



Code of Ethics for Career Development Practitioners



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1. Preamble

- 1.1. Career development practitioners provide professional services to clients on the premise that work is a basic human right. Career development practitioners support clients in entering, sustaining and exiting work. This support is underpinned by quality career information at all stages of life. Career development practitioners assume responsibility to support their clients.
- 1.2. Career development practitioners are engaged in a wide spectrum of professional services within and between many fields such as education, human resources, social work and psychology, as applied in the South African educational, work and community contexts. Career development practitioners work in a wide range of settings and provide a myriad of services to a diverse group of individuals and communities.
- 1.3. This Code of Ethics is intended to support the culture of quality services in line with the Competency Framework for Career Development Practitioners in South Africa. This Code of Ethics is designed to reflect the general scope of practice of career development practitioners. This Code of Ethics is therefore purposely broad and quite general as a minimum standard. Further detailed and focused ethical guidelines may be developed for specialisation areas identified. These specialised guidelines will then be considered as an annexure to this Code of Ethics and not a replacement.
- 1.4. The Code of Ethics does not supersede legislation and regulations that career development practitioners are required to follow according to the jurisdiction in which they work and the services they provide. The purpose of the Code of Ethics is to provide a practical guide for professional behaviour and practice for those who offer direct services in career development and to inform the public served by career development practitioners.
- 1.5. When the Code of Ethics is combined with the Competency Framework for Career Development Practitioners in South Africa, a standard of services will be defined that are to be provided to the public by career development practitioners. The South African Career Development Association (SACDA) is established as the professional body for career development practitioners in South Africa. Its purpose is to oversee the association and development of career development practitioners.

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2. Ethical responsibilities to clients

- 2.1. Career development practitioners accept the primary obligation to respect the dignity and human worth of each person to whom career development services are rendered. This obligation includes acceptance of the rights of the individual to make independent choices, to take responsibility for decisions reached, to engage in self-direction and self-development, and to preserve confidentiality. This Code of Ethics includes the responsibility to be knowledgeable about current laws and policies that pertain to clients' rights and career development practitioners' rights.
- 2.2. Career development practitioners recognise their obligation to provide equal opportunities in career development without prejudice to persons of diverse social status, educational background, gender, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or disability, and to avoid all forms of discrimination. Career development practitioners respect the rights of clients to have different values, attitudes, beliefs and opinions from their own. Career development practitioners shall not harass or judge a client in any way.
- 2.3. Career development practitioners are sensitive to the total needs of clients (educational, vocational, personal and social) as they interact to affect the planning for or the adjustment to education and training, occupations, and careers. If their professional designation competency boundary does not meet the client's needs, they should refer the client to relevant experts.
- 2.4. Career development practitioners inform clients orally or in writing of the purposes, goals, techniques, policies and ethical standards under which career development and vocational guidance are provided; considering conditions in which consultation with other professionals might occur, and legal or policy constraints which relate to how services are provided.
- 2.5. Any limits on confidentiality set by others will be discussed with the client before proceeding to put her/him in a position to choose their level of involvement and personal responses to such limits. Written informed consent (for clients over the age of 16 and competent to participate independently) and/or assent (for clients under the age of 16 and/or not competent to participate independently) forms must be signed by clients for all services, stating that they have been informed of their rights and that they consent/assent to the preconditions of the service.
- 2.6. Disclosure of confidential information may happen when a court order is provided. Disclosure of confidential information under other circumstances such as to assist clients with services from

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other professionals, or when any information can be harmful to the client or to others, must be with the clients expressed written permission. In all instances, clients must be informed beforehand of the circumstances around releasing confidential information and provide their expressed consent/assent thereto. Confidentiality must be upheld during any form of electronic recording via video, photographs, or on internet and clients must provide written informed consent/assent to these recordings. Career development practitioners must inform themselves and be familiar with and ensure that they adhere to the principles stipulated in the Protection of Personal Information Act, No 4 of 2013 regarding the handling of clients' information.

2.7. Career development practitioners enhance clients' independent actions and therefore refrain from consciously dictating or coercing client choices, values, lifestyles, plans or beliefs (such as general views on economic life) that represent the career development practitioner's or other people's views, but not the client's personal orientation or perspective. Career development practitioners accept that the client is the expert or authority (source of authoritative information) on herself or himself. This view leads the career development practitioner to accept that a clients need to be empowered rather than made to conform to a 'normal' curve of average characteristics. A career development practitioner who believes this would help a client to rewrite her/his individual narrative. Career development practitioners, as co-authors and co-facilitators of the client's career-life story, help their clients to narrate their careers as stories by pointing out certain themes and tensions in the story line and by teaching them the necessary skills for rendering the next episode in their lives. Throughout this process the career development practitioner emphasises personal agency and especially (the advancement of) personal authorship.

3.1. Career development practitioners may only perform assessment at the level for which they are competent as per the competency framework and other laws governing assessment practices. As is their qualification, experience and professional designation, career development practitioners might share information, provide explanations of content, advise or reword in a language or means of communication that is understandable to clients (such as screen readers and Braille). Career development practitioners may use relevant standards and techniques to select, administer and interpret completed assessments. Career development practitioners recognise that emerging techniques, e.g. computer-based assessment or career development programs, products and models of delivery of service may require periodic training, refresher updates and continuing familiarity with the professional literature in administration, scoring, interpretation and communication. Career development practitioners should endeavour to use language that is appropriate and services that are culturally appropriate to clients.

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- 3.2. Career development practitioners must remain cognisant that psychometric tests were used to unfairly discriminate against and exclude citizens from work during apartheid. Furthermore, a significant proportion of psychometric tests is based on western paradigms and may not be valid, reliable or culturally fair to clients, thus rendering their results ineffective. For this purpose, career development practitioners must abide by governing laws surrounding psychometric testing and understand that only registered psychologists, psychometrists and registered counsellors may administer tests that have been statistically shown to be valid, reliable and culturally fair.
- 3.3. Career development practitioners must ensure that informed consent/assent is obtained for any assessment done and that assessment content is kept confidential and secure. Career development practitioners may promote the benefits of new techniques and appropriate computer applications to clients when research or evaluation warrants such use. Career development practitioners must ensure that the use of computer applications or other techniques are appropriate for the individual needs of the client, that the client understands how to use the technique or process involved, and that follow-up support is provided.
- 3.4. Career development practitioners must remain acutely aware that while computer-based tools are useful for further exploration, they are not a final predictor of study or career success. If a career development practitioner is unsure if a tool is a self-exploration assessment or a psychological test, a request should be lodged with both SACDA and the HPCSA for further follow-up and investigation. Career development practitioners focus on an analysis of autobiographies and carefully assembled and coherent meanings rather than just on questionnaires that test aptitude or on counselling techniques.
- 3.5. Career development practitioners, in representing their professional competencies, training and experience to individual clients and organisations for which consultation is requested, must provide information that is clear, accurate and relevant and does not include misleading or deceptive information.
- 3.6. In marketing services, career development practitioners must not promote their services as 'better' than those of other practitioners or being the ultimate response to clients' needs. Career development practitioners should not ask clients to act as witness or provide references to their service.
- 3.7. Career development practitioners must avoid conflicts of interests which compromise the best interests of their clients when they engage concurrently in the career development of clients, serve

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as representatives of paid employment exchanges or as paid recruiters or intermediaries for training facilities. Where potential conflicts of interests occur, they should be made known to the client. Career development practitioners should avoid entering into multiple relationships, where they provide career advice to co-workers, friends, family, etc, that can influence their objectivity.

- 3.8. When dealing with clients younger than 18 years of age, the approval of parents or guardians (temporary or permanent) must be sought in addition to seeking informed consent from these clients before a service is rendered. The Children’s Act prescribes dealing with services/practices where children are involved and should be understood clearly and adhered to.
- 3.9. Career development practitioners must make an appropriate referral when their professional assistance cannot be provided or continued or extends beyond the scope of their professional designation, education and competence.

4. Attitudes to colleagues and professional associates

- 4.1. Career development practitioners contribute to the development and maintenance of cooperative relationships with professional colleagues and administrators to facilitate the provision of optimal career development services.
- 4.2. Career development practitioners are responsible for informing colleagues and administrators about aspects of the provision of career development services, such as confidentiality and privacy guidelines.
- 4.3. Career development practitioners must provide professional colleagues and administrators with accurate, objective, concise and relevant information about the needs and outcomes of career developments services for evaluative or other purposes.
- 4.4. Career development practitioners cooperate with their professional colleagues in implementing the Code of Ethics in the procedures and practices of their work setting. When direct information raises doubts as to the ethical behaviour of professional colleagues, whether SACDA members or institutions/organisations, career development practitioners must discuss such concerns with the colleague or use available institutional channels to rectify the situation.
- 5.1. In cases of conflict between professional ethical standards and directives, and non-cooperation of an employee, career development practitioners must seek to consult directly with responsible administrators about the implications of such conflicts and seek ways to eliminate the conflict.

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5.2. Career development practitioners must not engage in defamation of other career development practitioners or by making any pronouncements on the knowledge, skills or personality of other practitioners. The professionalism of the career development field and its practitioners must be guarded and maintained.

6. Attitudes to government And other community agencies

6.1. If necessary, career development practitioners will advocate for and assist in the development of career development services that are ethically rendered and relevant to clients' needs in cooperation with policy-makers, legislators or administrative personnel.

6.2. Career development practitioners must be aware of and inform administrators, legislators and others of the accepted qualifications and training expectations of competent practitioners of career development services.

6.3. Career development practitioners must actively cooperate with agencies, organisations and individuals in other institutions or in the community to appropriately meet clients' needs and provide services.

7. Responsibilities to conduct research and related processes

7.1. Career development practitioners who have the appropriate training and skills, acknowledge their responsibility to conduct research and report findings using procedures that are consistent with the accepted ethical and scientific standards of career development research practice.

7.2. When client data is used for statistical, evaluative, research or programme planning purposes, the practitioner must ensure the confidentiality of the identity of individual clients. Career development practitioners must obtain approval from the organisation to do the research study and also ensure that informed consent and/or assent forms are completed and signed by those clients sampled to participate in the research study. Career development practitioners must ensure that they adhere to the principles stipulated in the Protection of Personal Information Act, No 4 of 2013 regarding the handling of clients' information.

7.3. Career development practitioners acknowledge their responsibility to share in the improvement of career development services by sharing skills, knowledge and expertise with colleagues and with other professional associations. These activities are eligible for continuous professional development points.

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7.4. Career development practitioners shall not present substantial portions of the work of others as their own (i.e. will not plagiarise the work of others), whether in research or in the development or career advice materials. This includes any materials, including materials copied from the Internet. Where open educational resources are shared, appropriate attributions must be provided with the applicable copyright license (such as “Creative Commons – with attribution – share alike”).

8. Responsibilities as an individual practitioner

- 8.1. Achieve at least ten (10) CPD points annually as a member of a related body through relevant activities as stipulated in the SACDA CPD policy for members. This equates to ten (10) hours of professional development in the field of career development; Achieve at least fifteen (15) CPD points annually if not a member of a related body through relevant activities as stipulated in the SACDA CPD policy for members. This equates to fifteen (15) hours of professional development in the field of career development; and Adherence to the SACDA Code of Ethics and Competency Framework.
- 8.2. Career development practitioners function within the boundaries of their training and experience and refer clients whom the practitioner is not able to assist to other professionals. Each practitioner accepts the consequences of her/his professional actions and does so within the conscious and deliberate application of ethical guidelines. Career development practitioners abide by the Competency Framework for Career Development Practitioners in South Africa and the specific Scope of Practice policies which are to follow. Career development practitioners continue to reflect on how different forms of intervention (individual, group, computer-assisted programmes, consultation with management on behalf of workers) differ in ethical concerns.
- 8.3. Career development practitioners are responsible for monitoring and maintaining their professional competencies and obtaining training on a periodic basis to ensure that they are able to provide competent services to culturally diverse clients and to effectively use new theories and interventional techniques, computer applications and assessment processes. Practitioners strive to be current, innovative and follow trends in the contexts and content of career development services, and do so with an acknowledgement that professional, personal experience and growth continue throughout and in each phase of a person’s life.
- 8.4. When career development practitioners are developing competencies new to themselves, they must engage in consultation and supervision from a qualified person and also inform clients of the

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innovative nature and risks involved with the new method. Through transparent disclosure, clients have a choice to participate or not.

- 8.5. Career development practitioners seek to participate in regular supervision to increase the knowledge and skills required to effectively discharge their professional responsibilities and to develop goals for continued learning. These activities are eligible for continuous professional development points.
- 8.6. Career development practitioners are aware of their values and attitudes and remain discreet and objective in the assistance they provide to clients. In particular, they must avoid all forms of racial, sexual, and age stereotyping and discrimination.
- 8.7. Career development practitioners, in cases where ethical issues are unclear or ambiguous, must consult in a confidential manner with professional colleagues in an attempt to clarify the issue or develop strategies to rectify the conditions that caused the problem. Failing that possibility, practitioners should contact the SACDA ethics committee to seek clarification, advice or to lodge a complaint.
- 8.8. Career development practitioners uphold best practice and professional behaviour in terms of their day-to-day practice, where records of services rendered to clients are held confidentially.

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