

Code of Practice

The Association of Facilitators (AoF) provides a wide range of opportunities and resources for members to develop the skills, values and ethics that underpin their own facilitation practice, including our FACETS[®] Facilitator Competency Model and three levels of Facilitator Accreditation.

This Code of Practice is a key resource to support members of the AoF in their delivery of high standards of facilitation to client groups and to build healthy contracts and relationships with clients, colleagues and a wider support network.

All AoF Affiliate and Accredited Members are required to indicate their acceptance of and adherence to this Code of Practice as a condition of their membership. The Code of Practice covers the following areas:

- 1 Jurisdiction
- 2 Intention
- 3 Client Relationships
- 4 Contracting
- 5 Client Service
- 6 Confidentiality
- 7 Professional Competence
- 8 Co-Working
- 9 Supervision
- 10 Compliance
- 11 Research
- 12 Promotion & Reputation

This Code of Practice is subject to periodic review by the AoF, and amendments will be informed through dialogue with members and clients.

1 JURISDICTION

These guidelines apply to Affiliated and Accredited members of the AoF in the management of their professional responsibilities to clients, colleagues and the wider profession to which they are engaged as a facilitator.

2 INTENTION

This Code of Practice is intended as a practical resource for AoF members and those who use their services. It serves to

- 2.1 Allow AoF members to communicate to clients and potential clients their commitment to high standards of facilitation as engendered by their membership of AoF and adherence to this Code of Practice.
- 2.2 Protect and inform individuals and organisations who are inquiring about or receiving the services of AoF members.
- 2.3 Articulate a set of standards which is agreed by members and which, if found to be not adhered to in spirit or letter, will lead to temporary or permanent exclusion from membership.

3 CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

All interactions that form and evolve a relationship with clients and prospective clients are subject to the following principles:

- 3.1 Members need to recognise the importance of a good relationship for effective work and be cognisant of the power and influence their role and responsibility gives them.
- 3.2 A member must act in a manner consistent with a recognition of power dynamics and not exploit a client financially, sexually or emotionally for their own personal advantage or their own needs.
- 3.3 The health and welfare of the client and in organisational terms the client system is the member's primary concern.
- 3.4 The dignity, intrinsic worth and uniqueness of client representatives are to be respected at all times.
- 3.5 Members should be respectful of their client's age, health, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnic group, social context and all other significant aspects of their life and identity
- 3.6 Sexual harassment in the form of deliberate or repeated comments, gestures, or physical contacts of a sexual nature that are, or could be considered offensive by the client, are unethical and unacceptable.
- 3.7 Members need to be prepared to declare any conflict, or potential conflict, between their relationships or professional commitments and the interests of the client. When a potential conflict of interest exists or emerges it is the member's responsibility to declare it and be prepared to work through the issues with the client.
- 3.8 Members need to recognise that dual relationships – where the client or significant member of the client organisation is also an employee, close friend, relative, or partner – will likely impair their professional judgement and cause undue stress to clients and themselves.
- 3.9 Members are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a professional relationship and a social one, and for making explicit such boundaries to the client.

4 CONTRACTING

The process of contracting with clients is established from the start of an engagement and is also expected to continue throughout the lifecycle of the work. It may be written or verbal or both and must be subject to the following principles:

- 4.1 Members are fully responsible for developing a clear and explicit contract with their client within which they feel confident to provide a high quality service to the client.
- 4.2 Contracts should be explicit regarding fees, expenses, tax/VAT and other financial liabilities, payment schedule, and cancellation of bookings by a client or member.
- 4.3 The agreement needs to specify the outcomes being facilitated, success measures, expected way of working (timescale, action, interventions, methods, use of associates), responsibilities, boundaries and checkpoints for reviewing the terms of the contract and progress of the work.
- 4.4 Subsequent changes to the contract must be negotiated and agreed with the client.
- 4.5 Particular attention should be given to the concluding phases of client work, in full recognition of the potential impact of endings.
- 4.6 Should a member's professional assessment not accord with a client's decision to terminate, a member should facilitate termination in a manner which is respectful of the client's autonomy.
- 4.7 Introducing a change of facilitator or ending the work should be managed with care and consideration for the client and facilitators' dignity and well-being.
- 4.8 A member has the right to end the work with appropriate notice, or even without notice in special circumstances, including the behaviour of the client making the work no longer viable.

- 4.9 In the event of a formal complaint arising, the guidance for Dealing with Grievance available via the AoF website will provide useful support for obtaining resolution.

5 CLIENT SERVICE

Members continually strive to understand and meet client expectations and work with the group to bring about the agreed outcomes

- 5.1 The expectations and desired outcomes from working with a client should be explored on an on-going basis in order to meet evolving needs, circumstances, values and beliefs.
- 5.2 Members should work towards the development of self-support and autonomy of clients and away from creating a relationship where their client becomes dependent upon them.
- 5.3 Members are committed to raising awareness of the process and relationship aspects of groups in all circumstances, including when conflicts or change or direction arise.
- 5.4 Members continually seek a group's conscious agreement to the process and do not impose or unduly influence the direction of the group in any direction other than that agreed.
- 5.5 Members work towards the development of equitable relationships within the group, and where appropriate highlight power dynamics in the patterns of interaction within and between individuals, the client group and the wider system.
- 5.6 Members are committed to creating an environment in which all participants have their views, thoughts, desires and feelings attended to.
- 5.7 Members must take all reasonable steps to protect clients from physical or psychological harm during the work.
- 5.8 Members are committed to disclosing anything that they become aware of during the course of work that might prevent them from working effectively with the client or group participants.

6 CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is intrinsic to good practice and the following principles apply:

- 6.1 All information exchanged with the client should be regarded as confidential unless agreed otherwise.
- 6.2 Neither the content of discussions with or witnessed between individuals nor individual participants' thoughts, feelings or behaviours, nor a summary of impressions formed should be reported on without those individual's explicit and informed consent.
- 6.3 The expectations of confidentiality imposed on clients or group members should be clarified through discussion and explicit, stated agreement.
- 6.4 Where a member has any doubts about the limits of confidentiality she/he should seek supervision.
- 6.5 A client should be informed at the outset of the work that in extreme circumstances, such as when illegalities are illuminated or where the client is a danger to themselves or others, a member may break confidentiality and take appropriate action.

7 PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

Members have a responsibility to maintain their own effectiveness and ability to practice and to pay attention to the limits of their competence.

- 7.1 Members have a responsibility to actively seek developmental outcomes for themselves through any or all of the following; personal development activities, supervision, training, research, critical reflection on experiences, and self/peer review.
- 7.2 Members are duty bound to acknowledge in full the source of any learning material, tools,

methods, principles or theories they present to the client, and to make clear any adaptations they themselves have made.

- 7.3 Where members modify and develop theories based upon their experience, they should gather support for their ideas by circulating to other professionals for peer review, thus adding to the body of professional knowledge.
- 7.4 Members are responsible for keeping an up-to-date record of their continuing professional development. This should be available for AoF to review on request. (The Learning Record online tool is ideally suited for this purpose and available to all Affiliate and Accredited Members. Learning Records are confidential and only visible to the member and, for accreditation purposes, to their AoF trainers/supervisors).
- 7.5 Where a member suspects or becomes aware that they are reaching the limits of their competence then consultation with a colleague and/or supervisor is essential. It may be appropriate to refer the client to a colleague.
- 7.6 Members should not work with clients at a point where their capacity is impaired because of emotional problems, illness, drugs, alcohol or any other reason.

8 CO-WORKING

Facilitators often receive referrals from colleagues, co-facilitate, sub-contract work to colleagues, or provide work to a client through a third party, or any combination of the above. In all cases the principles outlined in all sections of this Code of Practice apply to AoF members in addition to the following principles:

- 8.1 A member will always have responsibility for a clear, explicit and ethical contracting relationship, whether directly or indirectly with the client, and/or in partnership with a co-facilitator.
- 8.2 Members should take care to openly acknowledge the source of a referral of a client and to demonstrate transparency and fairness regarding any agreement to compensate, include or inform the source of the referral if client work results.
- 8.3 Members entering into any co-working arrangement should ensure that they have the relationship and contracting skill to do so, and that they support and have confidence in their co-working partners to collaborate competently in order to meet the client's needs.
- 8.4 Concerns or questions about the conduct, competence or ethics of a colleague or co-worker should be raised directly using personal and professional judgment to decide whether to initiate a discussion in the first instance with the individual, the client or external authorities.
- 8.5 Co-working relationships, like all client relationships, should be reviewed and explored directly with the co-worker and in supervision.

9 SUPERVISION

Supervision provides a challenging and supportive context for members to share their work, enhance their effectiveness, and support the client.

- 9.1 All members are expected to support themselves with supervision arrangements. Supervision sessions should be timely, appropriate, relevant, and evidenced. (The AoF Learning Record is ideally suited to recording supervision activities. See 7.4 above).
- 9.2 Members should regularly review their supervision arrangements to ensure a focus which is purposeful and relevant to the member's professional practice and supports the work in which they are engaged or plan to be engaged.
- 9.3 Supervision should be a regular activity and in addition, suitable arrangements should be in place for ad-hoc or short-term consultation in the case of urgent issues or difficulties.
- 9.4 If members are unsure whether supervision in addition to their usual arrangement is needed, they should err on the side of seeking supervision, rather than not.

10 COMPLIANCE

Members must comply with the law of the territory in which they operate and with the requirements of the client organisation

- 10.1 Members must comply with safety and insurance regulations specified by their client, or negotiate an alternative. If for any reason, members are unable or unwilling to comply with any rules or regulations communicated to them by the client, members are responsible for making their position clear to their client, and agreeing an alternative or terminating the contract.
- 10.2 Members should keep client information under secure conditions and ensure that any computer-based records comply with the requirements of the Data Protection legislation
- 10.3 If a member is convicted of any Notifiable Offences they must inform AoF.
- 10.4 Members who become aware of the intention to commit a crime in the course of their professional practice should seek advice immediately, using their judgment as to whether to initiate a discussion in the first instance with the individual, the client or external authorities.
- 10.5 AoF expect to be informed of any significant misunderstanding or dispute with clients that escalates to mediation or legal recourse. Further, we require Members to inform us of the outcome of any formal proceeding, and ensure that learning from any such process is recorded and pursued.

11 RESEARCH

Members are encouraged to conduct their own research enquiries with ethical endeavour and to seek permission for any sharing of information that results.

- 11.1 Members are obliged to conduct any research intended for publication or dissemination only with full disclosure of the intention and nature of the inquiry to any organisations, groups or individuals who are the subjects of or participants in the research.
- 11.2 All research participants should provide written consent to anything published that refers to them by name and also verbal and/or written consent to any agreement to include their contribution in anonymised or summarised form.
- 11.3 All source material should be fully acknowledged in any published or disseminated work
- 11.4 Members need to ensure that they have the skill, competence, framework and support (e.g. backing of a research body and/or peer reviewers) to pursue high ethical and quality standards of research.

12 PROMOTION AND REPUTATION

Members should conduct themselves personally and professionally in such a way as to promote confidence in the facilitation profession

- 12.1 Members should be truthful about their skills, competence, experience, background, client feedback and qualifications and willing to provide evidence of such to AoF and clients as requested.
- 12.2 Members should only describe themselves as affiliated to any organisation in such a manner that accurately and properly represents their relationship with that organisation.
- 12.3 Advertising or promotion activities should not make negative statements about others.
- 12.4 AoF members act as representatives of the Association and its Members more generally and must at all times conduct themselves in a professional and positive manner, demonstrating confidence in AoF as an organisation, acknowledging use of AoF resources and complying with guidelines relating to use of logo and accreditation status.

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