

National Federation for Biblio/Poetry Therapy

CODE OF ETHICS

PREAMBLE

This code is intended to serve as a guide to the everyday conduct of members of the biblio/poetry therapy profession and as a basis for the adjudication of issues in ethics when the conduct of biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators is alleged to deviate from the standards expressed or implied in this code. It represents standards of ethical behavior in professional relationships with those served, with colleagues, with employers, with other professionals, and with the community.

This Code of Ethics applies to the specific situations of those individuals who have achieved the designations of PTR, CPT, or CAPF, trainees for these designations, and mentor/supervisors.

STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND PRACTICE

Principle 1 - Responsibility:

In providing services, biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators maintain the highest standards of their profession. They accept responsibility for the consequences of their acts and make every effort to ensure that their services are used appropriately. As practitioners, biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators know that they bear a serious social responsibility because their recommendations and professional actions may alter the lives of others.

As educators, biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators recognize their obligation to help others acquire knowledge and skill.

As researchers, biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators plan their research in ways to minimize the possibility that their findings will be misleading. In publishing reports of their work, they never suppress disconfirming data, and they acknowledge the existence of alternative hypotheses and explanations of their findings. They take credit only for work they have actually done. Biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators clarify in advance with all appropriate persons and agencies the expectations for sharing and utilizing research data.

Members of the biblio/poetry community fully comply with all applicable laws and regulations concerning their practice. They do not allow their practice to be used for purposes that would harm the public. Mentor/supervisors must perform a thorough evaluation of the background and suitability of their trainees, in order to ensure that the trainee does not plan to misuse the poetry therapy skills to mislead or harm the public.

Principle 2 - Competence:

The maintenance of high standards of competence is a responsibility shared by all biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators in the interest of the public and the profession as a whole. Biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators recognize the boundaries of their competence and the limitations of their techniques. They provide only services and use only techniques for which they are qualified by training and experience. In those areas in which recognized standards do not yet exist, biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators take whatever precautions are necessary to protect the welfare of their clients.

Biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators accurately represent their competence, education, training and experience. They recognize differences among people, such as those associated with age, gender and sexual orientation, socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, and when necessary, they obtain training, experience, or counsel to ensure competent service or research relating to such persons.

Biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators recognize that personal problems and conflicts may interfere with professional effectiveness. Accordingly, they refrain from undertaking any activity in which their personal problems are likely to lead to inadequate performance or harm to a client, colleague, student, or research participant.

Members of the biblio/poetry community accurately and objectively represent their qualifications. They do not refer to themselves as therapists if applicable state law or regulations prohibit them from doing so. They do not permit trainees, employees or supervisees to call themselves therapists if applicable state law or regulations prohibit this. They do not permit trainees, employees or supervisees to hold themselves out as competent to perform professional services beyond their training, level of experience, and competence.

Principle 3 - Public Statements:

In their public statements, announcements of services, advertising, and promotional activities, biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators represent accurately and objectively their professional qualifications, affiliations, and functions, as well as those of the institutions or organizations with which they may be associated. Announcements or advertisements of personal growth groups, workshops, and other professional activities should give a clear statement of purpose and a clear description of the experiences to be provided.

As also implied in Principle 2, members of the biblio/poetry community, in their public statements, announcements of services, advertising, and promotional activities, do not refer to themselves as therapists if applicable state law or regulations prohibit them from doing so.

Principle 4 - Confidentiality:

Biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators have a primary obligation to respect the confidentiality of information obtained from the persons in the course of their work as therapists. They reveal such information to others only with the consent of the person or the persons's legal representative, except in those unusual circumstances in which not to do so would result in clear danger to the person or to others. Where appropriate, biblio/poetry therapists inform their clients of the legal limits of confidentiality.

Information obtained in clinical or consulting relationships can be discussed in writings, lectures or other public forums only if adequate prior consent is obtained or if there is adequate disguise of all identifying information.

Biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators make provisions for maintaining confidentiality in the storage and disposal of records.

When working with minors or other persons who are unable to give voluntary, informed consent, biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators take special care to protect these persons' best interests.

Principle 5 - Welfare of the Client:

Biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators respect the integrity and protect the welfare of the people and groups with whom they work and they freely acknowledge that clients, students or participants in research have freedom of choice with regard to participation.

Biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators are continually cognizant of their own needs and of their potentially influential position vis-a-vis persons such as clients, students, and subordinates. They avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of such persons. Biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators make every effort to avoid dual relationships that could impair their professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation. Examples of such dual relationships include, but are not limited to, research with, treatment of or facilitation with employees, students, supervisees, close friends, or relatives. Sexual intimacies with clients are unethical.

Biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators make advance financial arrangements that safeguard the best interests of and are clearly understood by their clients.

Biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators terminate a clinical or consulting relationship when it is reasonably clear that the consumer is not benefitting from it. They offer to help the consumer locate alternative sources of assistance.

Members of the biblio/poetry community do not use their professional relationships with clients or trainees to further their own interest, in contrast to the interest of the client or trainee. Encouraging a client or trainee to participate in the professional's commercial enterprise, a relative's or friend's commercial enterprise, a social or political campaign, or an advocacy measure is unethical. Providing therapy to a trainee, except in an emergency situation, is unethical. A mentor/supervisor must exercise special care in requiring a trainee to buy a book written by the mentor/supervisor; such a requirement is ethical if the book is on the reading list of the Training Guide, otherwise it may be unethical, and the mentor/supervisor is encouraged to consult the Federation Ethics Committee.

Principle 6 - Professional Relationships:

Biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators act with due regard for the needs, special competencies, and obligations of their colleagues in their own and other professions. They respect the prerogatives and obligations of the institutions or organizations with which these other colleagues are associated.

In conducting research in institutions or organizations, biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators secure appropriate authorization to conduct such research. They are aware of their obligations to future researchers and ensure that host institutions receive adequate information about the research and proper acknowledgement of their contributions.

Publication credit is assigned to those who have contributed to a publication in proportion to their professional contributions.

When biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators know of an ethical violation by another biblio/poetry therapist or applied poetry facilitator, they informally attempt to resolve the issue by bringing the behavior to the attention of this colleague. If the misconduct is of a minor nature and/or appears to be due to lack of sensitivity, knowledge, or experience, such an informal solution is usually appropriate. Such informal correctives are made with sensitivity to any rights to confidentiality involved. If the violation does not seem amenable to informal solution, or is of a more serious nature, biblio/poetry therapists and applied poetry facilitators bring it to the attention of the Ethics Committee of the National Federation for Biblio/Poetry Therapy.

PROCEDURES FOR UPHOLDING STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND PRACTICE

Incorporated in 1983, the National Federation for Biblio/Poetry Therapy sets professional standards of excellence in the training and credentialing of biblio/poetry therapy and applied poetry practitioners and authorizes qualified credential holders to practice as mentor/supervisors. Credential holders and those seeking credentials have agreed to abide by the Federation's [Code of Ethics](#) and have signed adverse action statements and a mental health assurance. In addition to these stipulations, mentor/supervisors and those in training to become M/Ss have agreed to follow the [NFBPT Guide to Training Requirements](#), and to be familiar with any updates or distributed further details (eg. yellow pages) of these documents. The Federation takes seriously its responsibilities to uphold these standards which are designed to protect clients and trainees alike.

In rare instances, it may come to the attention of the Federation that one or more of its established standards have been compromised by a credential holder or seeker. This document outlines the process the Federation board will follow in the event of such a problem.

A respondent is defined for these purposes as a person who has received credentials, or who holds him/herself out as receiving credentials as a CAPF, CPT, PTR., and/or M/S, provisional M/S, mentor/supervisor candidate or any other designation or training title established by the Federation or who is in training for one of these designations against whom a complaint has been filed with the Federation board or with the Ethics committee.

The Ethics Committee shall consist of 3 voting members, plus the President as an *ex officio* member. The committee, upon referral from the President or from the Board, shall review and make determinations on ethics issues and charges of misconduct that relate to the functions and issues of the Federation. After appropriate investigation, the Ethics Committee shall prepare a written report, and forward that report, with any recommendations, to the full Board, for final action. If a member has to recuse herself or himself because of a possible conflict of interest, the Federation President will become the third voting member, in order to maintain a quorum. If additional members have to recuse themselves because of a possible conflict of interest, the President may appoint an *ad hoc* Committee as needed, per Article V, [Section 2](#). (*NFB/PT Bylaws, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph c., revised December, 2006*)

1. Initiation of Complaint

A suspected violation of or failure to follow the Code of Ethics, Training Guidelines, M/S yellow pages or other policies published on the Federation website may come to the

attention of the board in a number of ways, including a signed complaint filed by an individual, one filed by an institution or agency using or knowledgeable about the services of the respondent, or during the review of an application for certification or recertification, or the review of interim reports. Anonymous complaints will not be considered.

The Federation board will bring the complaint to the attention of its appropriate committee, which will investigate its merits. This may include the collection of any further needed evidence, and may include asking the respondent or others to provide information, documentation, statements, or other material the committee deems relevant. The respondent is encouraged to provide the committee any information specific to the complaint, including names of individuals who could corroborate relevant information. The board will uphold its ethical standards while conducting a thorough investigation.

If the committee determines that the complaint is unfounded or the problem to be of a degree that warrants no further action, the committee will recommend that the Federation board dismiss the complaint. If the complaint is found to have merit, the committee will then determine under which of the three levels described in Section 4 the violation would likely fall, and proceed accordingly.

2. Notification of Investigation

The respondent will be notified of any initial investigation. The committee will further notify the respondent as to whether the complaint has been dismissed or further action is being taken according to procedures listed below.

3. Voting

Disciplinary actions here described will require a two-thirds majority vote of the board. Ex-officio and/or advisory board members are not voting members.

Committee/board members with a conflict of interest with respect to the respondent may participate in committee discussion, after fully disclosing any conflict of interest, but will recuse themselves from voting.

4. Levels of Action of Complaint

Level I: Formal Warning

A warning is given in the case of a respondent who is involved in a relatively minor, non-repetitive situation that is deemed very likely to be corrected.

Any trainees of a respondent mentor/supervisor, provisional mentor/supervisor or mentor/supervisor candidate will not be notified of a warning.

The committee will define remedial action(s) the respondent must take.
Examples: working with an M/S, taking a class.

Documentation that remedial action(s) are being adequately performed will be required.

The board will set a time frame within which the remedial action(s) must be met. Failure to complete the work in the time allotted may result in a second formal warning, with new requirements, or with a recommendation for probation.

A warning stays on a credential holder's or trainee's permanent record, to be held in confidence by the Federation, and may be considered relevant to any future disciplinary actions. For example, repeated warnings may be grounds for probation.

Level II: Probation

Probation is imposed in the case of a respondent who has made single or repeated violations or errors that demonstrate failure to act according to best standard practices and/or non-compliance with documented Federation expectations.

If the respondent is an M/S, provisional M/S, or M/SC, his/her trainees will be notified of the Federation's concerns and the probation. The Credentials Committee will assist trainees who wish to transfer to another M/S or to arrange for support from a secondary M/S while remaining under the guidance of the original mentor/supervisor.

While on probation, an M/SC, provisional M/S or M/S may not take on new trainees. Pages describing the M/S's program will be suspended from the Federation website, and his/her name removed from the list of credentialed members on the website until such time as the probation is lifted.

A citation for probation will stay on a credential holder's or trainee's permanent record, to be held in confidence by the Federation, and may be considered relevant to any future disciplinary actions.

Conditions of Probation

The respondent will be required by the Federation board to undertake remedial action and to provide documentation of improvements, remedial efforts, evidence of supervision, etc.

The Federation may require a respondent to engage a consultant with the expertise to help the respondent meet professional standards and required remedial conditions. The Federation must approve the consultant chosen, and may set certain requirements (ex. that the consultant be a clinician.) The respondent will submit a statement detailing why and how this professional will be appropriate to meet the respondent's consultation needs. The consultant will provide the Federation with his/her CV, including supervisory and consulting experience, and a statement outlining the ways in which s/he plans to assist and monitor the respondent's progress.

The consultant's function is to support both a respondent and a respondent's trainees and to inform the Federation board of any serious concerns. The consultant will not be held responsible for any further violations the respondent may commit; sole responsibility for the respondent's actions rests with him/herself. The consultant may be expected to be reasonably financially compensated for his/her consultation. If the respondent is unwilling or unable to meet this requirement of probation, revocation of the credential will result.

Probation is to last no less than six months and no more than two years. The respondent will be given a reasonable time frame within which remedial requirements must be fulfilled. Either at the end of that period, or earlier at the request of the respondent, or in the event of another violation of Federation policy that raises serious concerns about the respondent continuing to practice, proceedings for considering the ending of the probationary period may be instituted. Any consultant assigned to the respondent will file a recommendation with the Federation board outlining his/her assessment of the respondent's current practices and abilities. After (1) review of the consultant's recommendation, (2) review of the respondent's documentation of fulfilled requirements, and (3) the board's determination of the respondent's willingness and ability to support and abide by the Federation's established professional standards, the board may lift the probation, returning the respondent to his/her former status, advising any trainees who were notified of the probation that it has been lifted, and replacing any website information. Any costs accrued for reinstatement will be paid by the respondent. If the board is not satisfied that necessary changes and/or learning have occurred or is not provided with the necessary documents within thirty (30) days of a request, the board may vote to extend the probation or revoke the credential or remove the trainee from the training program.

Level III: Revocation of Credential

In cases of egregious violations of the Code of Ethics, the Training Guide Requirements, best practices, or the unsatisfactory completion of a term of probation, the Federation board may vote to revoke the credential of a certified credential holder or to permanently remove a trainee from a training program. The board at its discretion will determine what constitutes an egregious violation.

Any affected trainees will be notified of the revocation by the Federation and will be assisted by the Credentials Committee in finding a new M/S.

5. Voluntary Surrender of Credential or Withdrawal from Training Status

A respondent may voluntarily surrender his/her credential or withdraw from training at any time before the board has reached a decision about a disciplinary action. Such an action means the respondent may not file an appeal and is ineligible for recertification or further training.

6. Appeals Process

Once the Federation has imposed a disciplinary action, the respondent will have twenty (20) days from the day notification by certified mail was sent to initiate an appeal. After such initiation, the respondent will have an additional ten (10) days to file the appeal. The Federation board will consider an appeal in light of (1) errors of facts that provided the basis of the disciplinary action or (2) newly submitted information. Based on the *new* information, the Federation board will notify the respondent that its original decision stands, or it may choose to modify the terms of the decision, or rescind the action altogether.

If the respondent does not initiate an appeal or complete the filing of an appeal in the time frame outlined above, the board's action will take effect.

7. After the Disciplinary Action Has Been Finalized

Once a warning or probation has been finalized, the respondent must meet the terms of the disciplinary action in order to be reinstated to full and regular status.

In the case of revocation, the disciplinary action was most likely taken because of a serious lapse in judgment or repeated infractions or difficulties that the respondent did not adequately rectify. As judgment, aptitude and attitude cannot be taught nor clearly measured, the Federation board cannot risk reinstating the credential of an individual who cannot be closely supervised because poetry therapy professionals generally work independently. Thus, revocation is irreversible.

8. General Matters

The Federation expects that all credential-holders will meet the self-reporting requirements of: (a) any regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over their professional practices; (b) any professional organization(s) to which they belong; and (c) their professional-liability (malpractice) insurance carriers.

The respondent is responsible for adjusting financial arrangements with any clients and/or trainees affected by the warning, probation or revocation. The Federation has no fiduciary duty to make good on such contracts.

Credential or training fees paid to the Federation will not be refunded if the Federation imposes a disciplinary action nor if the credential holder chooses to surrender his/her credential or withdraw from training.

9. Separability Clause

If any section, paragraph, phrase or provision of this discipline policy is declared invalid or inapplicable to any credential-holder or trainee for any reason, the remainder of this policy will not be invalidated.

I have read and agree to train and/or practice under the NFB/PT Code of Ethics:

Name (print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____