



Code of Ethics and Principles of Professional Practice

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Art Therapist Association, Singapore (ATAS)

Introduction

Art Therapy is a growing profession in Singapore whose practitioners' aim is to help their clients to discover an outlet for often complex and confusing emotions which cannot always be expressed verbally and to foster within them self-awareness and growth. Art therapists are evolving distinct ways of working according to their specialisation and work settings, to local or accepted practices of employing authorities and to laws and customs of the countries where they may practise after training.

Art therapists are expected to enhance their skills, remain abreast of new developments in Art Psychotherapy knowledge and practice and grow professionally through continuous educational activities, learning and development.

The Code of Ethics and Principles of Professional Practice have been set out to provide Registered members of the Art Therapists Association, Singapore (ATAS) with fundamental principles, standards and guidelines for good practice, to support them in their work and to inform and protect members of the public using their services.

This document sets out the standards of conduct, performance and ethics we expect from the health professionals we register. The standards also apply to art therapists who are applying for registration.

General Principles

Expectations of conduct, performance and ethics for art therapists in Singapore.

1. Art therapists will act in the best interests of service users.
2. Art therapists will respect the confidentiality of service users.
3. Art therapists will keep high standards of personal conduct.
4. Art therapists will keep their professional knowledge and skills up to date.
5. Art therapists should accept only those appointments or responsibilities for which they are professionally qualified by education, training or experience.
6. Art therapist will not discriminate on the grounds of race, class, culture, gender, marital status, physical or mental ability, religion, sexual orientation or age.
7. Art therapists will limit their work or stop practising if their performance or judgement is affected by their health.
8. Art therapists will behave with honesty and integrity and make sure that their behaviour does not damage the public's confidence in them or their profession.
9. Art therapists will make sure that any advertising they do is accurate.

Ethical Responsibilities

1. Personal Responsibility & Conduct

- 1.1. Physical, mental and emotional health and competency
- 1.2. Individual Accountability
- 1.3. Public behaviour

2. Professional Conduct

- 2.1. Duty of Care
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- 2.3. Relationship with colleagues and other professional

3. Documentation

- 3.1. Informed consent
- 3.2. Record keeping

4. Professional Competence & Integrity

- 4.1. Professional Competence
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- 4.3. Training
- 4.4. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- 4.5. Supervision

5. Research, publication & advertising

- 5.1. Integrity of representation
- 5.2. Reproduction of client's artwork

1. Professional Responsibility & Conduct

1.1. Physical, mental and emotional health and competency

- Art therapists are expected to be fit to practice from an emotional and a physical standpoint and to refrain from any activity that is likely to lead to inadequate performance.
- Art therapists are required to seek appropriate professional help, such as personal therapy, for any unresolved emotional or personal issues which might compromise judgement and therefore their ability to practice wisely and objectively within therapeutic boundaries.
- Art therapy practice should be enhanced and supported through regular supervision, personal artistic practice and continuing professional development.

1.2. Individual Accountability

- Art therapists have a professional duty to do no harm either through any action or omission of care.
- Art therapists are expected to act in the best interests of their clients at all times.
- Art therapists are expected to understand their accountability in relation to the treatment of clients.
- Art therapists are expected to remain aware of the current laws and changes to the laws which may affect their practice.
- Art therapists are expected to prepare their client for a termination or any break in the therapeutic relationship.

1.3. Public behaviour

- Art therapists are expected to be aware that their public persona reflects on the integrity of the profession as a whole and will therefore not engage in any activities which might bring the profession into disrepute.
- Art therapists shall conduct themselves within the laws and expectations of the nation of Singapore.

2. Professional Conduct

2.1. Duty of Care

- Art therapists are expected to maintain the therapist –client relationship on a professional basis and not engage in dual relationships with clients during therapy or any relationship with the client for at least 2 years after therapy has terminated.
- Art therapists will not engage in sexual, financial, emotional or any other form of exploitation or coercion with their clients.
- Art Therapists are expected to be aware of and respect the special needs of minors and vulnerable adults.
- At the start of a professional therapeutic relationship Art Therapists will contract with the client or clients' parent, guardian or carer as appropriate. The contract will include start date, approximate length of therapy, agreed frequency and length of sessions, boundaries of the relationship, including limits of confidentiality, fees, procedure for missed or cancelled sessions.

2.2. Confidentiality

- Art therapists have a responsibility to maintain confidentiality but also to ensure the client is aware of its legal limits. To this end art therapists are expected to remain cognizant of the law and changes to the laws of Singapore as they relate to practice.
- Art therapists are expected to respect and protect confidential information disclosed by clients in conversation or through artistic expression.
- Art therapists are expected to keep confidential up to date records of work with clients.
- The circumstances in which members must seek to protect a client's confidentiality include:
 - i. Within the framework of the treatment team
 - ii. Within the employers terms and conditions
 - iii. Within private practice
 - iv. Within the client-therapist relationship
 - v. Within supervision
- Disclosure may be authorised by the client, required by law or made by the art therapist in appropriate circumstances. Example, where the safety of the client, the therapist, those caring for the client or the public will be threatened by non-disclosure. In such cases, disclosure must be made in the manner that best protects the client's interest.

2.3. Relationship with colleagues and other professionals

- In the best interests of the client art therapists will be required to develop and maintain effective and informed communication and consultation with professionals from a variety of disciplines.
- Art therapists should be open-minded in referring clients to colleagues in order to achieve the most effective therapeutic outcomes and should not withhold information which may cause a client to receive inadequate or incomplete care.

3. Documentation

3.1. Informed consent

- Art therapists should obtain informed consent for treatment which must be recorded in their clinical notes. If a client has difficulty understanding the language or procedures used, art therapists should arrange for appropriate support to be provided to the client, such as the assistance of an interpreter or signer.
- The Art therapist takes the necessary precautions to protect the confidences of clients who are minors, or other clients who are unable to give voluntary informed consent, due to impairments which limit comprehension or communication.
- Art therapists must take appropriate action if they believe that a young person is in danger. They should be aware of child protection procedures and ensure that abuse is reported.

3.2. Record keeping

- Art therapists are to record the client's attendance for therapy.
- Material produced during the art therapy session should be dated and safely stored throughout the therapeutic relationship.
- Ultimately the ownership of the artwork remains with the clients, as does the manner of its disposal.

- Photographic, digitally or video recorded images may be used as an alternative record of the client's art expression.
- Art therapists must ensure that they follow the policy guidelines laid down by their employer with regard to the retention of written or computer generated client treatment records.
- In general, the client's art expressions should be kept within the therapeutic relationship and the disposal of such artwork should be negotiate with the client.

4. Professional Competence & Integrity

4.1. Professional Competence

- Art Therapists are expected to maintain high standards of professional competence and integrity.
- Art Therapists should strive to practice lawfully, safely, effectively, accountably and fairly.
- Art Therapists are expected to make appropriate clinical decisions according to context and client need and to regard the therapeutic interests of the client as paramount.
- Art Therapists should only treat and advise on cases in which they are competent as determined by their education, training and experience.
- Art Therapists are expected to recognise their potential to influence and alter the lives of others through their words and deeds.
- Art Therapists are expected to ensure they do not distort or misuse their clinical and research findings

4.2. Cultural Competence

- Cultural competence is an essential element of the code of ethics and includes a set of expected behaviours, attitudes and policies which display congruent and informed cultural practices.
- Within Singapore there are many cultural groups with diverse beliefs, values and ideals.
- Art Therapists are expected to acknowledge and incorporate cultural awareness practices into their professional work, including;
 1. Awareness of cross-cultural relations within their practice and organizational framework;
 2. Awareness of the dynamics that can result from cultural differences;
 3. Understanding of visual symbols and imagery from cross-cultural perspectives;
 4. The requirement to adapt their services to meet differing cultural needs.

4.3. Training

- Art Therapists must have completed accredited Art Therapy training to Masters level or equivalent, with a recognized training provider.

4.4. CPD

- Art Therapists are expected to keep informed and up to date with developments in Art therapy theory and practice and to maintain contact with fellow Art therapy professionals.
- Art therapists are encouraged to share their professional knowledge and practices in order to benefit others.

- Art therapists are expected to make use of training programmes, lectures, conferences and workshops relevant to their practice
- Continual professional development will include educational activities, clinical experience and personal art work with the objective of maintaining and developing professional knowledge and competence.
- In line with other organisations a minimum of 40 hours CPD are expected to be completed each year.

4.5. Supervision

- In accordance with ATAS supervision guidelines, art therapists are expected to monitor their own professional competence by partaking in regular supervision.
- In line with current accepted practice within Art Therapy and Psychotherapy, a minimum of 1 hours supervision for every 10 client hours is recommended.
- Clinical supervisors should be practicing art therapists who have at least 5 years of art therapy practice and have been accredited by ATAS or a recognised Art Therapy Association.

5. Research, publication & advertising

5.1. Integrity of representation

- Art therapists in research are expected to abide by the laws, ethics and professional standards governing the conduct of all research and publication.
- Art therapist researchers will collaborate with the employing institution (eg an independent ethics review board) to ensure adequate supervision, following of protocol, protection of client confidentiality and diligence with all aspects of informed consent.
- Art therapists are expected to conduct and interpret their research in an unbiased way without prejudice or false claims about their work.
- When advertising services or writing for the public domain members are expected to accurately represent their professional competence, education, training and experience.

5.2. Reproduction or display of client's artwork

- This section refers to all forms of duplication of clients work; images dialogue, written words as a photographed, digital recording, video taped, audio or other record.
- Art Therapists are expected to exercise professional judgement when considering reproduction or display of clients' artwork for publication or presentation.
- Art therapists are expected wherever possible to obtain the written consent of the client or their legal guardian in respect of publication or presentation.
- In all cases art therapists will be expected to protect the anonymity of the client and family who should be fully informed as to how their work will be used/shown.
- Art therapists are expected to pay attention to the context which might alter or misrepresent the intention of the original work.

Reference:

1. BAAT Code of Ethics online source 21/4/2010
2. ANZATA Code of Ethics online source
3. Moon, B.L. (2006) Ethical issues in art therapy. Charles C. Thomas. Publisher, Ltd. Springfield, Illinois.USA