



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION IN ORANGE COUNTY, INC.

MHA CODE OF ETHICS

Policy

(The Code of Ethics was adopted from the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals)

MHA employees who provide services to program participants are called upon to make independent judgments on a daily basis that involve both practical and ethical reasoning.

A primary purpose of providing services is to assist program participants to lead self-directed lives and to participate fully in their communities. The emphasis on empowerment and participation is critical because the prejudices and oppression of society may form powerful barriers that prevent many individuals who are survivors of sexual assault and/or individuals with disabilities from reaching their full potential.

Therefore, it must be the mission of MHA employees as professionals to follow the individual path suggested by the unique gifts, preferences, and needs of each program participant. It is important to walk in partnership with the individuals we serve, and those who love him or her for the purpose of working towards a life of opportunity, well-being, freedom, and inclusive community participation.

It is MHA's belief that the Code of Ethics be incorporated into daily practice. The attitudes and values that are associated with being an effective human service professional are the cornerstones of this code. This code is not the handbook of the profession, but rather a roadmap to assist MHA in staying the course of securing freedom, justice, and equality for those we have the privilege to serve.

Person-Centered Supports

- Commit to person-centered supports as best practice.
- Provide advocacy when the needs of the system override those of the individual(s) you serve, or when individual preferences, needs or gifts are neglected for other

reasons.

- Honor the personality, preferences, culture and gifts of people who cannot speak by seeking other ways of understanding them.
- Focus first on the person and understand that your role in direct supports will require flexibility, creativity and commitment.

Promoting Physical and Emotional Well-Being

- Encourage growth and recognize the autonomy of the individuals you serve while being attentive and energetic in reducing their risk of harm.
- Develop a relationship with the individuals you serve that is respectful, based on mutual trust and that maintains professional boundaries.
- Assist the individuals you serve to understand their options and the possible consequences of these options as they relate to their physical health and emotional wellbeing.
- Promote and protect the health, safety, and emotional well-being of an individual by assisting the person in preventing illness and avoiding unsafe activity.
- Work with the person and their support network to identify areas of risk and to create safeguards specific to these concerns.
- Know and respect the values of the individuals you serve and facilitate their expression of choices related to those values.
- Challenge others, including support team members (e.g. doctors, nurses, faith-based providers, therapists, coworkers, family members) to recognize and support the rights of individuals to make informed decisions even when these decisions involve personal risk.
- Be vigilant in identifying, discussing with others, and reporting any situation in which the individuals you support are at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation or harm.

Integrity and Responsibility

- Support the mission and vitality of your profession to assist people in leading self-directed lives and to foster a spirit of partnership with the individuals you serve, other professionals, and the community.
- Be conscious of your own values and how they influence your professional decisions.
- Maintain competency in your profession through learning and ongoing communication with others.
- Assume responsibility and accountability for your decisions and actions.
- Actively seek advice and guidance on ethical issues from others as needed when making decisions.
- Recognize the importance of modeling valued behaviors to co-workers, other providers, individuals receiving support, and the community at-large.
- Practice responsible work habits.

Confidentiality

- Safeguard and respect the confidentiality and privacy of the individuals you serve.
- Seek information directly from those you serve regarding their wishes in how, when and with whom privileged information should be shared.
- Seek out a qualified individual who can help to clarify situations where the correct course of action is not clear.
- Recognize that confidentiality agreements with individuals are subject to federal, state and agency regulations.
- Recognize that confidentiality agreements with individuals should be broken if there is imminent harm to them or others.

Justice, Fairness and Equity

- Promote and practice justice, fairness, and equity for the individuals you serve and the community as a whole.
- Affirm the human rights, civil rights and responsibilities of the individuals you serve.
- Help the individuals you serve use the opportunities and the resources of the community available to everyone.
- Help the individuals you serve understand and express their rights and responsibilities.
- Understand the guardianship or other legal representation of individuals you serve, and work in partnership with legal representatives to assure that the individual's preferences and interests are honored.

Respect

- Respect the human dignity and uniqueness of the individuals you serve.
- Recognize each person you serve as valuable and help others understand their value.
- Seek to understand the individuals you serve today in the context of their personal history, their social and family networks, and their dreams for the future.
- Honor the choices and preferences of the individuals you serve.
- Protect the privacy of the individuals you serve.
- Uphold the human rights of the individuals you serve.
- Interact with the individuals you serve in a respectful manner.
- Recognize and respect the cultural context (e.g. religion, sexual orientation, language, age, ethnicity, race, gender identity, socio-economic class) of the person supported and their social network.
- Provide opportunities and supports that help the individuals you serve be viewed with respect and as integral members of their communities.

Relationships

- Assist the individuals you serve to develop and maintain relationships.
- Advocate for the individuals you serve when they do not have access to opportunities and education to facilitate building and maintaining relationships.
- Assure that the individuals you serve have the opportunity to make informed

- choices in safely expressing their sexuality.
- Recognize the importance of relationships and proactively facilitate relationships between the individuals you serve as well as their family, friends and loved ones.
 - Separate your own personal beliefs and expectations regarding relationships from those desired by the individuals you serve. . If you are unable to separate your own beliefs/expectations in a given situation, you will actively remove yourself from the situation and seek assistance in providing optimal strength-based support to those you serve.
 - Refrain from expressing negative views, harsh judgments, and stereotyping of people close to the individuals you serve.

Self-Determination

- Assist the individuals you serve to direct the course of their own lives.
- Work in partnership with others to support individuals leading self-directed lives.
- Honor the individual's right to assume risk in an informed manner.
- Recognize that each individual has potential for lifelong learning and growth.

Advocacy

- Advocate for justice, inclusion, and full community participation.
- Support individuals to speak for themselves.
- Represent the best interests of individuals who cannot speak for themselves by finding alternative ways of understanding their needs, including, but not limited to gathering information from others who represent their best interests.
- Advocate for laws, policies, and supports that promote justice and inclusion for individuals with disabilities, survivors of sexual assault, and other groups who have been disempowered.
- Promote human, legal, and civil rights of all individuals and assist others to understand these rights.
- Recognize that those who victimize survivors of sexual assault, and/or individuals with disabilities either criminally or civilly must be held accountable for their actions.
- Find additional advocacy services when those that you provide are not sufficient.
- Consult with people you trust when unsure of the appropriate course of action in my advocacy efforts.

Your advocacy must operate on the fundamental principle that every individual has the right to self-expression, the right to grow, and the right to thrive in an environment free from oppression.