



QUICK REFERENCE

Therapy Apps: A Decision-Making Resource for Professional Counselors

For a professional counselor, the choice to offer treatment services through a “therapy app,” also referred to as a “third-party platform,” should include ethical decision-making, understanding the legal requirements and adhering to clinical best practices. Ethics are central to every decision made and action taken by a counselor.

Ethics

Have I read through the 2014 ACA Code of Ethics with the primary goal of understanding their relevance to this topic?

Being a professional counselor comes with many responsibilities and duties, including the overarching and foundational requirement to act in accordance with the profession’s codes of ethics. We recommend reviewing the following resources first in order to weigh one’s options through a lens of professional counselor ethics:

- [2014 ACA Code of Ethics](#)
- The ACA offers a clearly defined process through an ethical decision-making model, which is outlined in [Practitioner’s Guide to Ethical Decision Making](#) as well as an [infographic](#).

Primary Responsibility

How are my actions regarding all aspects of service delivery aligned with my profession’s ethics, especially considering that my primary responsibility is to do no harm?

Liability and Legal Considerations

Have I considered the potential liability and legal considerations?

Compliance with State and Federal Regulations/HIPAA

*How am I ensuring that I am compliant with federal and my state’s laws and regulations?
How am I ensuring that I am compliant with HIPAA?*

Compliance with Client Records

What measures am I taking to ensure I’m complying with requirements for client records?

Clinical Considerations

What clinical considerations come into play for this decision?

Client Safety

How am I ensuring client safety?

Informed Consent - General

How am I ensuring that clients can give fully informed consent to all aspects of their care?

Informed Consent - Privacy and Confidentiality + Technology

How am I ensuring that clients are able to give fully informed consent specifically in regard to their privacy and confidentiality when using technology?

The Therapeutic Relationship

Am I able to fully attend to developing a healthy therapeutic relationship?

Clinical and Technological Competence

*Am I competent in the delivery of telehealth and the technology I am using?
How am I staying current with new developments and updates?*

Cultural Responsiveness

Are the services I provide culturally responsive? How am I continuing my journey of reflection and ongoing learning about cultures that I am not a member of?

Billing and Financial Practices

What practices and policies am I following regarding payments and billing?

Termination

*How am I ensuring that clients are appropriately prepared for discontinuation of services?
What methods do I use to measure outcomes and readiness for termination?*

Technology and Privacy

Do I understand what information is gathered about my current, past, and potential clients by the platform?

Privacy and Confidentiality

How can I ensure clients have full control over who can access their personal information, data and details about sessions and treatment?

Professional Considerations

What considerations should I consider regarding my professional relationship with vendors and third parties?

Business Relationships

Are the practices of the businesses I work for or with aligned with my personal values and the ethics of the professional counseling field?

Section of the 2014 ACA Code of Ethics Referenced

- Section A, The Counseling Relationship
- A.1.a. Primary Responsibility
- A.1.b. Records and Documentation
- A.2.a. Informed Consent
- A.2.b. Types of Information Needed
- A.2.c. Developmental and Cultural Sensitivity
- A.2.a. Informed Consent
- A.2.b. Types of Information Needed
- A.2.a. Informed Consent
- A.4.a. Avoiding Harm
- A.10.c. Establishing Fees
- A.11.c. Appropriate Termination
- A.12. Abandonment and Client Neglect
- B.1.d. Explanation of Limitations
- B.1.b. Respect for PrivacyB.1.c. Respect for Confidentiality
- B.1.d. Explanation of Limitations
- B.2. Exceptions
- B.3.d. Third-Party Payers
- B.3.e. Transmitting Confidential Information
- B.6.b. Confidentiality of Records and Documentation
- B.6.c. Permission to Record
- B.6.d. Permission to Observe
- B.6.g. Disclosure or Transfer
- B.6.e. Client Access
- C.1. Knowledge of and Compliance With Standards
- C.2. Professional Competence
- C.2.f. Continuing Education
- D.1.g. Employer Policies
- D.1.h. Negative Conditions

This and additional resources can be found [here](#).

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