

INTEGRITY ISSUES

Mental health practitioners must also address issues related to personal and professional integrity.

They are:

- Dishonesty, Fraud, & Deception
- Misrepresentation
- Solicitations
- Acknowledging Credit

Practitioners have an obligation to avoid actions that are dishonest, fraudulent, or deceptive. Such actions, or in some cases, lack of action, put the continued integrity of both the individual mental health worker and the profession at risk.

- Falsifying records, forging signatures, or documenting services not rendered
- Embellishing one's education and experience history or qualifications (refer also to "Misrepresentation")
- Lying to a client or their family to "protect" them from unpleasant information
- Not sharing legitimate options to a client because they violate the professional's beliefs
- Misleading potential donors or current funders with false outcome data

Misrepresentation occurs when mental health professionals present opinions, claims, and statements that are either false or lead the listeners to believe facts that are not accurate.

Three actions must be taken to ensure that clients and the public receive accurate information:

- 1) Clearly distinguish between private statements and actions, and those as representative of an organization, employer, etc.
- 2) Accurately present the official and authorized positions of the organization they are representing and/or speaking on behalf of
- 3) Ensure accurate information about, and correct any inaccuracies regarding, professional qualifications/credentials, services offered, and outcomes/results

Client solicitation stems from a concern for clients who, due to their situation, may be vulnerable to exploitation or undue influence. Because of their circumstances there is also the potential for manipulation and coercion. As such, mental health practitioners should refrain from doing the following:

- Engage in uninvited solicitation, or
- Solicit testimonial endorsements from current clients or other potentially vulnerable persons

Mental health practitioners also have an ethical responsibility to the contributions of others by acknowledging credit. They should:

- Take responsibility and credit only for work they have actually performed and contributed to, and
- Honestly acknowledge the work and/or contributions, of others