

**NATIONAL BOARD FOR CERTIFIED COUNSELORS (NBCC)  
CODE OF ETHICS**

**PREAMBLE**

The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) provides national certifications that recognize individuals who have voluntarily met standards for general and specialty areas of counseling practice. Counselors certified by NBCC may also identify with different professional associations and are often licensed by jurisdictions that promulgate standards of behavior. Regardless of any other affiliation, this *Code of Ethics* is applicable to all NBCC applicants and National Certified Counselors (NCCs).

This *Code* establishes the minimum ethical behaviors and provides an expectation of and assurance for the ethical practice for all who use the professional services of NCCs. Furthermore, it provides an enforceable set of directives and assures a resource for those served in the case of a perceived violation.

NCCs are required to adhere to all of the directives.

Sanctions of applicants and credential holders under this *Code* are issued by NBCC only if the provisions of the NBCC *Code of Ethics* are found to have been violated.

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**ALL DIRECTIVES**

*NCCs take appropriate action to prevent harm.*

1. NCCs, recognizing the potential for harm, shall not share information that is obtained through the counseling process without specific written consent by the client or legal guardian except to prevent clear, imminent danger to the client or others or when required to do so by a court order.
2. NCCs shall respect client's privacy and shall solicit only information that contributes to the identified counseling goals.
3. NCCs generally shall not accept goods or services from clients in return for counseling services in recognition of the possible negative effects, including perceived exploitation. NCCs may accept goods, services or other nonmonetary compensation from clients only in cases where no referrals are possible or appropriate and if the arrangement is discussed with the client in advance, is an exchange of a reasonable equivalent value, does not place the counselor in an unfair advantage, is not harmful to the client or their treatment and is documented in the counseling services agreement.
4. NCCs shall not accept gifts from clients except in cases when it is culturally appropriate or therapeutically relevant because of the potential confusion that may arise. NCCs shall consider the value of the gift and the effect on the therapeutic relationship when contemplating acceptance. This consideration shall be documented in the client's record.
5. NCCs shall not engage in harmful multiple relationships with clients. In the event that a harmful multiple relationship develops in an unforeseen manner, the NCC shall discuss the potential effects with the client and shall take reasonable steps to resolve the situation, including the provision of referrals. This discussion shall be documented in the client's record.
6. NCCs shall discuss important considerations to avoid exploitation before entering into a non-counseling relationship with a former client. Important considerations to be discussed include amount of time since counseling service termination, duration of counseling, nature and circumstances of client's counseling, the likelihood that the client will want to resume counseling at some time in the future; circumstances of service termination and possible negative effects or outcomes.