



AUSTRALASIA PACIFIC PLAY THERAPY ASSOCIATION

APPTA Guidelines for Ethical Play Therapy Practice

The establishment of dynamic ethical principles for Play Therapists' work-related conduct requires both a personal commitment and acceptance of responsibility to act ethically and to encourage ethical behaviour by students, supervisors, supervisees, employees, colleagues and associates.

These guidelines are intended to guide and inspire Play Therapists towards achieving the highest ideals of the profession. Ethical Principles, as opposed to Standards or Codes, do not represent obligations in their own right. However, all Play Therapists are obliged to consider their practice with direct reference to each of these ethical principles. These Principles are aspirational in nature, although are considered good ethical practice for a Play Therapist.

PRINCIPLE A: RESPONSIBILITY

Play Therapists need to be motivated, concerned and directed towards good ethical practice. They are required to take responsibility to maintain these standards and Play Therapists should always accept responsibility for their professional behaviour and actions. Play Therapists are concerned about the ethical compliance of their own practice and their colleagues' professional conduct. When ethical conflicts occur, Play Therapists attempt to resolve these conflicts in a responsible manner. Play Therapists are also aware of their professional responsibilities towards their clients, society and to the communities in which they work.

PRINCIPLE B: BENEFICENCE

Play Therapists strive to benefit those with whom they work, acting in their best interests and always working within their limits of competence, training, experience and supervision. This principle involves an obligation to use regular and on-going supervision to enhance the quality of service provision and to commit to enhancing practice by continuing professional development. An obligation of the Play Therapist is to act in the best interests of clients and this is the paramount consideration for Play Therapists since clients are generally non-autonomous and dependent on significant others. Ensuring that the client's best interests are met requires monitoring of practice and outcomes and accordingly APPTA has developed practice guidelines for supervision which all members of APPTA should follow.

PRINCIPLE C: NON-MALEFICENCE

Play Therapists are committed to not harming those with whom they work. Because Play Therapists' professional judgements and actions may affect the lives of others, they are aware, concerned and committed to guard against personal, financial, social, organisational, emotional, sexual or political factors that may lead to a misuse of their influence or exploitation of those with whom they work. This may involve not providing services when unfit to do so due to personal impairment, including illness, personal circumstances or intoxication. Play Therapists have a responsibility to challenge the incompetence or malpractice of others and to contribute in investigations or adjudications concerning the professional practice and/or actions of others.

PRINCIPLE D: FIDELITY

Play Therapists establish relationships of trust with those with whom they work. Play Therapists honour and act in accordance with the trust placed in them. This principle obliges Play Therapists to maintain confidentiality and restrict disclosures of confidential information to a standard appropriate to their workplace and legal requirements.

PRINCIPLE E: JUSTICE

Play Therapists recognise that fairness and justice is an entitlement for all persons. This obliges Play Therapists to ensure that all persons have fair and equal access to and benefit from the contributions of Play Therapy and to equal quality in the services being conducted and offered by Play Therapists. Play Therapists exercise judgement and care to ensure that their potential biases, levels of competence and limitations of their training and experience do not directly or indirectly lead to unjust practices.

PRINCIPLE F: RESPECT FOR PEOPLE'S RIGHTS AND DIGNITY

Play Therapists respect the dignity and worth of all people and the rights to privacy, confidentiality and autonomy. Play Therapists who respect the autonomy of those with

whom they work ensure accuracy of advertising and delineation of service information. Play Therapists seek freely the informed consent of those legally responsible for clients and, where possible, assent from clients, engage in clear and explicit contracts, including confidentiality requirements and inform those involved of any foreseeable conflicts of interest. Play Therapists are aware that special safeguards may be necessary to protect the rights and welfare of clients who are non-autonomous and dependent on significant others.

PRINCIPLE G: RESPECT FOR PEOPLE'S NEEDS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Play Therapists respect the needs of individuals, including emotional, psychological, social, financial, educational, health and familial needs. Play Therapists who respect people's needs and relationships are aware that clients may be dependent upon significant others and that autonomous decision making may not be possible. Play Therapists respect the client's relationships and ensure that, where possible, those in significant relationships to the client are included in the decision making processes.

PRINCIPLE H: SELF RESPECT

Play Therapists apply all of these principles to themselves. This involves a respect for the Play Therapist's own knowledge, needs and development. This includes accessing opportunities for personal and professional development. There is a responsibility to use supervision for development and to seek training for continuing professional development (in accordance with APPTA's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements stated in the membership renewal documents). Play Therapists should be appropriately safeguarded with Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII).