.
- C. work cooperatively with and encourage other professionals to improve the provision of educational and related services to clients.
- D. promote corrective action by school administrators and colleagues when educational resources and placements appear to be inadequate or inappropriate for clients.

## **SECTION THREE. PROFESSIONALS IN RELATION TO THE PROFESSION AND TO OTHER PROFESSIONALS**

### **1. IN RELATION TO THE PROFESSION**

Educational Therapists:

- A. take an active position in the regulation of the profession through the use of appropriate corrective action for misrepresentation and violations of ethics and standards of practice herein defined.
- B. provide varied and exemplary field experiences for persons in training programs when acting in supervisory roles.
- C. refrain from using professional relationships with clients and/or their families for personal advantage or exploitation.
- D. initiate, support, and/or participate in research related to the enhancement and quality of educational services.
  - a. adopt procedures that protect the rights and welfare of subjects participating in research.
  - b. interpret and publish research results with accuracy and a high quality of scholarship.
  - c. support a cessation of the use of any research procedure which may result in undesirable consequences for the participant.
  - d. exercise all possible precautions to prevent misapplication or misuse of a research effort, by oneself or others.

### **2. IN RELATION TO OTHER PROFESSIONALS**

Educational Therapists function as members of interdisciplinary teams and recognize that the reputation of the profession resides with them.

Educational Therapists:

- A. recognize and acknowledge the competencies and expertise of members representing other disciplines as well as those members of their own discipline.
- B. strive to develop positive attitudes among other professionals toward clients, representing them with an objective regard for the client's possibilities and limitations.
- C. communicate, with client/guardian consent, with other agencies involved in serving clients in information exchanges related to planning, coordination, evaluation, and training, to achieve and maintain effective services.
- D. provide consultation and assistance, where appropriate, to both regular and special education as well as other school personnel serving clients.

- E. provide consultation and assistance, where appropriate, to professionals in non-school settings serving clients.
- F. maintain effective interpersonal relations with colleagues and other professionals, helping them to develop and maintain positive and accurate perceptions about the profession of educational therapy.
- ~~G.~~ abide by ethical standards and communicate respectfully with and about colleagues and allied professionals.
- H. develop policies for using online social media for educational purposes and share those policies with clients to provide them with guidance about ethical considerations.
- I. respect the standards and codes of ethics of other professional organizations.

This CODE OF ETHICS AND STANDARDS FOR THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE OF EDUCATIONAL THERAPY, adopted by the AET Executive Committee, February 1985, has been developed through an adaptation of the CODE OF ETHICS AND STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). Permission was granted by CEC for such adaptation.

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\*Security Controls are defined by the Committee on National Security Systems, NSA/CSS in Manual Number 3-16 (COMSEC) dated 2015.

Additions regarding e-practice have been developed through adaptations with permissions from:

“Telepractice: Key Issues” retrieved from:  
[https://www.asha.org/PRPSpecificTopic.aspx?folderid=8589934956&section=Key\\_Issues](https://www.asha.org/PRPSpecificTopic.aspx?folderid=8589934956&section=Key_Issues), a publication of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, (ASHA).

“Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology” in the December 2013 edition of the *American Psychologist*.

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