



Client Rights and Responsibilities

About This Publication

This publication was jointly prepared by the National Board for Certified Counselors and Chi Sigma Iota to help clients understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities. NBCC and CSI believe clients who are informed are best able to use counseling services to meet their needs.



Definitions

Counselors

Professional counselors must successfully complete a graduate degree program in counseling that includes a practicum and clinical internship in which skills and techniques are developed and honed under supervision.

Professional Counseling

Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals. Often, client concerns include family or other relationship matters, grief, and stress. In some cases, concerns may be specific to a mental illness.



Client Rights

Seeking and selecting a counselor can be an intimidating process.

As a client, you have the right to:

- Select a professional counselor who meets your needs.
- Receive specific information about your counselor's qualifications, including education, experience, national counseling certifications, and state licensure.
- Obtain a copy of the code(s) of ethics your counselor must follow.
- Receive a written explanation of services offered, time commitments, fee scales, and billing policies prior to receipt of services.
- Understand your counselor's areas of expertise and scope of practice (e.g., career development, adolescents, couples, etc.).



- Ask questions about confidentiality and its limits as specified in state laws and professional ethical codes.
- Receive information about emergency procedures (e.g., how to contact your counselor in the event of a crisis).
- Ask questions about counseling techniques and strategies, including potential risks and benefits.
- Establish goals and evaluate progress with your counselor.
- Request additional opinions from other mental health assessment professionals.
- Understand the implications of diagnosis and the intended use of psychological reports.
- Obtain copies of records and reports.
- Terminate the counseling relationship at any time.
- Share any concerns or complaints you may have regarding a professional counselor's conduct with the appropriate professional counseling organization or licensure board.



Client Responsibilities

In order for your counselor to provide the highest quality of services, it is important that clients:

- Adhere to established schedules. If you must miss an appointment, contact your counselor as soon as possible.
- Pay your bill in accordance with the billing agreements.
- Follow agreed-upon goals and strategies established in sessions.
- Inform your professional counselor of your progress and challenges in meeting your goals.
- Participate fully in each session to help maximize a positive outcome.
- Inform your counselor if you are receiving mental health services from another professional.
- Consider appropriate referrals from your counselor.
- Avoid placing your counselor in ethical dilemmas, such as requesting to become involved in social interactions or to barter for services.



What to Do if You Are Dissatisfied

Remember that a counselor who meets the needs of one person may not meet the needs of another.

If you are dissatisfied with the services of your counselor:

- Express concerns directly to the counselor, if possible.
- Seek the advice of the counselor's supervisor if the counselor is practicing in a setting where he or she receives direct supervision.
- Terminate the counseling relationship if the situation remains unresolved.
- Contact the appropriate state licensing board, national certification organization, or professional association if you believe the counselor's conduct to be unethical.



The National Board for Certified Counselors



The National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. and Affiliates (NBCC) was founded in 1982 as an independent, not-for-profit credentialing organization. It is the nation's premier certification board serving counselors who meet rigorous standards for the general and specialty practices of their profession. Counselors certified by NBCC must maintain their certification by adhering to a strict code of ethics and following continuing education procedures. In addition, NBCC provides the examinations used by states that regulate the practice of counseling.

nbcc.org



Chi Sigma Iota Counseling Academic & Professional Honor Society International



Chi Sigma Iota International (CSI) is an academic and professional honor society that recognizes excellence among counseling students and professionals. It includes a worldwide network of individuals who have met rigid academic standards and achieved professional recognition through credentialing.

csi-net.org



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The National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. (NBCC) values diversity.
There will be no barriers to certification on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, or national origin.