

Staff members are expected to treat one another, agency clients, other professionals, and the general public with courtesy and respect. The Forrester Center staff is cognizant of their obligation to safeguard both their reputations and those of professional colleagues and clients.

STAFF ETHICS

- The staff will **safeguard clients' welfare** within the bounds of his/her responsibility. It is the responsibility of all Forrester Center counselors to assure continuity of care by following up on the progress of referrals made to other agencies or counselors.

- An **ethical, professional relationship** with a client is **free from any behavior on the part of staff that is or has the appearance of being abusive or damaging to the client**.

This includes relationships that exploit the connection for the satisfaction of the needs or the desires of the staff person, including physical, sexual, psychological mistreatment and fiduciary abuse of the client.

- The counselor will **terminate a clinical relationship** immediately upon **evidence that the client cannot be reasonably expected to benefit** from a continuation of it.
- The agency and its staff **provide an appropriate setting for all clinical work**, both for the protection of the counselor and the client.
- Any **dual relationships (conflict of interest)** involving staff members and clients may raise questions of poor judgment, conflicts of interest, and **questionable ethical behavior**.

Staff who has a pre-existing personal/social relationship with persons seeking services will carefully evaluate their capacity to engage professionally with those individuals. Except under unusual and special circumstances, such situations are best handled by an appropriate referral. All cases will be subject to consultation with the appropriate program coordinator.

Additional examples of dual and inappropriate relationships with persons served include personal fundraising, personal property, and witnessing of legal documents.

Any form of romantic involvement or sexual activity between a staff member and a client or between a client and a Forrester Center volunteer/trainee/intern is unethical.

- The counselor **conscientiously seeks peer or supervisory consultations** in client management, especially when he/she encounters difficulties or has reason to question the appropriateness of his/her client relationship.
- Staff members shall **not enter into personal and/or social relationships with clients** during the course of treatment and for a **period of two years following discharge**.
- Staff will serve The Forrester Center clients and the public in **a conscientious and efficient manner to provide services promptly**.

When it can be foreseen that there will be an unusual delay in the initiation of such services, clients will be informed and, if appropriate, referrals may be made.

- A staff member **shall not enter into a business arrangement** with a Forrester Center **client**.

- Staff members shall **not accept gifts of monetary value, money and gratuities from clients** nor present such gifts, money, and gratuities to clients.

Exceptions are those token articles that clients may choose to hand-make for a staff member.

- **Out-of-office sessions with clients shall not be routinely scheduled** by counselors unless guided by specific program protocol.

Exceptions to this shall be on a case-by-case basis, and ONLY AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR AND APPROVAL FROM THE Chief Executive Officer. Peer Support Specialists MUST follow all established protocols when meeting, attending a support meeting, or otherwise interacting with a client outside of the agency.

- If a counselor discovers that he/she has scheduled an appointment with **someone he/she knows personally**, that counselor shall make every effort to **transfer that case** to another counselor.
- When establishing a **professional relationship with a client**, a counselor determines to the best of his/her ability that all previous professional service providers have either withdrawn or been discharged by the client or will be coordinated into the Individual Plan of Care (IPOC)/Treatment Plan that follows the assessment.
- All staff members shall observe the regulations outlined in **Federal Regulations with respect to client confidentiality**. Each staff member shall sign an agreement to observe these regulations, and this document shall be placed in personnel files. (Appendix A-51)
- All staff members shall **notify an appropriate Program Director when in receipt of a subpoena, search warrant, or when participating in an investigation or other legal action**. Program Directors will consult with the Chief Executive Officer, or his/her designee, or agency attorney prior to making any formal response to such activities. The agency's written response to such proceedings will be utilized as appropriate (Appendix A-32).
- Staff members shall observe the **principles outlined in the "The Forrester Center Ethical Standards for Staff"** (Appendix A-52).

MISREPRESENTATION

The Forrester Center staff does not misrepresent their professional qualifications, affiliations, competence, or purposes. Moreover, they do not misrepresent the qualifications, affiliations, competence, or purposes of colleagues or the institutions, agencies, and organizations with which they are associated.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS

When The Forrester Center staff is called upon to interpret, explain, or demonstrate knowledge of specific The Forrester Center procedures or their application to clients, the general public, or the media, they do so accurately, objectively, and fairly, and within the limits of their personal competence. Public statements made by staff are to be formulated with consideration of their impact on the entire agency and to promote the elimination of discrimination and stigma for persons living with addictions. Announcements or advertisements of services offered or available to the public will conform to professional standards and avoid the inclusion of statements or promises which are inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading.

HARASSMENT

Harassment occurs when the purpose or effect of slurs and other verbal or physical conduct interferes with work or service performance or when such conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. The Forrester Center will promote a work and service environment that is free from sexual, racial, national origin, or religious harassment. At any time, persons who believe they have been subjected to harassment may bring concerns or claims to The Forrester Center Leadership and/or CIC.

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF ETHICAL VIOLATIONS

Persons with suspicion or knowledge of behavior by any Forrester Center staff member that violates the agency's ethical code of conduct or this policy will report such conduct to their immediate supervisor. Individuals may meet confidentially with the Chief Executive Officer in instances when a violation of law is involved or if the nature of the report involves or has been caused by the staff member's supervisor and/or the staff member has reason to believe the supervisor may be less than impartial. Staff members should be aware that a report to The Forrester Center leadership does not absolve them of the responsibility they may have to make reports directly to certification bodies or licensure boards. Staff may also have direct and unimpeded access to the Corporate Compliance Officer. Any staff member who reports a violation will not receive in any way, shape, or form reprisal.

Allegations of waste, fraud, abuse, ethical violations, and other wrong-doings will be investigated by the Chief Executive Officer and/or designee within 3 working days of a report. The Privileging and Certification Committee may be appointed to assist in any investigation. Within ten (10) days of initiating the investigation, a summary of findings and recommendations for actions to be taken will be documented and submitted to the Chief Executive Officer for review.

The Forrester Center will not tolerate any attempt to retaliate against a person who has raised concerns in good faith or reported waste, fraud, abuse, harassment, and/or other questionable activities and practices.

VIOLATIONS

Any individual found to be in violation of The Forrester Center Code of Conduct and this policy will experience disciplinary action, in accordance with applicable Spartanburg County Personnel Policies and Procedures and departmental rules and regulations. This action may include written or verbal reprimand, suspension, termination, revocation of privileging, and/or additional investigation and action by relevant certifying/licensing authorities who will be notified of the violation by The Forrester Center.