Ethical Guidelines

Everyone taking part in an internship opportunity is expected to adhere to certain guidelines for ethical, responsible conduct and to adhere to federal and state laws and regulations. This is necessary for your own benefit and protection, as well as those of the clients, the placement agency, your instructor, your supervisor, and your academic institution. Certain basic guidelines are described in this appendix, but these are not exhaustive. As an intern you are also expected to learn and adhere to the broader ethical guidelines dictated by your relevant profession (APA, NASW, ASCA, ACA, etc.), as well as the guidelines specific to your placement agency. In addition, you must familiarize yourself with and follow federal and state laws and regulations (e.g., HIPAA, FERPA). If you ever have questions about ethics or responsible conduct, contact your instructor or the placement supervisor. At a minimum, interns agree to adhere to the following principles:

1. **Confidentiality.** The identity of clients or information that would reveal the identity of clients cannot be disclosed without the specific permission of the client and only according to the HIPAA and FERPA guidelines where they apply. The only exceptions are cases in which the client may be dangerous to himself or herself or others and in cases of abuse. In such situations, there may be a legal requirement to inform responsible agencies. There are also certain legal proceedings in which courts can order case notes and other records to be released. Interns must familiarize themselves with and adhere to confidentiality procedures of their placements and the laws of the state and federal governments. Personal notes pertaining to specific clients and any case material discussed in class must be prepared in such a way that confidentiality is maintained. Any records or communications involving electronic technologies (e.g., computers, email) must be protected with passwords, encryption, and any other means prescribed by the placement site, academic institution, HIPAA regulations, or other laws. Interns do not discuss cases in public settings outside of class or their internship, nor do they discuss their cases with persons who are not specifically authorized.

2. **Recognition of qualifications and limitations.** Interns must recognize the limitations to their training and abilities and must not exceed these in work with clients. It is incumbent on interns to recognize when clinical situations are beyond their knowledge or ability. When such situations arise, interns will seek assistance from their supervisors and instructors.

3. **Identification as interns.** Interns will explicitly identify themselves as interns to their clients, in reports, and in other professional activities. They will not misrepresent their training, qualifications, or status. Interns who will be at a placement site for a limited time will inform clients of that limitation at the outset of therapy and will consider it in their work with clients.

4. **Recordkeeping.** Interns will accurately and reliably maintain written and other records in a timely and accurate manner as required by their placement agency and by state and federal laws.
5. **Dual relationships.** Interns will strictly follow ethical guidelines regarding multiple relationships and will refrain from clinical work with persons with whom they are involved in other types of relationships. Such dual relationships may inhibit the effectiveness of the intern’s clinical work and may jeopardize both clients and trainees. For example, it would not be ethical for a trainee to take as a client someone who was a fellow student in class. Similarly, coworkers, friends, and others should not be seen as clients.

6. **Prohibition regarding sexual conduct or harassment.** Under no circumstances shall interns become involved in sexual or romantic relationships of any sort with clients or their family members. Interns will also refrain from sexual harassment and will respect the sensitivity of others regarding sexual matters.

7. **Self-awareness and monitoring.** Interns will monitor their own emotional and physical status and should be aware of any conditions that might adversely impact their ability to serve their clients or placement agencies. If such conditions arise, interns should seek assistance and inform their placement supervisors and instructors.

8. **Ethics discussion with supervisor.** Each intern must discuss the ethical standards of his or her placement agency with the supervisor before performing any clinical work or client contact. Space is provided at the bottom of this form to indicate that such discussions have taken place and that the intern has been informed of ethical expectations, state and federal laws and regulations, and any other specific guidelines of the agency.

By signing below, the intern agrees to adhere to the guidelines listed above as well as those of the professional discipline, state and federal laws, and the specific placement agency.

Intern signature: __________________________  Date: __________________________

Site supervisor: __________________________  Date: __________________________

Instructor: __________________________  Date: __________________________