



Psychotherapy & Counselling
Federation of Australia

PACFA CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE.

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1. Role of the PACFA Code of Good Governance.

The purpose of this document is to guide PACFA as a federation of established Counselling and Psychotherapy Associations in the principles and the process of Good Governance. This document is also for the information and protection of individuals who are using the organizational services of PACFA and Member Associations (MAs).

It is expected that the MAs that are constituent members of PACFA, and to which psychotherapists and counsellors belong, have established their own Codes of Ethics which set standards of good practice in counselling and psychotherapy for their members.

It is expected that this Code of Good Governance will provide a both a basis for reflection on the quality current organizational functioning and clear goals for future development.

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this statement:

- 2.1. The term Counsellor is used to include Psychotherapist.
- 2.2. The term *Committee of Management* is used to include Board.
- 2.3. The term *Member Association (MA)* refers to the counselling and psychotherapy association which have passed the audit required to become constituent members of PACFA.

3. Values of PACFA and of constituent MAs.

PACFA and MAs:

- 3.1. respect the essential humanity, worth and dignity of all peoples, and promote this value in their association;
- 3.2. honour the trust placed in them by their members and protect the integrity of that relationship;
- 3.3. recognise and respect diversity among people and protect their members from discrimination, oppression and injustice in their organizational processes, procedures and structures;
- 3.4. respect the privacy of their members and preserve the confidentiality of information collected in the course of their work;

- 3.5. protect the rights of their members including the right to informed consent in their organizational processes, procedures and structures;
- 3.6. take steps to maintain and develop their competence in Good Governance;
- 3.7. abide by the laws of the society in which they are constituted.

4. Principles of Good Governance.

4.1. The Code of Good Governance is divided into two sections:

- Principles and
- Good Practice Indicators.

4.1.1 The Principles of Good Governance are based on ethical principles common to all PACFA MAs and represent the higher values that counselling and psychotherapy as a field aspires to uphold;

4.1.2 The Principles of Good Governance are a guide for Committees of Management for good practice in organizational structures and behaviour;

4.1.3 It is recommended that Committees of Management should annually reflect on their application of Principles of Good Governance and Good Practice Indicators, as a means of evaluation, hence ensuring the quality of their organizational processes.

4.2. **The framework for Good Governance** consists of five principles which apply to effective Committees of Management.

4.2.1 An effective Committee of Management is a competent and viable group based in its constituent community of counselling and psychotherapy professionals;

4.2.2 An effective Committee of Management has a clear understanding of the individual roles and the collective role and tasks as a group. These roles and tasks are determined by its constitution and developed through the process of reflection and evaluation as a group.

4.2.3 An effective Committee of Management works on behalf of its members within external requirements, implementing the decision and policies made at general meetings, in a spirit congruent with the collective history and identity of the association.

- 4.2.4 An effective Committee of Management works to the best interests of the organization and actively protects the integrity of their relationship with their members and the wider community.
- 4.2.5 An effective Committee of Management conducts its business in a transparent, accountable, efficient and effective manner.

5. The Indicators of Good Governance represent the enactment of the principles on a practical basis, and provide a benchmark for evaluation.

- 5.1. The validity of an effective Committee of Management is maintained in the following way:
 - 5.1.1 The criteria for membership of the committee, is based on competency for the role, performance in the role, accurate record keeping, reporting and accountability to the membership. The skills required are identified and appropriate individuals are recruited. The diversity of interests in the association are identified and represented on the committee, and open and fair debate is encouraged;
- 5.2. The viability of an effective Committee of Management is maintained in the following way:
 - 5.2.1 Committee members are active and interested and regularly meet their commitments; positions on the committee are not left vacant; a majority of meetings attract a quorum and appropriate succession planning is conducted and documented.
- 5.3. The clarity of roles, responsibilities, duties and delegation of authority are maintained in the following way:
 - 5.3.1 The Committee of Management has discussed, agreed and documented a set of operational and procedural values that are consistent with the values of the association. These values guide the work of the committee and office staff, are regularly evaluated and the procedures that result from these values are refined to flow efficiently and smoothly.
 - 5.3.2 The Committee of Management can all describe their roles, duties and authority, and collectively the committee regards accurate documentation, review of risk, and particularly the matter of delegation of authority, as important to the quality of its work.
- 5.4. To work on behalf of and in the best interests of its members a Committee of Management needs to be conducted in the following way;

- 5.4.1 Beginning with understanding the collective history of the MA and previous Committee of Management's visions for the future, these need to be integrated into the development of the current vision. This involves facilitating effective consultation and discussion within the constituent community. A review and analysis of the current and future environment needs to be conducted and reported to the membership for discussion. Areas of risk need to be identified and validated and strategies to prevent genuine risk need to be developed and reviewed. Procedures and responsibility for the management of risk need to be assigned and periodically reviewed.
- 5.4.2 Working on behalf of the membership requires sound financial planning and priority setting; compliance with the plan and priorities being monitored. Responsibilities for the record keeping and communication processes need to be documented and reviewed, and as a matter of standard procedure fed back to the members.
- 5.4.3 The management of staff needs to be congruent with the values of the association, and compliance with industrial requirements and good human resources practices need to be implemented and regularly reviewed.
- 5.4.4 Fostering productive and good working relationships within the Committee of Management, between the Committee of Management and other groups within and external to the associations, volunteers and paid staff is essential to acting in the best interest of the association.
- 5.4.5 Positive representation to and interaction with other bodies in the community is essential to acting in the best interest of the membership. The association being respected as a good organizational citizen in the wider community is to be fostered at all levels by the Committee of Management.
- 5.4.6 Working on behalf of the membership requires that members of the management committee will not accept or offer payments for privileges, or engage in any financial transactions, apart from those detailed in their articles of association. Any conflicts of interest will be declared and the individual will stand down from participating and voting on decisions where there is a conflict of interest.
- 5.4.7 Members of Committees of Management will treat with confidence any personal information about members, whether obtained directly or by inference. This applies to all verbal, written, recorded or computer stored material pertaining to the therapeutic and organizational context.

All personal or health records, whether in written or any other form, need to be protected with the strictest of confidence.

- 5.5. In order to conduct the business of the association in a transparent, accountable, efficient and effective manner the Committee of Management needs to:
 - 5.5.1 Foster a process of consultation including discussion at general meetings, establish a set of agreed aims and goals for the current term of the committee of management. Transparent reporting processes need to be developed and documented. The constituent community needs to know that they have clear and multiple pathways to raise concerns and to trigger discussion.
 - 5.5.2 Balance different interests and views openly in public forums, without pressure and managed in a just and fair debate. Differences in views are to be expected and openness in the processes needs to focus on giving constituents a fair hearing. On highly contentious matters, general meetings are the only means by which the courses of action are decided and then enacted by the Committee of Management.
 - 5.5.3 Regularly reflect on the quality of the services offered by the management committee and maintain it through processes which request and accept feedback. Service delivery procedures need to include regular reviews and planning for improvement.
 - 5.5.4 Establish specialist task-focused sub-committees in order to maintain the quality and timeliness of services. These may include a combination of standing and single task sub-committees which have clear procedures for reporting and action, as well as clear boundaries of their authority.
 - 5.5.5 Regularly review the participation of individuals and the cohesion and morale of the committee. This needs to be implemented in order to maintain the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the committee of management. All members of the committee need to feel free to express their views, ask questions with the expectation that comments will be taken with good spirit as a contribution to the enacting of the best possible decision making process.
 - 5.5.6 Take responsibility for acknowledging and making restitution in the event of harm resulting from their decision making processes. The management committee will purchase Association and Committee of Management Indemnity Insurance as part of the process of protecting members from harm by allowing for restitution.

- 5.5.7 Undertake and carry out Committee of Management activities with due care and diligence, responsibility and professional intent. Due diligence and professional intent needs to be enacted in the procedures and in all interaction.
- 5.5.8 Work within the law and take all reasonable steps to be aware of current legislation and regulations effecting their association and professional work practises. Committee of Management activities need to be proactive in identifying their legal responsibilities to their members and the community.
- 5.5.9 Be committed to protecting the public against incompetent and dishonourable practices in counselling and psychotherapy, including misrepresentation, and also be prepared to challenge these practices. Committee of Management activities and procedures need to be proactive and develop ways to maintain the integrity, safety and credibility of the counselling and psychotherapy field.