

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 emotions, behavior, 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 individuals 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 their educational development;
- facilitation of communication between the individual, the family, the school, and involved professionals.

CODE OF ETHICS

AET's Code of Ethics provides professional guidance regarding the scope of practice and the boundaries of practice within educational therapy. Its primary goal is to ensure the welfare and protection of the individuals and groups with whom the professional works. Additionally, it educates members, students, and the public regarding the ethical standards in the field of educational therapy and supports the mission of AET. The AET Code of Ethics is a "living document" subject to regular review and revision when appropriate.

The Guiding Principles of AET emphasize the growth of the profession and assist in advancing ethics, professionalism, discussion, research, self-reflection and self-care. Developing an "ethical mindset" is an ongoing process that integrates professional values, ethical principles, and ethical standards which must be consciously cultivated, valued, and applied. When ethical dilemmas arise, AET's Code of Ethics reminds members to engage in a carefully reasoned ethical decision-making process. This involves consulting available resources and considering professional values, principles, and standards to resolve issues responsibly and ethically.

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. AET envisions a socially just world where all learners reach their potential, appreciate their unique abilities, and thrive. Educational Therapists fulfill their responsibilities by exemplifying the highest standards of competence, excellence, and integrity.
- III. Educational Therapists practice in a manner that is inclusive, understands and respects all clients across complex aspects of identity, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, family structure and/or social circumstance, political belief, or religion.
- IV. Educational Therapists are committed to the development of professional skills appropriate to the special needs of clients and devoid of false claims or guarantees.
- V. Educational Therapists serve the profession of educational therapy by validating ethical practice, discouraging misconduct, and working to expand the body of professional knowledge.
- VI. Educational Therapists acknowledge that technology is a rapidly evolving field and understand how to use technology ethically and responsibly to meet clients' goals and needs.
- VII. Educational Therapists accord due recognition to and collaboration with colleagues and allied professionals.

STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

SECTION ONE. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

I. 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.
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. 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).
 - 3. Technologies may augment traditional in-person services or be used as a standalone service model.

II. 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 educational assessment/screening to inform their intervention plan.
- D. recognize that technology is a rapidly evolving field.
 - 1. strive to stay current in knowledge and practice related to technology.
 - 2. use published materials ethically and only for the purposes intended.

3. adhere to and educate clients about copyright laws, attribution protocol, and citation style, and guidelines pertinent to the use of technology, including artificial intelligence (AI).
 4. work to educate clients to understand that AI sources are not always credible, equitable, or inclusive. Neither are such platforms necessarily a safe and secure exchange of information.
 5. empower clients to discern the appropriate use of technology, including credible sites for learning and research.
- 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 based on race, color, creed, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, age, political practices, family or social background, sexual orientation, or exceptionality.
 1. strive for objectivity in evaluating prospective employees.
 2. are informed about and evaluate the policies and procedures established in their places of employment.
 3. are alert to potential conflicts of interests when in the employment of others or when employing others.
 4. advocate for the best outcomes of client needs.
 - 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.
 - I. have an ethical obligation to protect the welfare of children and adolescents. An educational therapist who suspects abuse should report it to the appropriate state agency or department.

III. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Educational Therapists:

- 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

I. 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:
 - 1. the appropriateness, benefits, and limitations of e-practice and whether or not it is appropriate for the client before initiating e-services.
 - 2. the client's culture, education level, age, and other relevant characteristics including the individual's familiarity, comfort with technology, and access to the internet.
 - 3. the client's remote environment where e-services would take place, including regular monitoring of said environment as it might change.

- I. maintain confidentiality of information except where information is released under specific conditions of written consent and/or statutory requirements.
- J. establish and maintain confidentiality policies and procedures consistent with relevant statutes, regulations, rules, and ethical standards.
- K. provide adequate security and security controls for client information and data within information systems when engaging in e-practice.
 - 1. Adequate security, according to the Committee on National Security Systems, is commensurate with the risk and magnitude of harm resulting from the loss, misuse, or unauthorized access to or modification of information.
 - 2. Security controls are defined by the Committee on National Security Systems 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.”
- L. recognize the possibility that any electronic communication can have a high risk of public discovery.
- M. educate themselves about the potential risks to privacy and confidentiality and consider utilizing all available privacy settings to reduce these risks.
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. adhere to privacy and security standards in compliance with HIPAA regulations and other relevant federal and state laws when using cloud storage.
 - 3. notify clients and other appropriate individuals/organizations as soon as possible in the event of a breach of unencrypted electronically communicated or maintained data.
 - 4. 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.
- N. establish baseline data about the skills and needs of new clients and maintain accurate data for the purpose of decision making and consultation.
 - 1. establish ways to measure and determine client progress towards those goals at regular intervals.
 - 2. be especially cognizant about determining whether e-practice is achieving those goals.

3. terminate services upon consideration of the student's best interests, goodness of fit between the skill set of the educational therapist and the needs of the client, any contractual agreement, and/or the established educational therapy goals. 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.
4. 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.

II. CLIENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Educational Therapists acknowledge that the practice of educational therapy requires relationships of trust and mutual respect to support each client's learning and academic pursuits.

Educational Therapists:

- A. consider each client's environment and context to holistically support and empower clients with complex intersectional identities.
- B. develop our own knowledge and cultural competency to support each client and their family.
- C. recognize and address biases that may impact our work with clients and their families.
- D. 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.
- E. 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.
- F. inform parents/guardians of the educational rights of their children, and of any proposed or actual practices which violate those rights.
- G. recognize and respect cultural diversities in the implementation of professional practices.
- H. recognize that the relationship of home and community environmental conditions affects the behavior and outlook of the client.
- I. facilitate the understanding among parents/guardians, school personnel, and other professionals regarding the realistic limitations of each one's function and role.
- J. facilitate referral to other appropriate professionals for services as needed.

- K. maintain communication between parents/guardians and professionals with appropriate respect for privacy and confidentiality.
- L. take extra care to avoid breaches in confidentiality when using electronic media.

III. 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

I. 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.
 - 1. adopt procedures that protect the rights and welfare of subjects participating in research.
 - 2. interpret and publish research results with accuracy and a high quality of scholarship.
 - 3. support a cessation of the use of any research procedure which may result in undesirable consequences for the participant.

4. exercise all possible precautions to prevent misapplication or misuse of research efforts, by oneself or others.

IV. 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.

The 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.

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§ion=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*.

“NASW and ASWB Standards for Technology for Social Work Practice” by the National Association of Social Workers Press, 750 First Street, N.E. Suite 800 Washington, DC 20002-4241, USA. No further use or content can be made without written consent of the NASW Press.

Reissued October 1997
Reissued August 1999
Reissued March 2015
Reissued September 2016
Reissued August 2020
Reissued September 2021
Reissued February 2022
Reissued January 2024
Reissued September 2025