

# CODE OF ETHICS

## PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Employee Code of Ethics is to strengthen the ethical environment of PCS by providing guidance on the principles, standards, and responsibilities of conduct of all employees and members of the PCS workforce in the performance of their duties. These expectations are directly derived from PCS's core values, which are:

- We believe that our clients are our highest priority. They are the reason PCS exists.
- We believe in the preservation of human dignity, self-respect and client rights in a caring environment.
- We believe in the client-centered approach to care. The client's families are encouraged to become involved in their loved one's treatment efforts.
- We believe that PCS should be responsive to the mental health care needs of its communities and should direct its resources to meet those needs in a cost-effective manner.
- We believe that PCS should be a good corporate citizen of the community, maintaining communications with the various communities we serve and participating actively in community affairs, particularly related to health and behavioral health care.

## POLICY:

The PCS Code of Ethics policy applies to all members of the PCS workforce. *The PCS workforce includes employees, physicians, volunteers, students, vendors and independent contractors.* These policies are intended to provide workforce members with guidelines for conducting business in a manner that fulfills this commitment. It cannot anticipate all circumstances and situations that employees or staff may encounter. The exercise of good judgment is still expected. All workforce members shall be required to abide by the provisions of the Code of Ethics of their respective professions (e.g. psychiatry, psychology, social work, pharmacy, counseling and nursing). All clinical, administrative and support staff shall be committed to ethical standards no less stringent than those contained in this policy.

## CODE OF ETHICS:

The staff shall maintain:

1. **CONFIDENTIALITY** - Patient privacy and confidentiality are protected by both Federal and State law. An acknowledgment of confidentiality is signed by employees, volunteers, students, consultants and contract personnel, and this becomes part of their personnel file. Staff members are not permitted to disclose to anyone, including other patients, staff not involved in the patient's care, and persons outside the facility for whom there is no signed consent to release information, and information regarding a current or former PCS client. Supervisors are to be informed of any request for patient information by anyone other than a PCS staff member. All PCS workforce members are expected to comply with the Privacy Regulations of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Without a business-related reason, all staff should not be in the medical record or seek patient health information unless directly involved

in the care and treatment of the consumer. Confidentiality also applies to records, audiovisual tapes and all other oral and written information concerning a patient.

2. **STAFF-PATIENT INTERACTIONS**- All PCS workforce members will interact with patients in a courteous and respectful manner. This interaction should facilitate the therapeutic treatment process in a positive manner and enhance the dignity of each patient.
3. **STAFF-PATIENT RELATIONSHIPS** -There shall be no relationships of a romantic nature (such as dating or intimate relationships) between members of the PCS workforce and any patient of any PCS program. Romantic relationships do not fall within the boundaries of a positive therapeutic process and are viewed as irresponsible, unethical and potentially harmful to the patient's treatment. Such relationships are always considered inappropriate behavior and are grounds for immediate dismissal.
4. Non-discrimination among clients and staff on the basis of race, sex, creed, age or other individual characteristics unrelated to problems for which the person is being counseled. All PCS workforce members must comply with Title VI regulations.
5. Willingness to recognize when it is in the client's best interest to refer or release him/her to another staff member or program.
6. Respect for the rights and views of other professionals.
7. Respect for the Center policies and cooperation with administrative functions.
8. Respect for the privacy rights of clients and regard for peculiarities or unconventional behavior.
9. A commitment to take personal responsibility for continued growth further education and training.
10. A commitment to provide the highest quality of care through both personal effort and utilization of other health professionals or services which may assist the client.
11. A commitment to document client progress immediately after provision of service in a concise, professional manner.
12. A commitment to provide service promptly, with respect and kindness.
13. A commitment to service without complaint to the client.
14. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST** - PCS workforce members are not permitted to involve themselves in situations which might present a conflict of interest and are expected to adhere to the PCS *Conflict of Interest Policy* (Policy # 2-W).

#### ENFORCEMENT:

All workforce members have a moral and ethical responsibility to immediately report to the appropriate supervisor any violations of the Code of Ethics.

Violations of any Code of Ethics are subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

#### STANDARDS OF CONDUCT -

Groups of people who are working together for any purpose require certain guidelines pertaining to their conduct and relationships. Accordingly, it is important that our workforce (employees, staff, volunteers, students, physicians and independent contractors) be aware of their responsibilities to the Center and to co-workers.

It is our intention to take a constructive approach to disciplinary matters to ensure that actions that would interfere with operations or an employee's job are not continued.

The Center reserves the right, when the Center has business-related reasons to do so, to inspect all possessions of workforce members, visitors and customers, including such items as lunch boxes, handbags, purses, packages and briefcases, carried onto or from the premises. The Center may conduct such inspections at any time, at its discretion. Employees who refuse to cooperate with inspections are subject to disciplinary action, depending on the circumstances, up to and including termination.

Violations of our standards will result in one of the following forms of disciplinary action: oral warning, written warning, suspension, or discharge (Policy # 3-K). In arriving at a decision for proper action, the following will be considered:

- the seriousness of the infraction,
- the past record of the employee, and
- the circumstances surrounding the matter.

Although there is no way to identify every possible violation of standards of conduct, the following is a partial list of infractions that will result in disciplinary action:

1. Falsification of Center records, including but not limited to, the employment application, time records, expense reimbursement records, client records and billing records.
2. Violation of criminal laws on Center premises, including, but not limited to, the following: fraud, unauthorized possession of Center or personal property, gambling, or carrying weapons or explosives.
3. Disorderly conduct that may endanger the well being of any employee, client or Center operations.
4. Threatening, intimidating, coercing, using abusive language, or interfering with the performance of fellow employees.
5. Insubordination or refusal to comply with instructions or failure to perform reasonable duties to which assigned.
6. Use of Center material, time or equipment for personal or professional purposes not related to Center operations, without the approval of Management.
7. Performance that in the Center's opinion, does not meet the requirements of the job position.
8. Conduct that the Center feels reflects adversely on the employee, the client or the Center.
9. Engaging in such other practices as may be inconsistent with the ordinary and reasonable rules of conduct necessary to the welfare of the Center, its employees and its service community.
10. Willful or repeated violation of safety rules.
11. Use, possession, manufacture, sale, purchase or being the influence of alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs or other intoxicants at any time on Center premises or during Center related activities.
12. Violation of professional code of ethics.
13. Excessive or habitual absenteeism or tardiness from work.
14. Failure to maintain the confidentiality of the agency, customer or client information.
15. Removing, with permission, or applying to our own use, any property, record, or document of any agency or of other employees.
16. Other circumstances in which the Center feels that discipline is warranted.

#### Additional Standards

Punctuality and regular attendance are essential to the proper operation of any business. These also help to establish a good working reputation and add to the opportunity for advancement. If an employee is unable to report for work for any reason, the employee is expected to notify his/her supervisor as soon as possible. We reserve the right to require a physician's release when an employee returns to work following a disability.

#### Absence Without Notice

For the Center to operate effectively, we ask that all workforce members keep the Center informed of his/her status when off work because of illness or accident from any cause. Failure to notify PCS after three consecutive days of absence, will lead the Center to presume the employee resigned, and he/she may be removed from the active status in the payroll system. If necessary to leave work before the end of the day, the employee must notify his/her supervisor and complete a leave request form.

### **WORKPLACE FRAUD**

#### **Purpose:**

In an effort to protect the welfare of the clients that PCS serves and the integrity of the Center, PCS is committed as an organization to prevent fraud and misrepresentation. The purpose of this policy is to advance the prevention of fraud, abuse and detect misconduct or wrongdoing as soon as it occurs so that the problem can be quickly remedied and adverse consequences minimized. *Fraud means an intentional dishonest act or omission done with the purpose of deceiving.*

#### **Purpose:**

Professional Care Services considers acts of deception, fraud, or misrepresentation committed by its workforce to be wrongful and unethical and, in response, will take all disciplinary or other action that PCS deems appropriate. PCS shall provide training to all staff on the consequences of fraud, how to prevent fraud, and the correct procedures to report suspected fraud. This training shall be provided to all new employees during new employee orientation and annually at each site locations. Fraud may include, but not limited to the following examples:

1. falsifying services such as case management visits,
2. falsifying timesheets,
3. falsifying travel or mileage claims,
4. falsifying signatures,
5. falsifying billing claims,
6. abuse of sick leave (PTO),
7. theft, etc.

#### **Procedures:**

#### Preventing Fraud

All supervisors must take responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud. Supervisors are responsible for helping to control fraud by: (1) assessing the risk of fraud in their areas, (2) promoting

employee awareness of ethical principles, (3) educate employees about fraud prevention and detection, and (4) facilitate the reporting of suspected fraud activities.

### Internal Reporting Process

All members of the PCS workforce have the responsibility to report suspected fraud. Staff and other PCS workforce members may elect one of the following options to report suspected fraud.

- Immediately report concerns of suspected fraud to the immediate supervisor.
- If the member of the workforce is uncomfortable going to the immediate supervisor, concerns of suspected fraud should be reported directly to a member of Management.
- PCS workforce members may also elect to report suspected fraud or unethical behavior to the toll free anonymous Compliance Line posted at each location. PCS employees will receive training on how to access the anonymous hotline to report suspected fraud.

### Whistleblower

No retaliatory action can be taken against any workforce member who reports a violation, regardless of the seriousness of the violation or the level of employee or agent responsible for it. Employees are encourage to report concerns of fraud or unethical behavior.

All reported allegations of suspected fraudulent behavior will be thoroughly and carefully investigated with the consequences to be determined by management. If reasonable suspicion exists that an employee(s) might destroy or remove documents, the employee(s) must be suspended or removed from sensitive areas.

### Disciplinary Action

Employees found to have violated the code of ethics, standards of conduct or taken part in acts of fraud or deception are subject to disciplinary action to be determined by management including the possibility of termination of employment and subject to criminal prosecution.

My Signature below indicates that I have reviewed Professional Care Services policies on ethics, conduct, and fraud. I understand the consequences of violating any one of these policies. Furthermore, I understand if I have knowledge regarding alleged fraudulent activity, I must report such information according to the provisions of these policies.

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Signature

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Date