



ACCORD Dublin
CODE OF ETHICS AND PRACTICE

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UNDERTAKING

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Accord Dublin Catholic Marriage Care Service Company Limited by Guarantee ('ACCORD Dublin') is a faith based registered charity operating in the Archdiocese of Dublin - that aims to promote a deeper understanding of Christian marriage, preparing couples for the sacrament of marriage and offering individuals and couples a safe, ethical and professional service to support them to address difficulties and challenges in their marriage, relationships and family life. ACCORD Dublin also provides a relationship and sexuality education service to schools.
- 2 The purpose of this Code of Ethics and Practice is to describe the standards required of the members¹ of the organisation, the values and principles guiding them in their work with clients² and in their relationships within ACCORD Dublin.
- 3 By accepting to work in ACCORD Dublin, members agree to the principles and practices outlined in this Code and confirm their commitment to give effect to them by signing the undertaking which accompanies it.
- 4 In cases of dispute ACCORD Dublin provides a process whereby grievances and complaints can be examined and ethically resolved.
- 5 Those who avail of the organisation's service are the clients of ACCORD Dublin rather than of the members who work with them on behalf of the organisation.
- 6 All members working on behalf of ACCORD Dublin are subject to the law and their practice must conform to the law at all times. Members must take into account their responsibilities and their clients' rights under equality legislation, data protection and other relevant legislation.
- 7 This code is in two parts. Part A –**Ethics** – outlines the fundamental values and ethical principles relating to the services of ACCORD Dublin. It is not intended to be a complete or exhaustive statement of such values and principles but rather an indication of the ethical framework within which all members work. Part B – **Practice** – seeks to indicate how members should apply these principles in the course of their work.

PART A: ETHICS

A.1 Values

- 1 The fundamental values of ACCORD Dublin include commitment to respecting human rights and dignity; improving the quality of relationships between people, increasing personal awareness and understanding others, enhancing people's wellbeing and capabilities, alleviating symptoms of personal distress and suffering, protecting the safety of clients and keeping skills and knowledge up-to-date.

¹ Throughout the Code, "members" applies to all who deliver services to clients and who prepare and supervise members to deliver such services on behalf of ACCORD Dublin, either on a voluntary basis or in a paid capacity.

² Throughout the Code, "clients" applies to all who avail of the services of ACCORD Dublin.

A.2 Autonomy

- 1 Clients of ACCORD Dublin are accepted as being of unique worth and capable of self-determination and growth. Members work with clients on the basis of their informed consent and agreement.
- 2 ACCORD Dublin members recognise the trust placed in them by clients and the need to observe appropriate boundaries between the professional relationship and any other personal association or relationship.

A.3 Services

- 1 The services offered by ACCORD Dublin are delivered in accordance with commitment to sustaining and advancing good practice. Members are selected, Garda vetted, professionally trained, committed to continuing professional development and ongoing supervision.
- 2 Members shall make clear to all clients from the outset the terms under which a service is being offered and clients will be provided with relevant privacy statements in advance of availing of any of the organisation's services.

A.4 Confidentiality

- 1 ACCORD Dublin members recognise and accept that all information relating to clients shall be treated as confidential. This confidentiality shall be observed and protected as an ethical value. However, in exceptional circumstances, the need to safeguard clients or others from serious harm may require members to override their commitment to protecting client confidentiality and privacy. In such situations, members may need to act in ways that will support appropriate intervention or actions necessary to prevent serious harm to clients or others.

A.5 Competence

- 1 ACCORD Dublin members are selected and trained to professional standards. Quality services are delivered in accordance with organisational policies and procedures. Members undergo initial training and are committed to keeping their skills and knowledge up-to-date by availing of continuing professional development. In addition, they avail of regular professional supervision for their work.
- 2 Members are aware of the boundaries of their competence and where the needs of a client are outside such competency, the client will be advised accordingly.

A.6 Accountability

- 1 Members delivering services are accountable to ACCORD Dublin and to their clients in respect of their work within the organisation.
- 2 All complaints shall be dealt with pursuant to the Complaints Policy of ACCORD Dublin currently in force.
- 3 Counsellors will undertake supervision at the ratio for each counsellor's stage of development (student/working towards accreditation/accredited). Facilitators will also undertake supervision.
- 4 Supervision is essential for accountability and through it good practice is sustained as it provides members with regular opportunities to reflect in depth about all aspects of good practice in order for them to work effectively, safely and ethically.

A.7 Minors

- 1 Counselling of a minor³ is not to be undertaken, unless such minor is already married with parental consent in another jurisdiction.
- 2 Education programmes delivered by ACCORD Dublin will involve working with minors in schools. In all such work, members shall have due regard (a) to the limitations in autonomy and the right to self-determination of such clients which may arise because of their age and/or (b) to the rights and duties of their parents or guardians.
- 3 When working in schools with minors, ACCORD Dublin members will seek an assurance from the school involved that all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that the parents or guardians concerned have consented to the participation of such minors and are aware of the limitations to confidentiality which will attach thereto.
- 4 A teacher or adult (designated by the school's Board of Management) must be present in the classroom when an ACCORD Dublin schools' programme is being delivered.
- 5 ACCORD Dublin adheres to Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (issued by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2017) and Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland (published 2016). These are the core documents which determine the way child safeguarding and welfare issues are dealt with in ACCORD Dublin.

A.8 General

- 1 Members must ensure there is no conflict of interest between them and their clients and must establish and maintain appropriate, professional and personal boundaries in their relationships with clients.

³ ACCORD defines a "minor" as a person under 18 years of age other than a person who is or has been married.

- 2 Members shall not act on behalf of or in association with their clients outside of their professional ACCORD Dublin relationship and must never exploit or abuse clients in any way: physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually, sexually or financially.
- 3 ACCORD Dublin members will not enter into any personal or business relationship with a client during the counselling/facilitation process or for a period of one year after cessation of the counselling/facilitation process.
- 4 Members will not engage in any activity that will bring the organisation into disrepute and will not make public statements on behalf of the organisation unless prior approval is granted by the Board of Directors of ACCORD Dublin.
- 5 If any member intends to engage in a public campaign or to run for public office, he/she will first consult with the Centre Chairperson and then with the Chairperson of the Board of ACCORD Dublin to establish whether the public image thus involved conflicts with the interests or ethos of the organisation; if it does, then the person concerned may be required to withdraw (either temporarily or permanently) from the organisation. Neither shall any members make public use of their association with ACCORD Dublin for personal purpose.
- 6 The resources and facilities of the organisation will be used only for purposes approved by the Board of ACCORD Dublin. Counsellors and facilitators will not use access to clients to promote or facilitate their private practice or personal business interests.

PART B: PRACTICE

B.1 Values

- 1 ACCORD Dublin members will put clients first by making them their primary concern while working with them. In addition, members will work within their area of competence, keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date, collaborate with colleagues where relevant, improve the quality of what is being offered to clients and avail of supervision, to sustain and advance good practice.
- 2 Members will value and respect the unique dignity of clients and will discuss with them in an open manner any known risks involved in their work together and how best to work towards their desired outcomes. In the case of counsellor members, this will involve listening out for how clients experience their working together and from time to time evaluating the therapeutic alliance and the effects of their work with them.
- 3 Members will also ensure that their personal wellbeing is sufficient to sustain the quality of their work.

B.2 Autonomy

- 1 The personal integrity of the client is paramount.
- 2 Clients from the outset must be adequately informed about the nature of the ACCORD Dublin service being offered. Members should, at all times, respect a client's right to choose whether to participate, continue or withdraw from the services on offer.
- 3 In all circumstances clients will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions, behaviour and decisions, except in exceptional circumstances where an ACCORD Dublin member has reasonable grounds for concern that a client is in danger. In such instances, appropriate intervention will be necessary and in the interest of client safety a disclosure may be made to a third party. In addition, where it is deemed that there are reasonable grounds for concern, that there is a risk of harm to any child or children, the matter will be disclosed to the statutory and criminal authorities.⁴

B.3 Services

- 1 Only the services approved by ACCORD Dublin may be offered to clients. These are marriage education - preparing couples for the sacrament of marriage; counselling (marriage and relationships); and education programmes delivered in schools.
- 2 Members will not accept personal payments/gifts from clients for work done on behalf of ACCORD Dublin.
- 3 All ACCORD Dublin work will be delivered in ACCORD Dublin approved premises and/or venues and it is the responsibility of the Centre Committee to ensure that its premises and/or venues are safe for clients and members.
- 4 Minors should not be present during the delivery of ACCORD Dublin services nor left to be cared for in an ACCORD Dublin venue; however, in the case of a mother breastfeeding an infant, special arrangements may be made in advance with the Centre Chair.

B.4 Counselling

- 1 Counsellors will not undertake counselling of close relatives or friends and must adhere to the current Data Protection Policy and Counselling Protocol of ACCORD Dublin.
- 2 Counsellors will take all reasonable steps to honour undertakings provided to clients during the Stage 1 Needs Assessment (NA) session. During the Assessment Process potential clients will be informed of the terms upon which counselling is offered and will be provided with the organisation's Privacy Notice for Counselling Clients.

⁴ "Statutory and criminal authorities" applies to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána respectively.

- 3 Counsellors will discuss a financial donation with clients, who may contribute towards the cost of the service provided, if in a position to do so. In addition, clients will be made explicitly aware of their responsibilities in relation to appointments.
- 4 Members must honour their commitment to be available to clients for as many sessions as is necessary and will endeavour to inform them well in advance of approaching endings and be sensitive to their expectations and concerns when approaching the end of working together.
- 5 Any unplanned breaks by a counsellor, due to illness or other causes, will be managed in ways to minimise inconveniencing clients and after consultation with the Centre Chairperson, the counsellor may recommend to his/her client continuing counselling with another counsellor.
- 6 Other than at counselling sessions, all communication with clients will be through the Centre's Office Administrator.
- 7 All ACCORD Dublin counselling must take place in an ACCORD Dublin Centre or an official outreach premises. In the interests of safety, a counsellor may only counsel in an ACCORD Dublin Centre when there is a designated person present in the building, who is aware of the counsellor's presence, and can be called upon should assistance be required.
- 8 The counsellor and client/s will, at agreed intervals, review the impact that their work together is having on the quality of the couple relationship. Counsellors will, with the professional support of their supervisors, monitor the effectiveness of the approaches being used, and reflect on progress towards the client/s desired outcomes.

B.5 Facilitation

- 1 ACCORD Dublin's marriage preparation courses and schools' programmes are in general offered in group settings. Members who deliver such programmes are here referred to as facilitators.
- 2 Participants will receive relevant information, at the commencement of a programme, outlining its content, format and duration.
- 3 The facilitator/facilitation team (including trainers for schools work, marriage education and counselling), will respect and uphold the right of participants to decide what to share with the group and in which group activities and exercises they will participate.
- 4 The importance of confidentiality, and its limitations, will be emphasised at the commencement of all programmes. Members will also state that confidentiality includes the identity of participants attending courses and all information shared by participants on courses.

- 5 Facilitation teams will meet to adequately prepare for and subsequently review the administration, roles and tasks, processes, content, methodology and evaluation involved in the delivery of ACCORD Dublin's prescribed marriage preparation course.
- 6 Facilitators will be in supervision for their work as stated in the organisation's current supervision policy for facilitators.
- 7 Facilitators will be aware of their personal values in group-work and should not allow their professional relationships with clients to be prejudiced by any personal views they may hold.
- 8 Facilitators will be aware of the limits of their competence. They will not engage in counselling any individual or couple preparing for the sacrament of marriage. Where the need for such a service arises, an individual or couple will be made aware of ACCORD Dublin's counselling service.

B.6 Confidentiality

- 1 All ACCORD Dublin services are offered on a confidential basis. The duty of confidentiality is not to reveal to any third party any matter relating to ACCORD Dublin counselling, including the fact of attendance, except in the following exceptional circumstances:
 - (i) a client has provided his/her explicit consent;
 - (ii) a disclosure is required in accordance with the law to a third party such as a Court or Tribunal, a government department or agency, or is required by An Garda Síochána, for example, in pursuit of justice in the prosecution of a criminal offence;
 - (iii) intervention is necessary for matters of life or death or for the prevention of harm to clients or any individual or child; or
 - (iv) when it is necessary to report an allegation, concern or suspicion of abuse to the relevant Church authority.
 - (v) as mandated persons ACCORD Dublin counsellors and schools' team facilitators are legally obliged, under the Children First Act 2015, to report child protection concerns and retrospective disclosure of abuse (including (iv) above) to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. Mandatory reporting is carried out by the counsellor with the knowledge and support of the Designated Liaison Person of ACCORD Dublin and by the Schools Team member in conjunction with the Schools Designation Liaison Person. All potential clients are made aware of the limitations to confidentiality during the completion of the Client/s Index Card (CIC) - the first task in the ACCORD Dublin Assessment Process. If a client has concerns in relation to mandatory reporting, their counsellor will provide them with information and support in relation to this legal obligation.
- 2 Information relating to all clients is the property of ACCORD Dublin and not that of members working on its behalf. It is managed in accordance with data protection legislation and ACCORD Dublin's Data Protection Policy.

B.7 Competence

- 1 Only the services approved by ACCORD Dublin may be offered to clients.
- 2 ACCORD Dublin members shall be aware of the limits of their competence. Where the need of the client is outside these competencies, the client will be advised accordingly.
- 3 ACCORD Dublin members offer quality services to all clients. To this end, members are expected to review, develop and maintain their competence in accordance with ongoing and agreed continuing professional development and training requirements. Following selection, and having successfully completed an initial training course and a prescribed period of supervised student placement, members will undertake such ongoing, validated CPD training as prescribed by the Board of ACCORD Dublin and relevant accrediting bodies.
- 4 Members are expected to carry out such volume of casework/group work as decided by the Board of ACCORD Dublin as being the minimum to maintain competence.
- 5 Members will not engage in any ACCORD Dublin work when their competence is impaired by any cause, and shall withdraw (either temporarily or permanently) from client work. In such circumstances, members will work with the relevant Programme Director in deciding to withdraw from client work and when it may be appropriate to return.
- 6 The relevant services Director may recommend to the relevant Specialist in Central Office or the Programme Director if the member is still a student, the suspension, removal or the withdrawal of facilitators or counsellors from any work which they are undertaking on behalf of the organisation, if it is decided that such a course of action is necessary in the best interests of the organisation. This does not preclude the right of the trainee facilitator/counsellor to appeal to the Board of ACCORD Dublin such a recommendation.
- 7 Counsellors/facilitators accept responsibility for their own welfare and ensuring that their work does not become detrimental to their health or well-being and will seek professional support and services as the need arises.
- 8 Where circumstances occur which may be deemed likely to cause stress or pressure on the personal and professional life of a facilitator/counsellor, his/her Supervisor, Centre Chairperson or other appropriate officer of ACCORD Dublin may require the facilitator/counsellor to take leave of absence from ACCORD Dublin work. Work will be resumed when the facilitator/counsellor, and his/her Programme Director are satisfied that it is appropriate to do so.

B.8 Accountability

- 1 ACCORD Dublin seeks to provide quality services to all clients. Systems are in place through which services are evaluated and monitored. As part of its service quality, ACCORD Dublin may seek the views of service users.
- 2 Members shall work the minimum number of required client contact hours counselling/facilitation, and receive supervision for their work as specified.
- 3 Centres will provide anonymised information and reports for statistical or other purposes as may be required by the Board of ACCORD Dublin.
- 4 The ACCORD Dublin Complaints Policy outlines the process for dealing with complaints against any member of the organisation.

B.9 Monitoring and Review

- 1 This Code of Ethics and Practice will come into effect on 16th October 2019 and the Board of ACCORD Dublin will continue to review on an annual basis its effectiveness to ensure it is achieving its stated objectives.

I commend this Code of Ethics and Practice to all ACCORD Dublin members. You are required to abide by its principles in your work with the organisation. I invite you to sign the accompanying "Undertaking" which follows and thank you for your commitment and co-operation in this matter.

Most Revd Diarmuid Martin
Archbishop of Dublin
Chair, ACCORD Dublin
Date: 16 October 2019

UNDERTAKING

I have received a copy of the **Code of Ethics and Practice of ACCORD Dublin**.

I have read and fully understand the principles of this Code and agree to abide by them.

I also agree to abide by all ACCORD Dublin policies, protocols and procedures.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Witnessed by: _____

Date: _____

ACCORD Dublin Centre: _____