

The Counselor – Summer 2000

Text Version of CRCC's Newsletter

Ethics "Online" CRCC Takes the Initiative

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Chair, CRCC

Ethics are a vital concern for any Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC). That has certainly been the case in the 23 years I've been certified, and will undoubtedly remain so well into the future.

But what have changed are the issues surrounding ethics. While many aspects of professional ethics and behavior are clearly defined, there are a greater number of gray areas today. That's why the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) is undertaking two major projects:

- An Ethics Home Study Program for continuing education.
- The revision of our Code of Professional Ethics (Code).

Neither of these efforts could have been launched without the hard work and dedication by the members of CRCC's Ethics Committee. So before I go further, please allow me to recognize and thank the Committee.

Both the Ethics Home Study Program and the revised Code recognize one very important fact. The world in which we, as CRCs live and operate, is ever changing. Our profession is impacted by many variables, including a managed-care environment that may raise an ethical question in a CRC's mind about how to best meet a client's need while controlling costs.

Further, technology continues to make in-roads. As one example, we all readily use the Internet (including the ubiquitous email) to disseminate and access information. That's why we, as an organization, want to recognize this step by putting our Ethics Home Study Program online.

By no means are we in conflict with any existing education programs. Rather, we recognize that continuing education programs in various aspects of rehabilitation counseling deal with aspects of ethics to at least some degree. But we, as an organization of CRC professionals, have a unique perspective on ethics issues. For that reason, we have devised our own home study program, which is based on articles written by CRCC's Ethics Committee.

I can say that I'm very pleased with the dynamic and timely content that it includes such as identifying ethics, defining the client, dealing with dual and multiple relationships, the business perspective on ethics, and public sector practice, just to touch on a few areas.

Further, CRCC is revising its Code, which is no small task, indeed. To ensure this latest version is as comprehensive as possible, we will be circulating a draft of the Code around the professional community. Our hope is to address as many of the variables – and gray areas – that exist today, while giving CRCs the guidance that they deserve.

Let me underscore one point for a moment. If, at any point, a CRC is faced with an ethical dilemma, the Code will give guidance.

Ethics help us all protect the integrity of our professional credential. Our peers and the business community at large – including state licensing bodies, employers, insurance companies and the clients we serve – must know that, to be a CRC, we adhere to the highest of ethical standards. Should that ever be compromised, the value of the CRC credential is severely undermined.

As an organization, we're also working with other credentialing bodies and groups to make rehabilitation counseling better known to the public. Our goal is to increase the visibility of CRCC and, through those efforts, to raise the value placed on Certified Rehabilitation Counselors.

To that end, we're also continuing our efforts to work closely with state licensing bodies. We're offering our help to states to set and/or enforce standards and to conduct testing based on CRCC criteria as part of the state licensure process.

All in all, we're moving ahead in CRCC. We're looking at the business and issues addressed each day by our certificants, giving you the resources you need through a revised Code and an Ethics Home Study Program. Further, we're making these valuable resources more accessible to you – wherever you are – through Internet technology.

Our profession has not stood still in the face of technology and an ever-changing business environment. And neither, I'm proud to say, has CRCC.

Continuing Education Home Study Program

As mentioned in the article from our Chair, Richard Coelho, CRCC has made available through its website a home study program titled Ethics for Rehabilitation Counselors.

This home study program awards up to 4.5 clock hours of continuing education to those who successfully complete each of the nine modules. The modules are all written by past and present CRCC Commissioners and by leaders in the profession of rehabilitation counseling, many of who have served on CRCC's Ethics Committee.

The program is available for downloading through CRCC's website at <http://www.crc certification.org> for free. It may also be purchased from CRCC for a fee of \$10.00 to offset print charges. A fee of \$50.00 is due at the time the program is submitted for grading.

Visit CRCC's website to download your free copy or contact Cindy Biggs at (847) 394-2104, extension 121, to purchase your copy of Ethics for Rehabilitation Counselors.

CRCC Updates the Code

The CRCC Ethics Committee has been actively engaged in a review and revision process for the CRCC Code of Professional Ethics for Rehabilitation Counselors (Code), which began with the appointment of a taskforce in 1999.

The taskforce was charged with reviewing and updating the Code in order to adopt core standards for counseling as a profession utilizing the ACA Code as the core document and supplementing it with additional standards that are specific to the practice of rehabilitation counseling.

The taskforce has completed its charge and the Ethics Committee has reviewed the draft revisions. Emphasis in areas such as accessibility, accommodations, and advocacy, which are all key to the profession of rehabilitation counseling, will be added by the Committee.

It is anticipated that the draft will be available for review and comment on CRCC's website at <http://www.crccertification.org> by December. We welcome and encourage your comments before the final document is set in place.

Phase Out Date for Category D.4 Extended

Many rehabilitation counselors have opted to participate in a program of training to increase their level of education to that required for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRCs). Category D.4 addresses the need for these rehabilitation counselors who already possess a master's degree but lack the specific coursework at the master's level or above in core content areas applicable to rehabilitation counseling.

Full-time work and families can make acquiring up to 18 credit hours of additional coursework challenging for rehabilitation counselors. In an effort to allow ample time in which to complete the required 18 credit hours of specific coursework to be considered as having met the educational criteria for Category D.4, CRCC has voted to extend the phase out date to December 16, 2004.

Those seeking CRC certification under Category D.4 must make application by December 15, 2004 and must meet all educational and work experience criteria by January 1, 2005 in order to be deemed eligible to sit for the last administration of the CRC examination under this Category.

For more information on the criteria for Category D.4 and for helpful course definitions that allow you to complete your own assessment as to whether the courses you wish to take will meet the certification criteria, visit CRCC's website at <http://www.crccertification.org>.

Measuring Your Program's Effectiveness

CRCC has received a number of requests from educators to provide the pass rate for their students and graduates on the CRC examination so that they may use the data in support of the program for accreditation and grant attainment purposes.

In order to assist, CRCC has instituted a policy to allow the release of the number of individuals for a particular master's level rehabilitation counselor education program who passed or failed the CRC examination in comparison to the entire population of test takers. So as to protect the confidentiality of test takers, the information will only be released upon request at the time the number of individuals from a particular program reaches ten.

Reports will be generated following receipt of a written request accompanied by a fee of \$50.00 per request. If a response is required within ten working days from the time of receipt of a written request, payment of a fee of \$100.00 is required.

CCRC Reinstatement Process Instituted

A reinstatement process has been instituted for former CCRCs who gained initial certification between April 1995 and April 2000 but whose certification has lapsed. Contact CRCC for more information about the criteria.

Ethics in the Academy

Editor's note: Our author is Manuela Kress-Shull. Dr. Kress-Shull, CRC, who served on the CRCC Ethics Committee, is the Director of the Rehabilitation Counseling Program located in the School of Medicine at the University of South Carolina.

Rehabilitation educators are in a unique position of training potentially hundreds, even thousands of students over the course of a career. In turn those students will have an impact on the lives of thousands of clients. The ethical behavior that educators model for their students will provide an important example to those students and in turn influence how those students will treat their future clients. The following cases are offered as a way of thinking through ethical issues, specifically in the area of dual relationships, regularly faced by faculty members.

John is a recent graduate from a doctoral program. He has taken a position at a major university where he will be teaching in the undergraduate and graduate master's program in rehabilitation counseling. While on the phone with one of his friends, he mentions that 80% of the students in the master's program are female and that the majority of them are close to his age and very attractive. John's friend responds "what a lucky guy you are to have all those women to choose from to date".

Is John's friend right? Stories certainly do abound about professors dating undergraduate and graduate students. This issue has become of great concern to universities to the point where some institutions have established policies forbidding all romantic and sexual linkages between faculty and students, no matter whether the professor personally supervised or taught the student (Whicker & Kronenfield, 1994). If John's university does not have such a policy then John has the code of ethics that he can use for guidance. According to the code of ethics John dating any of his students, whether they are undergraduates or graduate students, would constitute a dual relationship. Specifically, Canon 2, Rule 2.3, states that rehabilitation counselors will be continually cognizant of their own needs and values as well as of their potential influence over clients, students, and subordinates...Rehabilitation counselors will make every effort to avoid dual relationships that could impair their professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation. John is risking having his judgment impaired by dating his students.

What about socializing? Being a new faculty member in a new town is often difficult and lonely. New faculty often find themselves closer in age to their students than to the other faculty in their program. Students are often drawn to young faculty and identify more easily with them. Students may ask faculty to go out for a night on the town or to join in on their group activities. Faculty should avoid "partying" with students as this puts the faculty member at risk for developing dual relationships with students.

The occasional program sponsored event that includes all faculty and students is a good way to develop rapport between faculty and students. These types of events help to create friendships between students, and a friendly environment for faculty and students versus friendships between faculty and students. Friendships between faculty and students can lead to impartiality or just the appearance of impartiality.

Even the appearance of partiality is likely to impair the learning process by damaging an instructor's credibility, causing students to wonder whether or not standards are being applied fairly (Cahn, 1994). This is especially important in the case of masters and doctoral students where so much of the evaluation conducted by educators is subjective. Essay exams, comprehensive exams, counseling skill evaluations and practicum/internship evaluations all have a largely subjective component to them.

Educators need to constantly be cognizant of this subjectivity and not let their personal feelings towards students influence their professional evaluations of them.

A relationship that is fraught with the possibilities of a dual relationship, is the relationship between mentor and mentee, often the relationship that develops between a doctoral student and his or her advisor. A great deal of emphasis has recently been placed on the importance and value of mentorship of students by faculty. Where is the line drawn between mentorship and dual relationship? Especially in doctoral programs a close relationship often develops between an advisor and a doctoral student. This relationship builds from years of working together very closely. The doctoral committee chair is often a lifeline to the struggling doctoral student. Many new graduates from doctoral programs have stated that they could not have completed their doctoral work without their advisor. The advisor serves as an important source of support, encouragement and a role model proving that there is "a light at the end of the tunnel". Some of these close relationships have become romantic in nature over time. So what is the problem?

Similar to a counselor/client relationship the advisor/advisee relationship is one that is uneven in power. Especially in the case of a doctoral student, a handful of individuals hold power over the student's life. The committee chair and other members determine the student's fate in terms of completion of the dissertation and graduation. The chair and committee members write letters of recommendation for internships and employment. The author has seen attempts made by faculty members to ruin the student's professional life after the student ended a relationship with the faculty member. What started out as a romance ended up nearly ruining both the student and the professor's careers and reputations. Does it matter if the student makes the first move?

Cheryl, a fourth year doctoral student, is completing her proposal for her dissertation. She and her advisor, Dr. Stevens, have been working hard to get her revisions done in time to submit to her committee. It's getting late and Cheryl invites Dr. Stevens out to dinner. Dr. Stevens recently went through a painful divorce after 15 years of marriage and is feeling very lonely. During dinner Cheryl tells Dr. Stevens that she has been attracted to him since she started her doctoral program and that now that his divorce is final, she hopes that their relationship can be more than just colleagues. Dr. Stevens finds Cheryl very attractive and enjoys her company. They share a great deal of interests and are approximately the same age. What should Dr. Stevens do?

It does not matter that Cheryl is the one that made the first move. The imbalance in power still exists in the relationship and it would clearly be unethical for Dr. Stevens to pursue a personal relationship with Cheryl. "If a student seeks to initiate an affair with a professor, the only proper response is an unequivocal refusal (Cahn, 1994, p. 37)."

Cahn (1994) sums up the best way for faculty to approach relationships with students, "a faculty member ought to guide students through a field of study, not seek to be their psychiatrist, friend or lover (p. 38)."

Conclusion

This article has attempted to make educators, their colleagues and students more aware of the dual relationship problems inherent in an academic setting. This article has not touched on sexual harassment and other illegal activities in which faculty engage. This type of activity is illegal and therefore also clearly unethical. Instead it has focused more on situations that are not as obvious on the surface. The ethical educator is always cognizant of his or her own behavior and steers clear of situations with students that could put them at risk for dual relationships.

Alternative Method for Comprehensive Exams

Students completing rehabilitation counselor education programs often find themselves in the position of having to take their university comprehensive exam and the CRC certification exam within a matter of a few weeks.

To relieve some of these pressures, CRCC offers the release of students' results on the CRC examination to their university for use by the program in lieu of requiring an additional comprehensive examination as a requirement for graduation. Students would need to provide consent, meet CRCC's eligibility requirements and pay associated fees.

Preliminary research indicates strong support for this process from educators. Some have remarked that this would greatly reduce the stress they encounter when trying to grade comprehensive examinations right before graduation. They have also stated that they would be assured that their students took a valid, reliable exam.

For more information, contact Kathy Kielar at (847) 394-2104, extension 119.

Offering of MAC Adjunct Designation Discontinued

Application and examination processes for the Master Addictions Counselor (MAC) adjunct designation have been discontinued effective immediately. CRCC based its decision on the lack of availability of an examination component in the future coupled with the lack of support of the adjunct designation from the field of rehabilitation counseling.

The certification renewal process, however, will still be available to those who wish to maintain their adjunct designation through the attainment of continuing education.

Administrative Update

October 1999 Examination:

Eligible candidates who took the examination	588
Candidates who achieved a passing score	451

April 2000 Examination:

Eligible candidates who took the examination	628
Candidates who achieved a passing score	491