

## **Code of Ethics for SGfB individual members with title right “Counsellor SGfB”**

Complementary to the ethical principles of the SGfB

### **In general**

This SGfB Code of Ethics regulates the professional behavior of SGfB counsellors as well as their public appearance.

The ethical principles and the Code of Ethics serve

- the orientation of professional activities for SGfB counsellors
- the protection of the public against unethical professional behavior of SGfB counsellors
- as the basis for the identification of complaints and support services.

For SGfB counsellors the ethical principles and the Code of Ethics prevail over those formulated by training institutions. By signing you are obliged to comply with them.

### **The Ethics Committee**

The SGfB Ethics Committee is the contact point for ethical questions SGfB counsellors may ask themselves. The Ethics Committee promotes discussions on professional ethical issues.

### **Code of Ethics**

The Code of Ethics addresses the basic attitude of SGfB counsellors which is based on the compliance with universal human rights and on the respect for individual, gender specific, cultural, religious and social differences. It is regularly reviewed and adapted, if necessary.

## **1. Professional ethical principles**

- 1.1 SGfB counsellors recognize the dignity and uniqueness of each individual human being.
- 1.2 SGfB counsellors practice their profession in full compliance with the laws of the state or the canton in which they work.
- 1.3 The protection of their clients is the primary concern of SGfB counsellors.
- 1.4 SGfB counsellors fully recognize that the relationship with their clients is particularly based on trust.
- 1.5 SGfB counsellors refrain from words and actions that violate the dignity of their clients and their relationships. They refrain from discrimination as regards gender, race, social status, religion, nationality, age, disability or sexual orientation. They reflect on their own values and standards in these respects.
- 1.6 SGfB counsellors promote their clients' autonomy and responsibility towards themselves and society. They ensure their clients' independence, respect their personal integrity and refrain from any abuse of personal or structural power.
- 1.7 SGfB counsellors seek a comprehensive professional expertise through ongoing further training, supervision and self-experience, the duration and extent of which are laid down in the SGfB Quality regulations.

## **2. Professional ethical obligations**

### **2.1 Qualifications and professional competencies of SGfB counsellors**

- 2.1.1 SGfB counsellors should only offer services and apply methods for which they are qualified and legitimized on the basis of their training, further training or experience. They ensure a high level of professional competence.
- 2.1.2 They agree to involve appropriate experts in their professional practice for activities

- beyond their own competencies.
- 2.1.3 They draw upon the latest research findings, integrate the outcomes into new developments in their work, recognize the necessity of their own learning process and apply these insights into their practice.
  - 2.1.4 They agree to review their practical professional activities as part of supervision/intervision.
  - 2.1.5 In case their own professional activities cannot be performed adequately as a result of illness, partiality or personal crises, they take measure to ensure the appropriate continuation of the counselling process of their clients. The same applies to any extended absences.

## **2.2 The creation of the professional relationship**

- 2.2.1 SGfB counsellors respect their clients' dignity and integrity, particularly their right of self-determination and their personal responsibility and seek maximum transparency. The client's intention to end the counselling process is to be respected. SGfB counsellors especially seek to create a careful completion phase.
- 2.2.2 SGfB counsellors have a duty to inform their clients. At the beginning of the counselling process they inform their clients clearly and openly about the general conditions, the objectives and methods, risks and limits as well as the probable duration of the counselling process. They are committed to establishing clear fees agreements prior to the acceptance of an assignment. They are transparent with respect to their own qualification and working method. They provide information about the SGfB Code of Ethics and make it available on request.
- 2.2.3 SGfB counsellors do not take financial, personal or other advantage of their clients' vulnerability in any way. They carefully reflect on the dynamics of transference and counter transference.
- 2.2.4 SGfB counsellors do not commit sexual offenses and refrain from behavior which arises from excessive narcissistic neediness.
- 2.2.5 Sexual activities and sexual relationships with clients during and outside of the counselling process are not permitted. The same applies to verbal assaults in the erotic and sexual fields. Since the transference dynamics do not cease to exist, sexual relationships with clients are only permitted two years after the conclusion of the counselling process. The responsibility lies exclusively with the SGfB counsellors.
- 2.2.6 In case specific treatment methods include physical contact, clients should be comprehensively informed about their function and effects, and give prior consent.
- 2.2.7 SGfB counsellors do not accept assignments that include activities that go against the professional and ethical guidelines and provide adequate reasons for their decision.
- 2.2.8 These professional and ethical principles and obligations apply for SGfB counsellors also beyond the counselling process in as far as there exists a connection with it and in as far as a restriction of personal freedom is legitimate and proportionate.

## **2.3 Obligation to keep records, professional privacy and data protection**

- 2.3.1 SGfB counsellors have an obligation to keep records. They agree to strict compliance with professional privacy and to actively secure the information entrusted to them.
- 2.3.2 SGfB counsellors are at any time obliged to account for the counselling process to their clients.
- 2.3.3 Passing on information is permitted only with the explicit consent of the individuals concerned.

- 3.3.4 SGfB counsellors make sure that all documents containing confidential information are protected from third-party access.
- 2.3.5 The same professional privacy and data protection applies to audio and video recordings.
- 2.3.6 The use of data material concerning clients for training, further training or publication purposes is only permitted with their consent and without disclosing their identity.
- 2.3.7 SGfB counsellors should take the necessary measures to guarantee that the clients' data material remains secure, also in case they are no longer able to do so themselves as a result of sickness, accident or death. They can appoint a person of their trust who is familiar with the SGfB Code of Ethics and who preserves or destroys the files in their place.

## **2.4 Publication of the offers**

- 2.4.1 SGfB counsellors commit themselves to publicise their services in an honest, factual and appropriate way.
- 2.4.2 SGfB counsellors provide clear, relevant and comprehensive information about their training, title and experience. On request documentary evidence of these qualifications must be provided.
- 2.4.3 SGfB counsellors do not impose their services and refrain from making unrealistic promises concerning learning or counselling success.
- 2.4.4 Commissions for assignments are neither paid for nor accepted.

## **3. Conflicts and complaints, appeal proceedings**

- 3.1 The possibility of complaints against a SGfB counsellor is open to persons concerned when the SGfB's ethical principles and Code of Ethics have been infringed. A complaint is to be addressed in writing to the SGfB board. It does not in any way imply that the person concerned renounces his or her right to take further steps under civil or criminal law against the bearer of the SGfB title right.
- 3.2 The president passes the violations on to the Ethics Committee, when no solution can be found informally.
- 3.3 The Ethics Committee can assist a SGfB counsellor, who gets into conflict with clients, colleagues, public or private institutions as a result of professional ethical obligations or ethical principles in an advisory role.
- 3.4 SGfB counsellors acknowledge the obligation to provide all the necessary information to the Ethics Committee in complaint cases within the professional privacy rules, in order to resolve the situation.

3.5 The Ethics Committee is responsible in complaint cases. It can make recommendations and impose the following sanctions when SGfB counsellors violate the ethical principles and the ethical code;

- prescribe an offer of assistance (therapy, supervision, amends, etc)
- reprimand
- reprimand and threat of exclusion
- exclusion and removal from the register of SGfB counselors

In the case of exclusion the Ethics Committee presents its proposal to the board, who will ban the SGfB counsellor from membership.

3.6 The member concerned can appeal against the decision of the committee within a 30-day period to the SGfB appeals committee. This committee takes the final decision. The costs incurred will be charged to the guilty SGfB counsellor(s). The proceedings are laid down in the appeals regulations.

This Code of Ethics for SGfB counsellors was approved by the Delegates Assembly on 12th November 2007 and immediately put into effect.

Editorial adjustments were undertaken subsequent to the amendments to the statutes of 21<sup>st</sup> March 2011.