

## **CODE OF ETHICS**

All Payne County Youth Services, Inc., staff are expected to conform to the highest ethical and professional standards. Violation of the Code of Ethics will result in appropriate disciplinary actions.

Payne County Youth Services, Inc., is a professional organization whose employees are dedicated to the enhancement of human development throughout the life span. PCYS employees recognize diversity in our society and embrace a cross-cultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of each individual.

The specification of a code of ethics enables PCYS to clarify to current and future employees and to those served by PCYS, the nature of the ethical responsibilities held in common by its employees. All employees are required to adhere to the Code of Ethics and the Standards of Practice. The Code of Ethics will serve as the basis for processing ethical complaints initiated against employees of PCYS. Where applicable, the word counselor is to mean any and all employees.

It is the policy of Payne County Youth Services, Inc., to have a written code of ethics to serve as a guideline for business and clinical conduct, with an overriding premise of promoting the dignity and individual rights of each person served.

The written code of ethics includes, at a minimum, the following:

- Professional conduct
- Personal behavior
- Business practices
- Marketing practices
- Clinical practices
- Potential conflicts of interest
  
- Procedures for investigating and acting on violations of the code of ethics
  
- Human Resource practices

The written code of ethics is communicated and a copy given to all personnel at orientation to the agency. The code is posted in all buildings owned, rented, or leased by Payne County Youth Services, Inc.

The written code of ethics is communicated to persons served at orientation to programs and services. Clients are given the opportunity to read, review, and discuss the written code of ethics. The code of ethics is posted in each Payne County Youth Services, Inc., building for review from other stakeholders in the community.

The code of ethics is reviewed annually and updated as needed.

Personnel and persons served are allowed and expected to report any violations of the code of ethics. A "no reprisal" system is in place to protect those who report violations. Violations of the written code of ethics are handled in the following manner:

- Staff members, persons served, and concerned individuals may file a written notice or present a verbal notice with the Executive Director or his or her designee.
- The Executive Director or his/her designee reviews the notice within seven working days, with a written formal notification of the outcome of the review sent to the reporting party.
- The notice and formal notification is dated and filed.
- An employee found in violation of the agency ethics policy is subject to disciplinary action or termination. Actions are approved by the Executive Director to ensure action is fair and consistent.

### *Code of Ethics*

**I hereby affirm that...**

My primary goal is to respect the dignity and promote the recovery of each client and his/her family. I have a total commitment to provide the highest quality care for those who seek services at Payne County Youth Services, Inc.

I shall present a genuine interest in all clients and their families and do hereby dedicate myself to the best interest of the clients and to helping them to help themselves.

I shall maintain at all times an objective, non-possessive, professional relationship with all clients.

I shall be willing to recognize when it is in the best interest of the clients to release them or refer them to another program or individual.

I shall adhere to all the professional rules of confidentiality of all maintenance and distributions of records, material, and knowledge concerning the client and respect the integrity and protect the welfare of the person or group with whom I am working.

I shall not in any way discriminate between clients, families, or fellow professionals based on age, color, culture, disability, ethnic group, gender, race, religion, spiritual orientation, sexual orientation, marital status, or socioeconomic status.

I shall maintain respect for PCYS policies and management functions, but will take the initiative toward improving such policies when it will better serve the interest of the residents/clients.

I have a commitment to assess my own personal strengths, limitations, biases, and effectiveness on a continuing basis; that I shall continuously strive for self-improvement; and that I have a personal responsibility for professional growth through further education and training.

I shall not have any type of outside involvement, including sexual intimacies, with clients and I shall not counsel persons with whom I have had a personal relationship.

I shall be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment. I shall inform clients when a real or potential conflict of interest arises and take reasonable steps to resolve the issue in a manner that will protect the client's interest.

I shall respect clients' rights to privacy. I shall not solicit private information unless it is essential to providing service. Once private information is shared, standards of confidentiality apply.

I shall not use derogatory language in written or verbal communications to or about clients.

When I act on behalf of clients who lack the capacity to make informed decisions, I shall take reasonable steps to safeguard the interests and rights of those clients.

I shall respect confidential information shared by colleagues in the course of their professional relationships and transactions.

I shall advocate for adequate resources to meet client's needs.

I shall be a diligent steward of the resources of PCYS and I shall wisely conserve funds where appropriate and never misappropriate funds for unintended purposes.

I shall not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, deception, or conduct that could affect my resident/client relationship or the relationship of PCYS with the community.

I shall cooperate with the Ethics Committee and promptly supply necessary information.

I have a responsibility to myself, the clients, the community and associates to maintain my physical and mental well-being and shall adopt a personal and professional stance, which promotes the well being of all human beings.

### **Complaints Alleging Violations of Code of Ethics**

Complaints may be submitted by any client/consumer, staff, or person affiliated or not affiliated with PCYS. A complaint shall be initiated by completing a Grievance Form obtained from agency staff. Complaints received by supervisors or receptionists must be submitted to the Executive Director or the Corporate Compliance Officer the same day the complaint was received. PCYS has a no reprisal policy for any individual, client, staff or person affiliated or not affiliated with the agency making a complaint alleging violation of the Code of Ethics. No retaliatory action will be taken.

For the purposes of determining time limits, a complaint shall be considered filed as soon as the Ethics Committee chairperson has received the complaint. The Ethics Committee is an ad hoc committee that has standing members of the Executive Director/Corporate Compliance Officer and the Clinical Director. The standing members will appoint a minimum of one (1) and a maximum of three (3) employees from programs not related to the ethics violation complaint. If a standing member is involved in the ethics violation complaint, they will remove themselves from the committee and the remaining standing member will appoint a minimum of two (2) and a maximum of four (4) employees from programs not related to the ethics violation complaint.

The Ethics Committee shall respond to the complainant within five (5) days of receipt of the completed complaint form. This response shall outline the investigative process and assure the complainant that every effort will be made to correct any violations. All violators of PCYS's Code of Ethics will be dealt with in a fair and consistent manner. Upon conclusion of the investigation, the Ethics Committee shall review the case. When the review has been completed, the Ethics Committee shall vote to take one of the following actions:

Dismiss the charges if

- there has been no violation;
- the violation would constitute only a minor or technical violation;
- the violation has been adequately addressed in another forum;
- the violation is likely to be corrected;
- there is insufficient evidence to support a finding of an ethical violation.

Recommend action consisting of:

- reprimand
- termination
- stipulated resignation
- choose to dismiss some of the charges but find violation and recommend disciplinary action on the basis of the other charges.

The Ethics Committee shall forward a report of their findings and recommended action to the Board of Directors for final review and approval. Upon receipt of final approval, the Ethics Committee shall notify the respondent, in writing, of their recommendations and that he/she may accept or appeal the findings within 10 days.

Should the respondent accept the Committee's recommendations, the case will be closed.

Should the respondent appeal the findings, the Ethics Committee will direct the matter to the Executive Director and the Board of Directors. A full report of investigative findings shall be forwarded for scheduling in the next Board of Directors meeting. The Board will review and consider all reports before recommending action. All recommendations by the Board shall be final. The Board of Directors will notify the respondent of the ruling within ten (10) days.