

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION OF PLAY THERAPY MANATŌPŪ INCORPORATED

Standards of Ethical Conduct

Acknowledgements

These Standards of Ethical Conduct, also known as our Code of Ethics have been developed by Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Play Therapists (ANZAPT). It is in its entirety, the way we envisage play therapy in Aotearoa New Zealand now and into the future.

A number of National and International Codes were examined in relation to how our Code of Ethics might be organised and presented. We have drawn on PBANZ frameworks for the drafting of the Code, and incorporated elements from the BAPT, NZAC and APANZ Codes of Ethics. Additionally we have considered the core values underpinning play therapy, and the ethical principles that derive from these.

Introduction

The Play Therapist Standards of Ethical Conduct broadly defines the conduct that clients and the general public can expect from Members and Provisional Members of the Association. It also articulates the core principles and values of the Association and, in this way, provides a guide for responsible practice. Play Therapists are expected to act with honesty and integrity in all their professional work and to be familiar with, and abide by, these Standards. Professional work may entail play therapy, supervision, training, education, research, writing, management, community work, group facilitation and mentoring. Colleagues, in this document, includes peers, supervisees and supervisors, trainers and trainees, students and other health professionals. The code applies to all categories of ANZAPT Members.

In upholding the Standards of Ethical Conduct, Play Therapists will have regard to the principles derived from Te Tiriti o Waitangi - the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand - such as protection, participation and partnership with Maori, be knowledgeable about Te Ao Māori (the Māori world view) and be sensitive to the pillars / pou of Māori health and wellbeing. Further information is contained in the principles outlined below and the ANZAPT Cultural Code of Conduct.

The Play Therapist Standards of Ethical Conduct sits alongside the Play Therapist Core Clinical and Cultural Competencies, which together describe the minimum standards that must be demonstrated by all practising Play Therapists in Aotearoa New Zealand. Guidelines on specific topics, such as TeleHealth for family support, and Electronic media position statement, provide supplementary advice from the Play Therapy Association on safe and ethical practice.

Play Therapists will take all reasonable steps to be informed about New Zealand law relevant to their work, such as privacy law. This Code provides a framework within which ethical and practice related dilemmas might be addressed.

A breach of the Standards is a serious matter and may lead to a professional or disciplinary investigation. The Standards may be used to evaluate conduct, by employers, colleagues, clients and the public.

Spirit of the Code

This Code cannot cover every potential ethical, conduct or competence related concern. Play Therapists will depend on their own thoughtful evaluation of specific principles and the spirit expressed in these statements, and strive for ethical practice and conduct, even when doing so involves making difficult decisions or acting courageously.

Primary Values of Play Therapy

Primary values of play therapy include: respect for the dignity of all human beings; recognition of tamariki's rights to self-determination, to learn from their experience, and to be in charge of themselves, while taking into account the reality of each situation, the laws of their country, and the rights of others; the right to physical health and mental stability; the right to be free to explore and grow in an environment that enables a sense of security.

Principles

The following theoretical principles / mātāpono of Play Therapy underpin the Standards of Ethical Conduct and it is expected that Play Therapists will embrace these principles and core values as integral to our work. Refer also to additional values embraced by the Cultural Code of Conduct and the requirements under the Code of Core Clinical Competencies.

Actualisation

Human beings are motivated by an innate tendency to develop constructive and healthy capacities. This tendency is to actualise each person's inner potentials, including aspects of

spontaneity, creativity, curiosity, genuineness, and the desire to become more effective and autonomous.

The Need for Positive Regard

Human beings require and yearn for respect, warmth, and acceptance from others, especially from 'significant others'. As tamariki grow and develop, this need for positive regard develops transforms into a secondary, learned need for positive self regard.

Play as Communication

Tamariki use play as their primary medium of communication. Play is how tamariki communicate their emotions, thoughts, values and how they perceive the world. It is a medium, that like language, is primarily creative.

Respect for People's Rights and Dignity

Play Therapists respect the dignity and worth of all people, including self, and the rights to privacy, confidentiality and autonomy. Play Therapists seek freely the informed consent of those legally responsible for tamariki and, where possible, assent from tamariki, engage in clear and explicit contracts, including confidentiality requirements.

Beneficence

Play Therapists act in the best interests of tamariki and their family/whānau and this is the paramount consideration for Play Therapists since clients are generally non-autonomous and dependent on significant others. Ensuring that the client's best interests are met requires monitoring of practice. Play therapists strive to benefit those with whom they work, acting in their best interests and always working within their limits of competence, training and experience. This principle involves an obligation to enhance practice with ongoing supervision and continuing professional development.

Autonomy

Play Therapists have respect for the client's and the therapist's right to be self-governing. Play therapists will foster client self-determination and choice, except where these may cause harm to self or others.

1. The Nature of Play Therapy

1. Play Therapy involves the formation of professional relationships based on ethical values and principles. Play Therapy assists clients to increase their understanding of themselves and their relationships with others, to develop more resourceful ways of living, and to bring about change in their lives.
2. Play Therapists will seek to ensure that they practice from the person-centred principles of congruence, genuineness and unconditional positive regard.
3. Play Therapists recognise that the interests and welfare of tamariki they are working with are paramount, and prioritise this over other considerations, giving priority to the psychotherapeutic aspect of the client-therapist relationship.
4. Play Therapists respect the individuality of each child.

5. Play Therapy enables tamariki to give informed consent appropriate to their stage of development. Play therapists will have regard for the needs of tamariki who are unable to exercise self-determination.
6. Play Therapists consider tamariki in the context of their family/whānau and culture.
7. Play Therapists seek to increase the range of choices and opportunities that meet the needs of tamariki, appropriately involving their family/whānau.

2. Play Therapists must work in the client's best interests

1. Seek to ensure that tamariki, whether in individual, whānau, family or group settings, suffer no harm (physical, spiritual, or psychological) during the conduct of play therapy, accepting that some distress is an inevitable part of the process.
2. Recognise the needs of tamariki who are unable to exercise self-determination or to ensure their own personal safety and act to protect their best interests, rights and well-being.
3. Form respectful relationships with clients based on clear, open and honest communication, and show respect in language, attitude and all communications.
4. Respect the client's mana and tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and the client's capacity to increase their range of choices and opportunities, except where these may cause harm to self or others.
5. Respect the development of psychological maturity in clients including their capacity for interdependence as well as independence.
6. Respect the importance of relationships, especially family/whānau relationships, and the role these play in all human development.
7. When providing play therapy services to a dyad or group, strive to be impartial.
8. Advocate for the best interests of any tamaiti who is directly a client, or part of a client group, and take preventive action when their welfare is seriously threatened.
9. Be knowledgeable of child protection procedures, statutory requirements and family/whānau court procedures, and skilled in their application of relevant procedures

3. Play Therapists must practise with integrity

1. Adhere to the ANZAPT Core Clinical Competencies alongside the Code of Ethics.
2. Practise in settings appropriate for tamariki that enable safe, confidential practice, adhering to professional standards and public health requirements.
3. Practise within the limits of your knowledge, training, experience and competence. Acknowledge the limits of your practice, skills and method, and refer clients or supervisees to others when appropriate.
4. Play Therapists are required to keep up to date with current methods, research and knowledge around Play Therapy and related subjects.

5. Be open and honest in your interactions with clients and their families/whānau, and willing to acknowledge errors, accept responsibility, and initiate repair as therapeutically indicated.
6. Obtain informed consent, be accurate and clear in reporting assessments, progress reports, statutory reports and other summary information about clients.
7. Once a professional relationship has been established, provide services consistent with treatment planning until the relationship is ended in consultation with family/whānau. Facilitate client access to other services when identified.
8. Wherever possible, make provision through a professional executor for alternative professional care should you suddenly become unable to work.
9. If it becomes clear that the tamariki is unlikely to benefit from continuing play therapy with you, end the professional relationship, with due regard to the client's needs.
10. Facilitate the client's right to make a complaint and seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner, and co-operate with any investigation into your care, conduct or competence.
11. Respect the confidences with which they are entrusted.
12. Play Therapists must have professional indemnity insurance and public liability insurance cover through the workplace or through private insurance cover. A minimum of \$1,000,000 insurance cover is the ANZAPT minimum requirement for those in private practice.
13. Play therapists do not make false or deceptive statements concerning their qualifications, training, experience, fees or services.

4. Play Therapists must maintain their competence

1. Play therapy supervision has distinct features with philosophical emphasis on principles of autonomy and personal responsibility. These feature development of an equal relationship, collaboration, transparency in assessment, feedback, and evaluation to facilitate an egalitarian relationship.
2. Receive adequate supervision from an appropriately qualified and experienced Play Therapist (CCPT-S) to maintain your competence and develop your professional knowledge and skills to ensure practice is both ethical and safe.
3. Use supervision and personal therapy as required to monitor and maintain your own health and well-being, and enable you to provide an effective service.
4. Embrace continuous learning and the pursuit of knowledge in play therapy to maintain adequate levels of knowledge and skills as a play therapist.

5. Play Therapists must be sensitive to diversity and cultures

1. Adhere to the ANZAPT Cultural Competencies alongside the Code of Ethics.
2. Provide a service that recognises the uniqueness of each tamariki and is sensitive to their needs, values and beliefs, culture, gender identity and worldview.
3. Avoid using diagnostic labelling in any way which is likely to cause harm to tamariki.

4. When offering therapy to those who identify as Māori, be sensitive to and thoughtful regarding cultural factors bearing on the therapeutic relationship and the significance of connections to whenua, whānau, hapū and iwi.
5. Be aware of your own personal values and beliefs and how these may affect your work and impact on clients; refer the client to another practitioner when appropriate.
6. Recognise that a decision to exclude someone from your services or activities, reduce your services, or fail to provide interventions that might reasonably be expected to assist, must be made fairly and not on discriminatory grounds.
7. Do not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, membership of distinctive groups and organisations, ethnicity, gender, migrant experience, ethnic identity, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or spiritual.

6. Play Therapists must maintain appropriate boundaries

1. Establish and maintain appropriate boundaries with tamariki and their families/whānau.
2. Do not condone or engage in any form of discrimination, coercion, harassment or sexual, financial, or other exploitation.
3. Recognise the power imbalance in the play therapist relationship and do not abuse this power, or exploit the relationship with the child or family/whānau, for personal gain or gratification.
4. Avoid any personal relationship (including sexual intimacy) with a current or former client and/or member of client's family and avoid any behaviour that may be reasonably interpreted as a sexual advance.
5. Do not encourage families/whānau to give, lend or bequeath money or gifts to the Play Therapist or put pressure on clients to make donations to other people or organisations.
6. Establish and maintain appropriate boundaries with supervisees, former supervisees, supervisors, trainers, and trainees, including the avoidance of any intimate relationship (including sexual intimacy) when the dynamics of the supervision and/or training relationship continue in ways that may create a power imbalance.

7. Play Therapists must obtain informed consent to therapy

1. Disclose your qualifications, professional membership and experience accurately, in a way that assists the public to make informed choices about the type of service you offer.
2. Use clear and understandable language to discuss with family/whānau/clients the purposes, risks and limits and costs of the services provided, giving sufficient time for the recipients to respond to the information and taking reasonable steps to ensure that the information has been understood.

3. Provide detailed information regarding the nature and duration of play therapy sessions, and about your fees and payment requirements. When providing play therapy services to a parent, parent and child or group of parents and/or children, ensure that each individual gives informed consent on their own behalf. Take all reasonable steps to ensure that consent is not given under conditions of coercion or undue pressure.
4. Provide play therapy only with the guardians' written informed consent. When running groups, provide prospective group members with information about the purpose, the approaches to be used and how the group will be conducted, including the relevant cultural practices or kawa.
5. When working with someone who is unable to consent due to diminished capacity, age and/or intellectual and/or emotional immaturity, provide therapy only with the consent of the individual's guardian(s) or other legal authorization.
6. Respect the rights of children to receive age appropriate information and to give consent on their own behalf, commensurate with their capacity to do so.
7. If play therapy support for parents is to be provided by video conference, provide information about the privacy limitations of non-secure options, recognising that some clients may prefer to use familiar platforms even knowing the privacy limitations. Play therapy online is not appropriate for the needs of tamariki clients.
8. Provide clear information about the family/whatau/client's right to withdraw from therapy and terminate their professional relationship with you.
9. If needed, provide information regarding the availability of government funding for play therapy services.

8. Play Therapists must respect privacy

1. Play Therapists must discuss limits of confidentiality with clients, maintain client confidentiality noting that considerations of safety or legal obligations may on occasion override confidentiality;
2. Play therapists do not disclose personal information obtained from a tamariki or their family/whānau without the informed consent of those who provided the information. Exceptions are in circumstances of diminished capacity, urgent need, legal requirements and/or client or public safety), and without careful consideration of the consequences of disclosure.
3. Manage the complex boundaries of confidentiality and safety with regard to the tamariki and whānau they are working with, including in the provision of feedback with family/whānau and professionals involved with the tamariki.
4. Treat symbolic material such as drawings and paintings as confidential communication, seeking the consent of the child or young person to showing or discussing this material with others, including parents.

5. Protect information gained second hand (eg, from a colleague about their client or student) in activities as a Play therapist, where it could be anticipated that the information would be regarded by the person/s it concerns to be confidential.
6. Select video conferencing technologies that support the privacy and security of the client's personal information; be aware of the inherent limitations in the security of electronic communications such as email.
7. Keep appropriate records that are accessible and legible and as required by law, and take all reasonable steps to ensure this information remains retrievable for at least 10 years from the date of the last provision of services to the client, or as required by law.
8. Take all reasonable steps to ensure that the client's personal information is collected, stored, used and disposed of in a manner that protects the information.
9. Make adequate plans for access to and disposal of records in the event of retirement, serious illness, or death of the Play Therapist.
10. Play Therapists do not disclose in public situations, confidential, sensitive personal information or identifiable information concerning their clients or client's family members unless they have taken reasonable steps to disguise the client; the guardian or person holding legal responsibility for the client has given consent, or there is an ethical or legal requirement to do so.
11. Take all reasonable steps to disguise clients, colleagues, supervisees or trainees when clinical material is used for education and training, or in research and publications, unless consent to disclosure has been obtained.

9. Play Therapists must interact professionally with others

1. Form respectful relationships with Play Therapy colleagues, other health practitioners, supervisees, supervisors, trainers and trainees, acting fairly and with courtesy.
2. Be open and honest in your communication with all those you interact with professionally.
3. Do not assume responsibility for another Play Therapist's client without encouraging appropriate communication with the colleague concerned.
4. Clarify and make explicit your role and responsibilities with the person(s) with whom you are working.
5. Respect collegial confidences and the trust placed in you by colleagues, other health practitioners, supervisees, supervisors, trainers and trainees, using information only for the purposes for which it is disclosed.
6. Delegate activities or refer for further professional advice, care or treatment only with the client and guardian's authorisation and to someone with the knowledge, skills and experience needed to work safely and effectively; continue to provide appropriate supervision and support to your delegate.
7. Consult with your supervisor about potential conflicts-of-interest and other personal professional challenges, such as acting on concerns about a colleague's health, competence or ethical behaviour.
8. If you have reason to believe a colleague is unable to practise safely due to health problems or competence concerns, or is acting unethically, take steps to resolve the

situation directly with the colleague or their employer or manager; if you remain concerned, notify ANZAPT.

9. Seek to minimise damage to clients, colleagues and the profession, without compromising integrity.
10. Use all forms of communication, including social media and networking sites, responsibly when participating in public debate or dialogue on issues of community welfare.

Disclosure responsibilities

A Play Therapist will promptly notify the Association about any criminal charges, disciplinary procedures, or civil claims brought against them. This information will be kept confidential to the Chair of the Ethics Committee and the President. It would only be used in any future disciplinary action and the person would be informed and consent would be sought before the information would be relied on.

The Play Therapy profession is only concerned about personal behaviour if it is of such a nature that it undermines public trust in the profession as a whole or if it raises questions about the Play Therapist's ability to carry out appropriately their responsibilities as a Play Therapist. Competent practice is the individual responsibility of every Play Therapist, whether working with clients, supervisees or trainees. By accepting this statement of ethics, members of the Association are committing themselves to engaging with the ethical challenge. Association policies on supervision, training and personal psychotherapy are designed to assist this.

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