



CASC / ACSS
Canadian Association
for Spiritual Care / Association canadienne
de soins spirituels

CASC/ACSS POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

CHAPTER 5:

CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

CASC/ACSS National Ethics Commission
Revised: March 2025



CASC/ACSS

12-16715 Yonge St, Suite 315, Newmarket, ON, L3X 1X4 | 289-837-2272 or 1-855-442-2272 | spiritualcare.ca

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preamble	3
Section I: Ethical Principles	4
Section II: Ethical Standards	4
A. In Relationships with “Clients”	4
A.2 Consultation Guidelines Regarding Relationships with Former Clients.....	5
B. In Relationships Between Supervisor-Educators and Staff / Students	6
C. In Relationships with Social Institutions.....	7
D. In Relationships with Other Professionals and the Community.....	7
E. In Relationships with Colleagues.....	8
F. In Advertising.....	8
G. In Research	9
H. In Relation to Social Media.....	9
I. In Relationship to CASC/ACSS	10



CHAPTER 5: CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

All members of CASC/ACSS are accountable to the principles and standards in this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

The Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists:

- a. Gives expression to the basic values and standards of the profession;
- b. Guides decision-making and professional behaviour;
- c. Provides a mechanism for professional accountability; and
- d. Informs the public as to what they should expect from Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists.

PREAMBLE

CASC/ACSS is an organization of Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists who are grounded in communities of faith or spirituality and informed by professional education and training.

CASC/ACSS members are called to nurture their personal health of mind, body and spirit and be responsible for their personal and professional conduct as they grow in their respect for all living beings and the natural environment.

When Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists act in a manner congruent with the values of this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, they bring greater justice, compassion and healing to our world.



SECTION I: ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists:

- a. Affirm the dignity and value of each individual;
- b. Protect clients and patients from predatory/destructive relationships;
- c. Affirm life-giving, fulfilling, healthy relationships that respect the dignity of all persons;
- d. Respect the right of each faith group to hold to its values and traditions;
- e. Respect the right of individuals to identify as belonging to multiple faith groups, or to none.
- f. Advocate for professional accountability of Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists that protects the public and advances the profession;
and
- g. Respect the diversity of cultural, ethnic, gender, racial, sexual-orientation, spiritual, religious, and disability experiences that people have and strive to eliminate discrimination.

SECTION II: ETHICAL STANDARDS

A1. IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH “CLIENTS”

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists understand the term “clients” to be any counselees, congregants, prisoners, patients and their family members, students or staff to whom they provide spiritual care or Psychospiritual therapy. In relationships with clients, Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists uphold the following standards of professional ethics. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists:

- 1.1 Speak and act in ways that honour the dignity and value of every individual.
- 1.2 Provide care that is intended to promote the best interest of the client and to foster strength, integrity and healing. It is recognized that there can be situations in which multiple clients (e.g., family members, or the community generally) may have conflicting or competing interests (e.g., around end-of-life care provided to a loved one; regarding the provision of services to previously-incarcerated individuals).
- 1.3 Demonstrate respect for the cultural and religious values of those they serve and refrain from imposing their own cultural and religious values and beliefs on those served. We serve all people equally.
- 1.4 Are mindful of the imbalance of power in the professional/client relationship and refrain from exploitation of that imbalance.
- 1.5 Maintain relationships with current clients on a professional basis only.



- 1.6 Determine the propriety of any sexual, financial, political/organizational or other power imbalance relationship with a former client by consulting the Regional Ethics Chair and the Region's Professional Practice Chair (Subsection A.2).
- 1.7 Avoid or correct any conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicting interest(s). It is recognized that there can be situations in which multiple clients (e.g., family members) may have conflicting or competing interests (e.g., around end-of-life care provided to a loved one). Where an actual conflict of interest exists, the Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psychospiritual Therapist must remove him/herself from that relationship. Consulting the Regional Ethics Chair is mandated.
- 1.8 Are duly bound to refrain from any form of exploitative behaviour, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment or sexual assault in relationships with clients and colleagues.
- 1.9 Refrain from any form of harassment, coercion, intimidation or otherwise abusive words or actions in relationships with clients and colleagues.
- 1.10 Safeguard the confidentiality of clients in all situations, with the exception of mandated reporting.
- 1.11 Respect the confidentiality of information entrusted to them by clients when communicating with family members or significant others except when disclosure is required for necessary treatment, granted by client permission, for the safety of any person or when required by law.
- 1.12 Understand the limits of their individual expertise and make referrals to other professionals when appropriate.
- 1.13 Provide clear expectations regarding responsibilities, appointment schedules, fees and payments.

A.2 CONSULTATION GUIDELINES REGARDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FORMER CLIENTS

Ending the spiritual care/Psychospiritual relationship does not eliminate the possibility that sexual, financial, political/organizational or other power-imbalance contact between a Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psychospiritual Therapist and a former client may be considered to be professional misconduct. This is because there may be continuing trust, knowledge or influence derived from the previously-existing professional relationship. What follows is intended to provide a procedure to determine when this condition does not exist.

- 2.1 A Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psychospiritual Therapist **must** end the care giving relationship before starting a sexual, financial, political/organizational or other relationship with a former client. It is the Spiritual Care Practitioner's or Psychospiritual Therapist's responsibility to ensure that termination of the spiritual care/Psychospiritual relationship is communicated to the former client and documented in the client's record. The Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psychospiritual Therapist should also ensure that alternative services are arranged or the former client is given a reasonable opportunity to arrange alternative services should the former client require them.
- 2.2 In determining the propriety of sexual, financial, political/organizational or other relationships between a Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psychospiritual Therapist and a former client, a number of factors will be considered, including:



- a. The length and intensity of the former professional relationship;
- b. The nature of the former client's spiritual/clinical problem;
- c. The type of care provided by the Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psychospiritual Therapist;
- d. The extent to which the former client has confided personal or private information to the Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psychospiritual Therapist; and
- e. The vulnerability the former client has in the spiritual care relationship.

For example, when the spiritual care relationship involves a significant component of psychotherapy, then sexual, financial, political/organizational or other involvement with the client is likely inappropriate at any time after termination.

However, if a Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psychospiritual Therapist saw a client on one or two occasions to provide routine supportive care, it may not be inappropriate to have a sexual, financial, political/organizational or other power-imbalance relationship with the former client within a short time following the end of the spiritual care/psychospiritual relationship. This is **not** a decision that an individual can make by themselves. The Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psychospiritual Therapist should consult with their Regional Ethics Chair for guidance.

- 2.3 At all times, a Spiritual Care Practitioners or Psychospiritual Therapists have an ethical obligation not to exploit the trust, knowledge and dependence that develops during the spiritual care/Psychospiritual relationship for the Spiritual Care Practitioner's or Psychospiritual Therapist's personal advantage.
- 2.4 A Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psychospiritual Therapist who is considering a sexual, financial, political/organizational or other relationship with a former client must:
 - a. Act cautiously, making sure to consider the potentially complex issues
 - b. Consult with the Regional Ethics Chair and the Region's Professional Practice Chair concerning this relationship, and
 - c. Ensure that the former client has a good understanding of the dynamics of the spiritual care/psychospiritual relationship and the boundaries applicable to the relationship.

B. IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SUPERVISOR-EDUCATORS AND STAFF/STUDENTS

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists respect the integrity of their employees or students using the power they have as managers/directors or Supervisor-Educators in responsible ways. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists in supervisory positions **must**:

- 1. Maintain a healthy educational or work environment, free of coercion or intimidation.
- 2. Maintain clear ethical boundaries in the areas of self-disclosure, intimacy and sexuality.
- 3. Provide clear expectations regarding responsibilities, work schedules, fees and payments.



4. Provide adequate, timely and constructive feedback to students per CASC/ACSS policies and complete regular performance appraisals for their staff.
5. Maintain a healthy respect for the personal growth of students and provide appropriate professional referrals.
6. Maintain appropriate confidentiality regarding all information and knowledge gained in the course of supervision.
7. Willingly and honestly participate in any inquiry, investigation, or grievance process in which the Supervisor-Educator has been named as a respondent.

C. IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists are accountable to their faith communities, one another and other professional organizations to which they belong.

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists:

1. Maintain good standing in their faith group, if they belong to one.
2. Abide by the professional practice and/or teaching standards of the province, the community and the institution in which they are employed. If for any reason a Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psychospiritual Therapist is not free to practice or teach according to conscience, the Spiritual Care Practitioner or Psychospiritual Therapist shall notify the employer, their professional organization, and faith group as appropriate.
3. Do not directly or by implication claim professional qualifications that exceed actual qualifications or misrepresent an affiliation with any institution.

D. IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS AND THE COMMUNITY

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists are accountable to the public, faith communities, employers and professionals in all professional relationships. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists:

1. Promote justice in relationships with others, their institutions, and in society.
2. Represent accurately their professional qualifications and affiliations.
3. Exercise good stewardship of resources entrusted to their care and employ sound financial practices.
4. Respect the opinions, beliefs and professional activities of colleagues and other professionals.
5. Seek the advice and counsel of other professionals whenever it is in the best interest of clients and make referrals when appropriate.
6. Provide expertise and counsel to other health professionals in advocating for best practices in care.
7. Seek to establish and enhance existing collaborative relationships with other community institutions and health professions.



8. Advocate for the recognition of the value of spirituality and the promotion of the well-being of all people.
9. Provide other professionals with chart notes where they are used that further the treatment of the clients or patients, obtaining the consent of the client when required.
10. Communicate the minimum necessary information to other care team members while respecting the privacy of clients.
11. Ensure that their private conduct does not impair their ability to fulfill professional responsibilities or bring dishonour to the profession.
12. Clearly distinguish between statements made or actions taken as a private individual and those made as a member or representative of CASC/ACSS or one of the cognate organizations.

E. IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists engage in collegial relationships with peers, other chaplains, local clergy and counselors, recognizing that perspective and judgment are maintained through consultative interactions rather than through isolation. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists:

1. Honor all consultations, whether personal or client-related, with the highest professional regard and confidentiality.
2. Maintain sensitivity and the professional protocols of the employing institution and/or the certifying organization when receiving or initiating referrals.
3. Respect each other and support the integrity and well-being of their colleagues.
4. Maintain honesty, professional excellence and integrity, including academic integrity. This means that any form of plagiarism is prohibited (See Administrative Policy 11: Plagiarism and Disciplinary Procedures for Acts of Plagiarism).
5. Take collegial and responsible action when concerns about or direct knowledge of items such as (but not limited to) incompetence, impairment, misconduct or violations against this code arise. The Regional Ethics Chair should be consulted.
6. Communicate sufficient information to other care team members while respecting the privacy of clients.

F. IN ADVERTISING

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists engage in appropriate informational activities that educate the public about their professional qualifications and individual scopes of practice. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists:

1. Represent their competencies, education, training and experience relevant to their practice of spiritual care, education and counseling in an accurate manner.
2. Do not use any professional identification (business cards, letterhead, Internet or telephone directory, etc.) that is false, misleading, fraudulent or deceptive.



3. List and claim as evidence only degrees and certifications that are earned from educational institutions and/or training programs recognized by the certifying organizations of Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists.
4. Ascertain that the qualifications of their employees, supervisees and students are represented in a manner that is not false, misleading, fraudulent or deceptive.
5. Represent themselves as providing specialized services only if they have the appropriate education, qualifications, training, or supervised experience.

G. IN RESEARCH

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists engaging in research follow guidelines and applicable laws that strive to protect the dignity, privacy and well-being of all participants. Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists:

1. Engage only in research within the boundaries of their competence.
2. In research activities involving human participants, are aware of and ensure that the research question, design and implementation are in full compliance with ethical principles.
3. In research activities involving human participants, submit their research proposal to a duly constituted Research Ethics Board (REB), and do not begin their research until they have received REB approval to do so.
4. Adhere to informed consent regulations and policies, including a clear and understandable explanation of the procedures, a description of the risks and benefits, and the duration of the desired participation.
5. Inform all participants of the right to withdraw consent and to discontinue involvement in research activities at any time.
6. Engage in research while being sensitive to the cultural characteristics of participants.
7. Maintain the confidentiality of all research participants and inform participants of any limits of that confidentiality.
8. Use any information obtained through research for professional purposes only.
9. Exercise conscientiousness in attributing sources in their research and writing thereby avoiding plagiarism.
10. Maintain honesty, professional excellence, and integrity, including academic integrity. This means that any form of plagiarism is prohibited (See Administrative Policy 11: Plagiarism and Disciplinary Procedures for Acts of Plagiarism).
11. Report research data and findings accurately.

H. IN RELATION TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists are aware that social media (for example, Internet, intranet, text messaging, e-mail, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, blogs, YouTube, LinkedIn, as well as all other forms of electronic/digital communication) influences



and informs our daily life and work. We recognize that the World Wide Web records everything that is posted anywhere, anytime and retains this information indefinitely.

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists:

1. Recognize that the Ethical Principles of the Professional Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct apply to the use of social media.
2. Engage in honest and respectful communication both professionally and personally in all social media activity.
3. Maintain a clear professional identity and refrain from developing inappropriate social media relationships with current and former clients, students, employees or other individuals.
4. Will not speak formally or informally on behalf of CASC/ACSS when engaging in personal Social Media activity unless authorized in writing by an Officer of CASC/ACSS.
5. Will be mindful of the privacy and confidentiality of clients and others and not engage in the use of social media in any way which may breach another's privacy and confidentiality.

I. IN RELATIONSHIP TO CASC/ACSS

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists within CASC/ACSS maintain the highest possible standards of trust in relationship to one another in the interest of the public whom they serve.

Spiritual Care Practitioners and Psychospiritual Therapists:

1. Will disclose to the Chair of the National Ethics Commission if they have been criminally charged or hold a conviction on record of an indictable offence found within the Criminal Code of Canada and/or Narcotic Statutes of Canada, or equivalent legislation in a foreign jurisdiction.

