

Institute of Family Therapy Malta

Code of Ethical Practice



Section 1: Ethical principles

Professionals at IFT Malta are committed to upholding the following core ethical principles in all aspects of their work.

1.1 Beneficence and non-maleficence

- Therapists must act in the best interest of their clients, promoting their well-being and growth.
- They must take proactive steps to avoid harm to clients, colleagues, and the profession.
- Therapists should continually monitor their effectiveness and terminate relationships when it is clear the client is no longer benefiting.

1.2 Fidelity and responsibility

- Therapists must act in a trustworthy and responsible manner, upholding all professional commitments and obligations.
- They must be aware of their professional and ethical responsibilities to both clients and the wider community.
- This includes being honest and truthful in all professional communications and interactions.

1.3 Integrity

- Therapists must operate with honesty, transparency, and accuracy in all professional activities.
- They should be aware of their own fallibility and personal issues, and take constructive action, such as seeking supervision, to prevent them from compromising their professional judgment.
- They must not knowingly make any false, misleading, or fraudulent statements about their qualifications, services, or research.

1.4 Justice

- Therapists must be fair and impartial in their work, respecting the dignity and rights of all individuals.
- They must actively strive for equity and non-discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socioeconomic status.
- They should challenge systemic barriers and oppressive practices that may negatively impact clients or trainees.

1.5 Respect for clients' rights and dignity

- Therapists must respect the autonomy, freedom, and dignity of clients, safeguarding their confidentiality, privacy, and well-being.
- In family therapy, this requires balancing the rights of the family unit with the individual rights of each member.

Section 2: Clinical practice

2.1 Confidentiality in systemic work

- Therapists must clarify the unique nature and limits of confidentiality in family therapy with all family members at the outset of treatment.
- Written authorization from each individual is required before releasing any confidential information outside of the therapeutic setting, except when mandated by law or for safety reasons.
- Exceptions to confidentiality, including suspected child abuse, elder abuse, abuse of vulnerable people or serious risk of harm to self or others, must be discussed with clients. Consultation with a supervisor is required in such cases unless time is of the essence.
- Therapists must use secure methods for storing and transmitting client information, adhering to local laws like Malta's Data Protection Act.

2.2 Informed consent in systemic work

- Therapists must provide clients with clear and understandable language regarding the therapeutic process, potential benefits and risks, fees, and the limits of confidentiality.

- In family therapy, consent must be sought from all members, with consideration for vulnerable individuals or minors, involving legal guardians where necessary.

2.3 Professional competence and boundaries

- Therapists must only practice within their areas of professional competence, as defined by their education, training, and experience.
- They must maintain appropriate personal and professional boundaries and refrain from engaging in dual or multiple relationships that could impair their judgment or exploit clients.
- In a small society like Malta, therapists must be especially aware of maintaining clear boundaries between their personal and public lives.

2.4 Record-keeping

- Therapists must keep accurate and complete records of their work, ensuring secure storage and disposal in line with legal requirements.
- Records should be written with sensitivity and respect for clients' well-being and privacy.

Section 3: Supervision

3.1 Role of supervision

- Supervision is a mandatory, regular, and ongoing part of professional practice for all IFT Malta therapists.
- Its primary purpose is to ensure competent and ethical practice, support the supervisee's development, and ultimately protect the welfare of clients.
- Supervisors must model ethical practice and help supervisees understand and apply the principles of this code.

3.2 Competence in supervision

- Supervisors must be competent both in family therapy and in the practice of clinical supervision.
- They are responsible for staying current with professional and ethical standards and relevant laws.

- Supervisors must assess and monitor the competence of their supervisees, intervening if they lack the necessary skills for safe practice.

3.3 Boundaries in supervision

- Supervisors must maintain clear professional boundaries with supervisees and avoid dual relationships that could impair judgment or lead to exploitation.
- Sexual contact with supervisees is strictly prohibited.
- Confidentiality within supervision should be clearly defined, acknowledging that it is limited by institutional, ethical, and legal requirements.

3.4 The supervision contract

- A written contract must be established at the outset of supervision, outlining the responsibilities of both parties.
- This contract should cover areas such as fees, scheduling, evaluation procedures, the limits of confidentiality, and arrangements for emergencies.

3.5 The supervisory process

- Supervisors must provide ongoing and constructive feedback to supervisees, encouraging self-reflection and professional development.
- They should facilitate self-awareness, particularly concerning biases and prejudices, to ensure practice is anti-oppressive.
- In cases of personal issues affecting a supervisee's work, the supervisor should help them seek appropriate assistance, such as personal therapy.

Section 4: Resolution of ethical issues

- Therapists and supervisors are encouraged to resolve ethical disputes directly with colleagues where possible, through consultation or mediation.
- If a therapist becomes aware of an ethical conflict that cannot be resolved, they are required to seek consultation with their supervisor or another professional.
- IFT Malta is committed to providing a mechanism for addressing ethical complaints in a fair and transparent manner, protecting both clients and practitioners involved.