10 CONSIDERATIONS FOR e-CAREER SERVICES

1. **Skill.** The ethical principle of Boundary of Competence requires that career practitioners and counsellors only offer services within their scope of competence. How have you developed the specific competence to e-serve your clients? Are you prepared for the unique challenges of online interactions (e.g., text-based communication without non-verbal cues)? Professionals can demonstrate their proficiency through relevant credentials including the Distance Credential Counselor (DCC).

2. **Accessibility.** Providing online counselling/career services requires, at minimum, access to secure and reliable Internet and digital devices (e.g., computers, Smartphone) that can support the selected system(s) for both the counsellor and client. Other important considerations include accommodating time zone differences and specifying work schedules (i.e., when might the client reasonably expect a reply to an asynchronous message such as an e-mail or text?).

3. **Jurisdiction.** Counsellor regulation, certification, and insurance requirements may have regional differences. e-Counsellors must check with their own insurer and regulatory body to clarify coverage when offering services to clients outside of their local region; they should also be aware of, and comply with, requirements within their clients' regions.

4. **Appropriateness.** e-Counselling might not be the most appropriate option for all clients. In some instances, this might be related to the client's own technical skill or access to technology; however, there may be presenting issues that would be better served by more traditional forms of counselling or career services.

5. **Consent.** Informed Consent is rooted in a clear articulation of proposed interventions; only once clients are fully informed about the risks and benefits of e-counselling, can they provide consent for services. Several articles explore the benefits and challenges of various systems; both CCPA (2014) and BCACC (2011) are good starting points.

6. **Technology.** e-Counsellors should reach for technologies that work for themselves and their clients. Options range from freely available messaging (e.g., Skype) to more sophisticated web-conferencing systems (e.g., OmniJoin, GoToMeeting); from customized, interactive self-paced modules (e.g., MyQuest) to large-scale, counselling-specific online platforms (e.g., PrivacEmail, Thera-link, Talk Space). Depending on the size of your practice, you may be able to construct a system to meet your specific needs. DCC advises against using public media sources (e.g., tweets). Depending on the situation, e-counsellors may choose to blend online and face-to-face methods.

7. **Security.** To align with relevant regulatory requirements and Records Maintenance/Access principles (e.g., CCPA, DCC), e-counsellors may need password-protected devices/systems, anti-virus software / encryption protection, and secure file-sharing systems. If records are housed on external systems, the location of servers (e.g., US vs. Canada) might impact release of information requests. Not all security issues need high-tech solutions; simple, low-tech strategies can go a long way (e.g., avoid taking "calls" from clients in public locations, ensure clients properly log out / clear history after using public computers, verify client's identity using pre-arranged code words/phrases).

8. **Technology Failures.** Unfortunately, technology isn't perfect (e.g., power/Internet service can be interrupted, computers die). e-Counsellors should proactively plan for technological failures offering clients back-up procedures for when technology fails.

9. **Emergencies.** Advise clients to avoid asynchronous communication channels (e.g., email) during emergencies. Direct clients to emergency services or relevant crisis lines. This can be done through the informed consent, on the counsellor's website, and/or within your email signature line. Ensure clients are aware of the turnaround time to expect when they reach out to you.

10. **Online Relationships.** Ethical practice requires that the counsellor-client relationship is handled confidentially. Social media facilitates sharing resources and marketing services, it can present unique problems for counsellors and career service providers in terms of managing relationships with clients. A client who sends a friend request to a counsellor or likes their social media account/page could breach confidentiality and may present dual relationship issues. It's best to maintain boundaries between your personal and professional online presence and ensure clients are aware of the issues interacting online via social media channels.

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