**Student Dispositional Review**

**Louisiana State University Counselor Education Program**

(Adopted Spring 2023)

The counselor education program faculty assesses each student’s professional dispositions throughout the program. At the end of each academic year, the faculty will meet, discuss, and score each student on the PDCA-R rubric found on pages 39-40 of the student handbook. Once the scoring is completed by the faculty, a subgroup of faculty will meet with each student to discuss the results. Throughout the programs, students will meet with faculty three times for dispositional review.

The Counselor Education program’s dispositions are available in the student handbook (pp. 36-38) and are also posted on the program’s website. In addition, faculty will include the program dispositions on their course moodle pages. Students are expected to strive to exemplify the dispositions in their interactions with peers, faculty, and clients.

**Dispositional Remediation:**

Students scoring less than a three in any area of the PDCA-R will need to have a remediation plan. It is important that students improve any area that does not meet expectations. Faculty will work with students to improve areas of concern.

**Professional Counselor Dispositions**

Louisiana State University Counselor Education Program

(Adopted Spring 2023)

Counselor professional dispositions include the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors necessary for success as a professional counselor. These dispositions reflect the necessary characteristics for counselors to possess and exhibit in their work and interactions with clients, colleagues, supervisors, and the broader community. They are essential to maintaining ethical standards and promoting excellence in the field (ACA, 2014; Freeman et al., 2019; Garner et al., 2016). The ten professional counselor dispositions the LSU counselor education program instills in our students and expects our students to adhere to include: conscientiousness, coping and self-care, openness, cooperativeness, cultural sensitivity, moral reasoning, interpersonal skills, self-awareness, emotional stability, and ethical behavior. The following describes each of these dispositions and their importance in the counseling relationship.

**Conscientiousness:** Conscientiousness refers to a person's tendency to be organized, responsible, reliable, and diligent in carrying out tasks. It involves being self-disciplined, motivated to achieve goals, and demonstrating careful attention to detail in one's work.

***Why it matters:*** Conscientious counselors are reliable and committed to providing quality care to their clients. They are focused on meeting their clients' needs and willing to invest the time and effort necessary to help them achieve their goals. Conscientious counselors take pride in their work and are willing to go above and beyond to ensure their clients receive the best possible care.

**Coping and Self-Care:** Coping refers to the various strategies and techniques individuals use to deal with and manage stress, difficult emotions, and challenging situations. Self-care refers to the deliberate and intentional actions that individuals take to care for their physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Self-care is essential for maintaining one's overall health and well-being and can also help individuals to better manage stress and cope with challenging situations.

***Why it matters:*** Counselors, like anyone else, are susceptible to stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue, which can negatively impact their ability to provide quality care to their clients. Therefore, it is essential for counselors to engage in effective coping strategies and self-care practices to maintain their own mental and emotional well-being.

**Openness:** Openness is a general willingness to experience new things, explore new ideas, and entertain novel perspectives. People who are open tend to be curious and imaginative. They enjoy intellectual stimulation and are often receptive to alternative ways of thinking and unconventional approaches to problem-solving.

***Why it matters:*** Counselor openness refers to a counselor's ability and willingness to be open-minded, non-judgmental, and accepting of clients and their experiences. Counselor openness is a crucial component of effective counseling as it creates a safe and supportive environment for clients to explore their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

**Cooperativeness** Refers to the degree to which a person is willing to work with others to achieve common goals and be helpful, supportive, and accommodating in social interactions. It involves being considerate of other people's needs, perspectives, and feelings and being able to compromise and negotiate to reach mutually beneficial outcomes.

***Why it matters:*** A cooperative counselor is empathetic, flexible, and responsive to the needs of their clients. They work collaboratively with clients and other professionals to create a safe and supportive environment where clients feel comfortable sharing their concerns and working towards their goals.

**Cultural Sensitivity*:*** Cultural sensitivity refers to an individual's awareness and understanding of the customs, beliefs, values, and behaviors of people from different cultures. It involves recognizing and respecting the differences in language, traditions, and social norms of different cultural groups. This includes awareness of potential cultural biases or stereotypes and avoiding behaviors that may offend or harm individuals from different cultural groups.

***Why it matters:*** Culturally sensitive counselors understand, respect, and appreciate the cultural differences and diversity of their clients. Culturally sensitive counselors respect their clients’ unique cultural backgrounds, beliefs, values, and customs and how these factors may influence their worldviews, behaviors, and mental health.

**Moral Reasoning:** Moral reasoning refers to the cognitive process of decision-making about what is right and wrong, good and bad, or just and unjust, based on moral principles or values. It involves the application of moral reasoning to specific situations, often regarding moral dilemmas, to determine the most ethical course of action. Moral reasoning is a critical component of ethical decision-making.

***Why it matters:*** Counselors must make ethical decisions and judgments in their practice. The foundation of counselor moral reasoning is based on our professional codes of ethics, developed by the American Counseling Association (2014), which offers guidance on issues such as confidentiality, informed consent, and boundaries.

**Interpersonal Skills:** An interpersonal skills disposition refers to a person's natural tendency or inclination to communicate, interact, and build positive relationships effectively. It encompasses a range of social and emotional competencies, such as active listening, empathy, conflict resolution, adaptability, and teamwork. Developing an interpersonal skills disposition can be an ongoing process that involves self-awareness, practice, and feedback.

***Why it matters:*** Counselors’ interpersonal skills impact their ability to effectively interact with clients and establish a therapeutic relationship.

**Self-awareness:** Self-awareness disposition refers to an individual's ability to reflect introspectively on their own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. It involves an ongoing process of self-examination, where individuals actively seek to understand their strengths, weaknesses, values, beliefs, and motivations. Individuals with a high self-awareness disposition are typically more introspective, reflective, and mindful of their own experiences. They can accurately recognize their emotions, understand their triggers, and manage their responses accordingly.

***Why it matters:*** When counselors are self-aware, they are better equipped to recognize and manage their emotional reactions to clients, identify and address their biases, and establish more meaningful and authentic connections with clients. This, in turn, can lead to better client outcomes and a more fulfilling and rewarding experience for the counselor.

**Emotional Stability:** Emotional stability is an individual's ability to manage and regulate their emotions in response to external and internal stressors. It involves maintaining a sense of emotional balance and composure despite life's challenges, setbacks, and difficulties. People with high emotional stability generally bounce back quickly from negative experiences, adapt to change, and maintain a positive outlook on life.

***Why it matters:*** Emotional stability is crucial for counselors to manage their emotions and maintain a sense of balance and calmness when working with clients in stressful or challenging situations. Emotional stability allows counselors to be present and attentive to their clients' needs without being distracted by their own emotional reactions.

**Ethical Behavior:** Ethical behavior, as a professional disposition, refers to the practice of adhering to moral principles and standards in one's professional conduct. Ethical behavior involves doing what is right and just in one's professional interactions, even when it may not be the easiest or most convenient option. It involves demonstrating honesty, integrity, and responsibility.

***Why it matters***: ethical behavior is essential for counselors because it helps maintain trust in the therapeutic relationship, protects clients from harm, upholds professional standards, promotes accountability, and ensures competence.

**References**

American Counseling Association. (2014). *ACA code of ethics*. <https://www.counseling.org/resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf>

Freeman, B. J., Garner, C. M., Scherer, R., & Trachok, K. (2019). Discovering expert perspectives on dispositions and remediation: A qualitative study. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 58*(3), 209–224. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ceas.12151>

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