



VECAP Code of Professional Ethics, Revised December 2020

VECAP Standards Committee

Introduction

The Vocational Evaluation & Career Assessment Professionals (VECAP) Standards Committee is excited to announce the release of the revised VECAP Code of Ethics. VECAP's revised Code of Ethics offers guidelines for ethical decision making, captures the ethos of the organization, and provides useful guidance for our members.

In the midst of uncertain times, ethical decision making has never been more in the professional forefront. Ethical behavior is vital to practitioners' success, the lives of the clients we serve, and the continued evolution of a responsible organization. This Code of Ethics emphasizes VECAP's mission, values and principles, and is intended to remind professionals of the standard of conduct they must observe. The goal is for professionals to use VECAP's Code of Ethics as a reference tool, when considering an ethical dilemma and navigating recent trends in vocational evaluation and career assessment. VECAP has always committed itself to making ethics a priority, and challenges all professionals to do the same by using this document as a standard for ethical conduct.

This code has been developed by the VECAP Standards Committee, with support, edits and ideas from members of the VECAP Board of Directors. We welcome your thoughts and comments about the current Code.

On behalf of the Standards Committee, Carly Castora

Keywords

ethics, vocational evaluation, career assessment

Preamble

The Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals (VECAP) association is committed to providing ethical standards of practice for professionals who provide vocational evaluation and assessment and related career services. We subscribe to the following guiding ethical principle (Kitchener, 1984):

1. **Respect for Dignity, Rights and Autonomy:** Professionals respect the dignity and worth of all people and the rights to privacy, confidentiality and autonomous decision-making.
2. **Beneficence:** Professionals strive to engage in actions that are beneficial and contribute to the welfare of others. They help others, meeting them where they are, to promote career decision-making and realization of personal goals.
3. **Nonmaleficence:** Professionals have an obligation to do no harm, refrain from and protect clients from harm, avoiding and/or removing conditions that could be harmful to a person's liberty, personal and psychological well-being.
4. **Justice:** Professionals promote fairness and justice in the access to and benefit from assessment services. Professionals are committed to the fair and equitable treatment of all clients in the quality, process, procedures and services conducted. Professionals shall exercise reasonable judgment and take precautions to ensure their potential biases, boundaries of professional competence and limitations of their expertise do not lead to or condone unjust practices.
5. **Fidelity and Responsibility:** Professionals strive to be loyal and honor promises or commitments made and expectations that were legitimately engendered. Professionals VECAP Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals uphold professional standards of conduct, clarify their professional roles and obligations, accept appropriate responsibility for their behavior and seek to manage conflicts of interest that lead to exploitation or harm.
6. **Veracity:** Professionals have an ethical duty to act honestly without deception and communicate with candor, as a means to establish and maintain trust, strengthen relationships and promote autonomy.

Professional Responsibility

Professionals have a responsibility to follow the Code of Ethics for the profession. They shall practice within the boundaries of their personal and professional competence based on education, training, experience and credentials. Professionals' primary responsibility is to the individual served. In addition, they shall be continuously aware of the dynamic relationship between their responsibilities to the individuals served, to the profession, to the referral source and to their employer. Professionals shall encourage and expect ethical and competent behavior from colleagues and shall attempt to put right behavior which is contradictory. They are obligated to the organization

where employed and shall utilize this Code of Ethics to influence their the day to-day activities.

Relationship with the Person Served

Professionals shall uphold proper boundaries and respect the dignity and integrity of the individual served as a unique person, with unique strengths, needs and skills. They shall inform the individual served and the individual's agent, if appropriate, about the purpose of any professional service being contemplated. Information generated during the administration of such services shall only be communicated to those with an essential need to know as part of the evaluation or assessment process. Professionals will avoid developing dual relationships with the individual served, their family members and advocates. They should not condone or participate in any form of harassment with any party, including sexual harassment.

Confidentiality, Communication and Privacy

Professionals shall keep information about the individual being served and their appointments confidential, safeguarding all information and materials obtained during the evaluation or assessment process. In the case of suspected child, elderly or vulnerable adult abuse, professionals must disclose relevant information to the proper authorities. They must also report to authorities the intention or the action of harm to self or others. Professionals are responsible to understand the regulations for timely and accurate reporting held by the state or district in which they practice.

Professionals shall obtain written informed consent from the individual being served both to gather information relevant to the delivery of services or to share privileged information with anyone other than the referral source. The relationship of the professional and the individual being served will remain private except when there is a court order to release confidential or privileged information without the individual's permission.

Relationships with Other Professionals

The association acknowledges that interdisciplinary effort is essential to successful outcomes for clients. Professionals shall be cognizant of relationships with other personnel involved in the evaluation and assessment process and shall be aware that the welfare of individuals receiving services depends on the capacity of all personnel to integrate their expertise and efforts. They shall respect the roles of professionals and staff in other disciplines and act with integrity and collaboration in their relationships with colleagues, organizations, agencies, referral sources, and related disciplines. Professionals shall assist others in understanding their roles and shall avoid practicing in areas that are not within their specialized competencies.

Evaluation, Assessment, Interpretation

When providing services, professionals working in collaboration with a client will create a plan to answer the stated referral questions. The input of the individual served will be used and respected during the planning process and throughout the evaluation or assessment. Professionals shall conduct a thorough interview with the individual being served and consider all relevant background information with regard to education, work history, disability, and relevant social and personal history. They shall include detailed information on the functional aspects of the individual's disability and their impact on employment. Professionals shall choose assessment instruments, techniques and methods based on reliability, validity and evidenced-based practice. Professionals shall note cultural bias in questions and materials and interpret assessment instruments accordingly. When appropriate, they will provide modifications or accommodations, including the use of assistive technology in the assessment process. They shall consistently and accurately report any violation of normative practice and resultant impact on interpretation. Appropriate work-based techniques including work samples, simulated work tasks, and community-based assessment should be integrated in the process. A multidisciplinary perspective from others knowing the person served should be gathered. A clearly written, well organized report shall be prepared for the individual served and shared with the referral source in a timely manner. The client's voice or uniqueness should be evident in the report. The report always synthesizes assessment data, answers referral questions and accurately addresses the individual's functional aspects of their disability when making employment or training and educational recommendations. Recommendations shall be supported by evaluation and assessment findings or rationale. Alternate recommendations, including suggested referrals for other needed evaluations are provided when appropriate.

Advocacy

Professionals shall actively pursue social justice and engage in the removal of institutional and cultural barriers for people with disabilities and/or disadvantages. The association as a whole and its individual members work to provided social action on a societal level by educating others on legislation or public policy.

Professionals shall advocate for the individual being served, empower and promote a sense of self-efficacy to address their personal concerns at the present time and improve their ability to resolve similar problems in the future, gaining or retaining as much power and control over their own lives as possible.

Accessibility

Professionals facilitate the provision of necessary, appropriate, and reasonable accommodations in accordance with the law, including physically and programmatically accessible facilities, services, and technology to address the barriers encountered by individuals with disabilities. Assistive technology, Universal Design, and Universal Design for Learning are incorporated in the evaluation or assessment process to reduce barriers and optimize outcomes for the individual being served.

Technology and Distance Services

The association supports the provision of virtual services when needed to protect the health and safety of the client; due to distance or travel concerns; when in-person services are not practical; or by agreement with the client and referral source. Delivery of virtual services should be completed only through a means that is HIPAA compliant to protect confidentiality. Professionals should follow the guidelines of their referral source or state, as well as assessment material providers' tele-health guidelines when delivering services virtually.

Business Practices

Professionals aspire to open, honest, and accurate business practices. They uphold professional standards of conduct, demonstrate professional competence and utilize best business practices gained through education and experience. Professionals facilitate access to services in a nondiscriminatory manner, understanding and using culturally sensitive and competent business practices.

Forensic and Indirect Services

When providing forensic services, professionals shall produce objective findings that can be substantiated based on the information obtained, utilizing methods and techniques appropriate to the forensic evaluation. Professionals shall define the scope and limits of their reports, opinions, and testimony, especially when an in-person examination of the individual has not been conducted. Also, professionals shall use and seek guidance from sources, such as applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies, standards of practice, and professional Code of Ethics from this and other credentialing bodies or licensing boards.

Diversity and Inclusion

The Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals association is dedicated to fostering diversity and inclusion as fundamental values of the association. The association promotes nondiscrimination based on race, color, class, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, age, religion, disability, genetics, and veteran status, as well as for groups or individuals disenfranchised by social and economic challenges. The association opposes inequities in all forms and in all systems and support initiatives providing full access to employment, community engagement, and other opportunities. The association respects human dignity; recognizing and valuing the uniqueness of each individual and their contributions to the community. The association applies these same values beyond our professional practice to our membership and our community at large and expects professionals to conduct themselves ethically in accordance with these values.

Teaching, Mentoring, Supervising and Training

The association encourages experienced professionals to assist and mentor students and vocational evaluators entering the profession by guiding and developing a thorough

understanding of the ethics, responsibilities, and needed competencies of their chosen profession and area of practice. Professionals shall clearly define and maintain ethical and professional relationship boundaries with their students, mentees and supervisees. Professionals who supervise individuals will provide appropriate working conditions, fair evaluation of performance, consultation and feedback, and opportunities for in-depth experience and training. Professionals shall assist students, mentees and supervisees in gaining knowledge, personal awareness, sensitivity, and skills necessary for becoming culturally competent professionals.

Professional Learning, Research and Publication

Professionals are committed to strengthening their specialized competencies through continuous learning, skills development and application of new knowledge. Professionals contribute to the body of knowledge, the evolution of the profession and the growth of other professionals through information sharing, teaching, research and dissemination of knowledge. They engage in or support research and publication activities that will benefit service delivery, and promote the quality of life for individuals whom they serve.

Resolving Ethical Concerns

Professionals are to be cognizant of the potential for ethical concerns as they arise in the delivery of services. Knowledge of the guiding ethical principles in the Preamble of this document will help inform decisions. The following steps should be implemented when Professionals suspect an ethical concern.

Steps to Resolving Ethical Concerns (Corey, Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2019).

- Identify the problem or dilemma
- Identify the potential issues involved
- Review the relevant ethics codes
- Know the applicable laws and regulations
- Obtain consultation
- Consider possible and probable courses of action
- Enumerate the consequences of the action
- Choose what appears to be the best course of action.

References

- Corey, G., Corey, M. S., Corey, C., & Callanan, P. (2019). *Issues and ethics in the helping professions* (10th ed.). Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning, Inc.
- Kitchener, K. S. (1984). Intuition, critical evaluation and ethical principles: The foundation for ethical decisions in counseling psychology. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 12(3), 43-55.