



# Western Region Integrated Care (WRIC)

*A La Crosse, Monroe, and Jackson county collaboration to ensure a core set of mental health and substance abuse services is available across partner counties.*

## WRIC CCS Ethical Standards

The Western Region Integrated Care (WRIC) Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) Consortium was developed between three counties, Jackson, Monroe and La Crosse in order to provide mental health and substance abuse services between counties removing the systematic barriers that prevent efficient service delivery. WRIC CCS promotes the independence and worth of its participants through psychosocial rehabilitation services that assist a participant with their mental health and/or substance abuse conditions to achieve their highest possible level of independent functioning, stability, and independence and to facilitate recovery. Performing providers within the WRIC CCS Consortium are professionals who come from a wide range of life experiences, education levels, professions, expertise, cultures, ethnicities, social economics, and communities. Furthermore, the performing providers credentialed with WRIC CCS are considered human service professionals who must demonstrate moral and ethical behaviors that maintain the dignity and respect of their clients, colleagues, agencies, and communities.

As a result of the dedication and passion of the WRIC CCS Coordination Committee Members, these WRIC CCS Ethical Standards have been adapted from various sources to best fit the performing providers within WRIC. The WRIC CCS Ethical Standards were developed to help human service professions within the consortium to make ethical and professional decisions while recognizing that conflicts may exist between these standards and laws, workplace policies, cultural practices, credentialing boards, and personal beliefs. Ethical-decision making should never be compromised by a lack of resource or knowledge and this document serves professionals by assuring careful choices in service delivery. The WRIC CCS Ethical Standards are not a legal document, they are carefully considered standards of practice that all human services professionals within WRIC CCS Consortium should attain to protect the profession, the client and each other.

WRIC CCS Coordination Committee Members Involved in the Review and Design of these Standards:

- Alicia Braun, Monroe County Community Based Services Manager
- Desiree Lemagnes, Peer Support, CCS Participant
- Jessica Stinson, Jackson County Behavioral Health Manager
- Jodi Rastall, Wisconsin Family Ties, Parent Peer Specialist
- Lakisha Hudson, Independent Living Resources, Peer Specialist
- Louise Campbell, Family & Children's Center, Program Manager
- Nicole Schroeder, Innovative Services, Service Coordinator
- Ryan Ross, La Crosse County Supervisor, WRIC Clinical Operations
- Sarah Morschauser, La Crosse County Supervisor, WRIC Administrator
- Theresa Capaul, CCS Participant
- Vanessa Hudson, Innovative Services, CCS Administrator

## Sources:

This code of ethics is meant to be inclusive of human service professionals regardless of training and credentials. In the development of this code, elements of existing professional ethics codes were evaluated and incorporated into this standard by the WRIC Coordination Committee:

- [American Counseling Association, Code of Ethics, 2014](#)
- [National Association for Addiction Professionals, Code of Ethics, 2019](#)
- [National Association of Social Workers, Code of Ethics, 2021](#)
- [National Organization for Human Services, Ethical Standards for Human Services Professionals, 2024](#)
- [Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist, Code of Ethics, 2023](#)

## Outline of the WRIC Ethical Standards:

### Standards for Clients

- WRIC CCS human services professionals hold the burden of responsibility to ensure that the actions and choices they make do not harm clients, intentionally or unintentionally.

### Standards for Colleagues

- WRIC CCS human service professionals have a responsibility to treat other professionals with dignity and respect while working in cooperation to serve the well-being of clients.

### Standards for the Profession

- WRIC CCS human service professionals have a responsibility to represent the human services profession as ethical, responsible, and promotion of high standards of practice.

### Standards for Self

- WRIC CCS human service professionals have a responsibility to bring their best self into the professional relationship by having self-awareness and pursuing personal growth and development.

## Training Expectations:

For providers who are regulated by a Department Safety Professional Services (DSPS) licensing board, a professional ethics and boundaries training must be completed within the past two years as part of CCS orientation and completed as part of continuing education in accordance with the appropriate licensing board. In general, this is 4 hours of ethics and boundaries training every two years.

For providers who are not regulated by a DSPS licensing board, at least 2 hours of professional ethics and boundaries training must be completed as part of CCS orientation within 90 days of starting in a CCS position, and at least 2 hours of training each year as part of continuing education.

## WRIC CCS Ethical Standards for Human Service Professionals to Clients

### **1. Self-Determination:**

- a. Human service professionals respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals.
- b. Human service professionals recognize and build on client and community strengths.
- c. Human service professional ensure that their values or biases are not imposed on upon their clients.

### **2. Informed Consent:**

- a. Human service professionals obtain informed consent to provide services to clients at the beginning of the helping relationship.
- b. Clients should be informed that they may withdraw consent at any time except where denied by court order and should be able to ask questions before agreeing to the services.
- c. Clients who are unable to give consent should have those who are legally able to give consent for them review an informed consent statement and provide appropriate consent.
- d. Human service professionals obtain informed consent before making audio or video recordings of clients or permitting observation of service provision by third parties.

### **3. Privacy & Confidentiality:**

- a. Human service professionals protect the client's right to privacy and confidentiality except when such confidentiality would cause serious harm to the client or others, when agency guidelines state otherwise, or under other stated conditions (e.g., local, state, or federal laws). Human service professionals abide by Mandated Reporter laws. Human service professionals inform clients of the limits of confidentiality prior to the onset of the helping relationship.
- b. Human services professionals should protect the integrity, safety, and security of clients' written and electronic records and other sensitive information. Human services professionals should take reasonable steps to ensure that clients' records are stored in a secure location and that clients' records are not available to others who are not authorized to have access.
- c. Human services professionals should take reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality of electronic communications, including information provided to clients or third parties. Human services professionals should use applicable safeguards (such as encryption, firewalls, and passwords) when using electronic communications such as e-mail, online posts, online chat sessions, mobile communication, social media and text messages.

### **4. Ensuring Safety**

- a. When a human service professional suspects a client's behavior may endanger themselves or others, they must take appropriate and professional actions to ensure safety, which may include consulting, seeking supervision, or, in accordance with state and federal laws, breaching confidentiality Human services professionals are to ensure the safety of clients.
- b. Human service professionals are considered Mandated Reporters by law and must be familiar with the mandated reporting requirements in the state they are providing services

to, and the appropriate protective services and emergency services agencies to contact to make a suspected report.

- c. WRIC CCS human service professionals should notify the WRIC service facilitator of client safety risks and/or health risk concerns whether they meet criteria for mandated reporting or not for ongoing assessment of client safety.

#### **5. Use of Technology:**

- a. Human services professionals who use technology to provide services should assess the clients' suitability and capacity for electronic and remote services. Human services professionals should consider the clients' intellectual, emotional, and physical ability to use technology to receive services and ability to understand the potential benefits, risks, and limitations of such services. If clients do not wish to use services provided through technology, Human services professionals should help them identify alternate methods of services.
- b. Human service professionals should not use public websites or social media platforms to engage in treatment service delivery. Exceptions may arise on limited situations for purposes of protecting the client or others from serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm, or for other compelling professional reasons.
- c. Human service professionals ensure privacy and confidentiality are upheld when using technology (see Privacy & Confidentiality)
- d. Human service professionals consider any impacts of dual relationships or conflicts of interest that may occur via technology (see Conflicts of Interest)

#### **6. Physical Contact:**

- a. Human services professionals should not engage in physical contact with clients when there is a possibility of psychological harm to the client as a result of the contact (such as cradling or caressing clients). Human services professionals who engage in appropriate physical contact with clients are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern such physical contact.

#### **7. Sexual Relationships:**

- a. Human services professionals should under no circumstances engage in sexual activities, inappropriate sexual communications through the use of technology or in person, or sexual contact with current clients, whether such contact is consensual or forced. Sexual activity or sexual contact with clients' relatives or other individuals with whom clients maintain a personal relationship has the potential to be harmful to the client as well and may make it difficult for the social worker and client to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. Human services professionals—not their clients, their clients' relatives, or other individuals with whom the client maintains a personal relationship—assume the full burden for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.
- b. Human services professionals should not engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with former clients because of the potential for harm to the client. They should not provide clinical services to individuals with whom they have had a prior sexual relationship.

## **8. Conflicts of Interest:**

- a. Human services professionals should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment. Human services professionals should inform clients and their WRIC CCS wraparound team when a real or potential conflict of interest arises and take reasonable steps to resolve the issue in a manner that makes the clients' interests primary and protects clients' interests to the greatest extent possible. In some cases, protecting clients' interests may require termination of the professional relationship with proper referral of the client. Human services professionals should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.
- b. Dual or multiple relationships with clients or former clients is harmful to the relationship between a client and human services professional. Dual relationships can put the client in a position that make them feel inferior, manipulated, coerced, or exploited, intentionally or unintentionally. Human services professionals remain aware and take actions that prevent dual or multiple relationships from forming. In instances when dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable, Human services professionals should take prompt steps to protect clients and are responsible for communicating the relationship with the WRIC CCS wraparound team and setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.
- c. When Human services professionals provide services to two or more people who have a relationship with each other (for example, couples, family members), human services professionals should clarify with all parties which individuals will be considered clients and the nature of human services professionals' service obligations to the various individuals who are receiving services. Human services professionals who anticipate a conflict of interest among the individuals receiving services or who anticipate having to perform in potentially conflicting roles (for example, when a human services professional provides services to siblings who live with different caregivers) should clarify their role with the WRIC CCS team and take appropriate action to minimize any conflict of interest.
- d. Human services professionals should avoid communication with clients using technology (such as social networking sites, online chat, e-mail, text messages, telephone, and video) for personal or non-work-related purposes. They should avoid accepting request from or engaging in personal relationships with clients in person, on social networking sites or other electronic media to prevent boundary confusion, inappropriate dual relationships, or harm to clients.

## **9. Unlawful Conduct:**

- a. Human services professionals should never engage in activities with a client that are unlawful and criminal. They should never encourage or promote activities to a client that are unlawful and criminal.

## **10. Scope of Practice and Training**

- a. Human service professionals should provide services and represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, consultation received, supervised experience, or other relevant professional experience.

- b. Human service professionals should provide services or use intervention techniques or approaches that are new to them only after engaging in appropriate study, training, consultation, and supervision from people who are competent in those interventions or techniques.
- c. Human service professional should take reasonable steps to engage in continuing education and staff development to ensure they have current knowledge related to their services and ethical conduct to provide competent services to clients they serve.

## **WRIC CCS Ethical Standards for *Colleagues***

1. **Duplication of Services:** Human service professionals avoid duplicating another professional's helping relationship with a client. They consult with other professionals who are assisting the client in a different type of relationship when it is in the best interest of the client to do so. In addition, human services professionals seek ways to actively collaborate and coordinate with other professional on the WRIC CCS team when appropriate.
2. **Conflict with Colleagues:** When human service professionals have a conflict with a colleague, they first seek out the colleague in an attempt to manage the problem. If this effort fails, the professional then seeks the assistance of supervisors, consultants, or other professionals on the WRIC CCS team in efforts to address the conflict.
3. **Consultation:** All consultations between human service professionals are kept private, unless to do so would result in harm to clients or communities.
4. **Dual Relationships:** Human service professionals may encounter situations when working in the human services field where their colleague(s) are also their family members or friends outside of work. Human services professionals maintain these relationships by communicating the relationship and its impact on service delivery to the client with the WRIC CCS team and their direct supervisor. They set clear, appropriate boundaries, and protect the privacy of their clients and colleagues.
5. **Integrity:** Human service professionals engage in honest, respectful, collaborative wraparound care with all members involved on a client's team. They support other colleagues by sharing information in a timely manner and provide details that help to clarify communication. They do not hold information in order to promote their own position, status, beliefs, biases, business or interests.
6. **Unethical Conduct:** Human services professionals should take adequate measures to discourage, prevent, expose, and correct the unethical conduct of colleagues, including unethical conduct using technology. Human services professionals who believes that a colleague has acted unethically should take action through appropriate formal channels and inform their agency leadership, WRIC CCS Service Facilitator, Mental Health Professional and Supervisor/Manager.

## WRIC CCS Ethical Standards for the Profession

1. **Operating within Scope & Role:** Human service professionals know the limit and scope of their professional knowledge and offer services only within their knowledge, skill base, and scope of practice. They accurately represent their qualifications to the WRIC CCS wraparound team. This includes, but is not limited to, their abilities, training, education, credentials, academic endeavors, and areas of expertise. They avoid the appearance of misrepresentation or impropriety and take immediate steps to correct it if it occurs.
2. **Consultation & Supervision:** Human service professionals seek appropriate consultation and clinical supervision to assist in decision-making when there are legal, ethical, or other dilemmas.
3. **Inter-disciplinary Teaming:** Human service professionals promote cooperation among the WRIC CCS wraparound team to foster professional growth and to optimize the impact of inter-professional collaboration on clients at all levels.

## WRIC CCS Ethical Standards for Self

1. **Self-Awareness:** Human service professionals are aware of their own cultural backgrounds, beliefs, values, and biases. They recognize the potential impact of their backgrounds on their relationships with others and work diligently to provide culturally competent services to all of their clients.
2. **Personal Limits/Fit for Duty:** Human service professionals strive to develop and maintain healthy personal growth to ensure that they are capable of giving optimal services to clients. When they find that they are physically, emotionally, psychologically, or otherwise not able to offer such services, they identify alternative services for clients.
3. **Self-Care:** Human services professionals practice self-care because they understand that when they are unable to regulate they cannot provide positive co-regulation with their clients.
4. **Learning & Development:** Human service professionals are dedicated to lifelong learning, consistently seeking to enhance their knowledge and skills to better serve their clients.



# Western Region Integrated Care (WRIC)

*A La Crosse, Monroe, and Jackson county collaboration to ensure a core set of mental health and substance abuse services is available across partner counties.*

## WRIC CCS Code of Ethics Acknowledgement

Staff Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to conduct services in an ethical manor in order to safeguard the well-being of clients, uphold the integrity of the profession, and foster trust and respect in all professional relationships.

I agree to seek professional consultation with an administrative or licensed clinical supervisor to address any ethical dilemmas.

I agree to engage in ongoing training to ensure adequate knowledge of ethical conduct and how to address ethical dilemmas.

I acknowledge that disciplinary action may be taken against me if I breach ethical behavior which may include discontinuation of provider status with the WRIC Consortium, and/or reports of conduct to any relevant governing authorities (e.g. Department of Safety and Professional Services, Professional Regulation boards, Wisconsin Caregiver Misconduct System, law enforcement, etc).

I agree to abide by (select at least one):

- American Counseling Association, Code of Ethics
- National Association for Addiction Professionals, Code of Ethics
- National Association of Social Workers, Code of Ethics
- National Organization for Human Services, Ethical Standards
- Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist, Code of Ethics
- WRIC-CCS Code of Ethics
- Other - *Name of Professional Licensing/Regulation Entity:* \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_