



# North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA)

## NADTA CODE, ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

This Code of Ethics reflects the ethical principles and values of the North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA). The purpose of the NADTA code of ethical principles is to serve its members and the general public by providing standards of professional competence in the field of drama therapy. All members of the NADTA are responsible to ensure that they are familiar with this Code of Ethics, understand its application to their professional conduct, and strive to adhere to its principles and standards. To achieve this goal drama therapists work together to resolve conflicts and maintain open and constructive communication.

### 1. Professional Responsibility and Respect

Drama therapists are responsible for providing professional services respectful of the legal and civil rights of others, adhere to the NADTA professional and ethical guidelines, and safeguard the dignity and rights of their clients, students, colleagues, and research participants.

- a. A drama therapist accepts responsibility for actions in clinical work, teaching, supervision, and/or research and complies with ethical and legal standards of behavior.
- b. A drama therapist does not knowingly make statements that are false, deceptive, or fraudulent concerning research, clinical or business practices, or other work activities on behalf of themselves or those organizations with which the member is affiliated.
- c. A drama therapist is responsible to report any conduct by another drama therapist that has substantially harmed or is likely to substantially harm a person or organization, and which is not appropriate for informal resolution.
- d. A drama therapist is obligated to cooperate in any ethical investigations or proceedings required by the NADTA.

### 2. Competence

Drama therapists limit their practice and services to those which are in their professional competence by virtue of their education and professional experience, and consistent with any requirements for state/provincial and national/international credentials. Drama therapists seek supervision/consultation or refer clients to other professionals when the therapeutic needs of clients exceed their level of competence.

- a. Drama therapists accurately represent their training, techniques and skills, and do not present information that is misleading or inaccurate.
- b. Drama therapists use only initials to which they are legally entitled, for example: degree(s) from an accredited institution and/or registration or certification from professional organizations.
- c. A drama therapist takes adequate steps, through supervision or personal psychotherapy, to prevent personal circumstances from interfering with the quality of service offered to others.
- d. A drama therapist follows standard guidelines for referencing another's theories, research or clinical work in publications or presentations.
- e. Drama therapists refrain from initiating any drama therapy activity if there is a substantial likelihood that personal circumstances will prevent them from performing work-related activities in a competent manner.
- f. A drama therapist who becomes aware of personal circumstances that may interfere with the ability to engage in drama therapy sessions must take appropriate measures, such as obtaining professional consultation or assistance, and determine whether to limit, suspend, or terminate work-related duties.
- g. A drama therapist keeps up to date with new clinical developments related to practice, continues to develop professional skills and cultural competence, and maintains credentials through continuing education.

### 3. Confidentiality

Drama therapists have a primary responsibility to maintain confidentiality with respect to the therapeutic relationship and all information and creative works resulting from clinical sessions and the therapeutic relationship. Exceptions to confidentiality are only acceptable when disclosure is required by specific state and

federal legal requirements, to prevent serious and imminent danger to client or others, and to protect a child, older adult, or other vulnerable person(s) from abuse or neglect.

- a. A drama therapist maintains confidentiality, whether obtained in the course of practice, supervision, teaching, or research.
- b. A drama therapist obtains informed consent before releasing confidential information about a client.
- c. A drama therapist maintains informed consent when giving information about a client through publications, or written or verbal presentations.
- d. A drama therapist takes strict precautions to ensure clients' records are stored in a secure location, and ensures records and client information are available to authorized personnel only.

### 4. Informed Consent

Drama therapists take responsibility to keep clients, students, and research participants informed of potential risks and benefits at the initiation of therapy and at all times during therapy, supervision or research projects. This includes, but is not limited to, goals, techniques and methodologies, procedures, limitations, potential risks and benefits, and any other pertinent information, so that the client(s) can make informed decisions about consenting to participate in therapy.

- a. When conducting therapy, research, or providing assessment or consulting services a drama therapist obtains informed consent of the individual(s) or legal guardian(s).
- b. A drama therapist uses culturally and developmentally appropriate language on the consent form that is understandable to the person(s) providing the consent.
- c. Where limitations to understanding are apparent such as cognitive deficits or with young children, the drama therapist secures informed consent from a legal guardian and obtains assent from the individual.
- d. A drama therapist informs clients and research subjects that they have the right to refuse services or participation in research without consequence.
- e. A drama therapist gains permission from the individual(s) to whom services are provided, or their legal representatives, before recording voices or images.
- f. A drama therapist ensures that clients understand the implication of any assessment, fee arrangements, record keeping, therapeutic plan, and limits to confidentiality.
- g. A drama therapist informs clients, students, and research participants that they have the right to refuse any recommended services and are advised of the potential implications of such a refusal (as, for example, in the case of court-mandated treatment).
- h. Drama therapists periodically review their informed consent procedures with clients.

### 5. Professional Relationships

Drama therapists have a primary responsibility to respect and promote the welfare of their clients and to avoid any multiple relationships or conflicts of interest that could impair professional judgment or increase the risk of harm to clients.

- a. A drama therapist does not engage in unfair discrimination based on, but not limited to, age, gender, identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, physical appearance or attributes, or any basis proscribed by law.
- b. A drama therapist does not engage in sexual solicitation, physical advances, and/or verbal or non-verbal conduct that is sexual in nature with clients, students, supervisees, or research participants in connection with the drama therapist's activities.

- c. A drama therapist does not engage in sexual relationships with clients, students, supervisees, interns, or research participants. A drama therapist also refrains from engaging sexually with clients' relatives or other individuals with whom clients maintain a close personal relationship when there is any risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client.
- d. A drama therapist refrains from entering into multiple relationships with clients. When multiple relationships are unavoidable, appropriate professional precautions to avoid exploitation or potential harm are undertaken, such as informed consent, supervision, consultation, and documentation to ensure that judgment is not impaired.
- e. A drama therapist refrains from entering into multiple relationships with students, supervisees, interns, or research participants. When multiple relationships are unavoidable, appropriate professional precautions to avoid exploitation or potential harm are undertaken.
- i. A drama therapist who serves as a student's supervisor, teacher, or educator should not at the same time serve as the student's individual or group therapist, even if the program prescribes training therapy for the student.

Drama therapists avoid personal, professional, financial, or academic conflicts of interest that might interfere with their ability to provide competent, effective or objective services to clients.

**6. Principles of Teaching and Training**

Drama therapists who are responsible for drama therapy education and training adhere to current NADTA guidelines and standards with respect to their professional activities.

- a. A drama therapist educator is knowledgeable regarding ethical aspects of the profession and makes students/supervisees aware of their responsibilities.
- b. A drama therapist educator ensures that a current and accurate description of program goals and objectives, course descriptions, curriculum and content, fee structures, and completion criteria that must be satisfied for completion of the program is provided to students.
- c. A drama therapist gives accurate and objective information while teaching or training.
- d. A drama therapist educator does not teach techniques/procedures for which the drama therapist has not been fully trained.
- e. A drama therapist defines and maintains appropriate professional, social, and ethical boundaries with students/supervisees. Potential conflicts of interest and dual relationships are identified, and if unavoidable, appropriate precautions are undertaken, such as informed consent, supervision, consultation, and documentation to ensure the best interests of the student/supervisee.
- f. A drama therapist offers appropriate feedback to students/supervisees and evaluates their performance on relevant and established program requirements throughout training.
- g. A drama therapist educator responsible for a program/course that requires the students to have individual or group therapy ensures that faculty who are or are likely to be responsible for evaluating students' academic performance do not themselves provide that therapy.
- h. A drama therapist in education, training, or supervision relationships does not engage in clinical relationships as therapist/client with students and/or supervisees, and instead refers them to another professional.

**7. Principles of Physical Contact, Role Play, and Other Drama Therapy Activities**

Drama therapists are responsible to practice in a manner that maintains professional boundaries, based on the individual's therapeutic goals, safety, and best interests.

- a. A drama therapist uses physical contact, movement, and/or role play: 1) when they are consistent with the client's therapeutic goals, 2) with the client's informed consent, and 3) in a safe, respectful, and culturally sensitive manner. A drama therapist never engages in any behavior that is intended for sexual stimulation nor makes intentional contact with any private area of the client's body, and communicates that objective at the beginning of the professional relationship.
- b. A drama therapist never imposes or requires that an individual make physical contact, and informs the client that they may refrain from or refuse physical contact at any time.
- c. A drama therapist makes continuous assessments regarding the usefulness of physical touch with each client, and periodically renews the consent from the client. They also document the use of physical touch and its therapeutic effects.
- d. A drama therapist appreciates that physical contact may evoke strong feelings from the client and seeks consultation on a regular basis regarding their use of physical contact.

**8. Responsibility to Research Participants**

Drama therapy researchers respect the dignity and protect the welfare of participants in research.

- a. A drama therapist researcher adheres to laws, regulations, and professional standards governing the conduct of research.
- b. Drama therapist researchers follow all criteria and processes established by the Institutional Review Board of the organization or institution in which they conduct research with human subjects.
- c. In the absence of an Institutional Review Board, a drama therapist seeks the ethical advice of qualified professionals not directly involved in the investigation to determine the extent to which research participants may be compromised by participation in research. The researcher observes safeguards to protect the rights of research participants.
- d. A drama therapist researcher requesting participants' involvement in research informs them of all aspects of the study that might reasonably be expected to influence willingness to participate. Investigators take all reasonable steps necessary to avoid coercion of potential research subjects.
- e. A drama therapist researcher respects participants' freedom to decline participation in, or to withdraw from, a research study at any time with no negative consequences to their treatment.
- f. A drama therapist researcher cannot use information about a research participant during the course of an investigation unless there is authorization previously obtained in writing. When there is a risk that others, including family members, may obtain access to such information, this risk, together with the plan for protecting confidentiality, is to be explained as part of the procedure for obtaining informed consent.

By checking the boxes below I affirm that:

- I have not been convicted of a felony     I have not had ethics sanctions brought against me by a state licensing board or other credentialing body.

If a box above cannot be checked, please explain:

Please note that upon receipt of this communication your application for registry will be forwarded to the Ethics Chair of the NADTA for review before registration renewal is complete.

**Membership in NADTA is contingent upon signing this Code of Ethical Principles on an annual basis. This signed form is kept on file at the NADTA national office.**

NAME (Please Print)

Signature Date