

## Ethical Principles for Peer Responders<sup>i</sup>

Peer responders are lay caregivers who are not bound by the same ethical code as professional counselors. However, it is crucial that peer responders follow ethical principles that support the dignity and respect of those they are caring for and that they operate within the bounds of their competence so that they help and do not harm.

### Competence

**Work only within the bounds of your competence and expertise.** Your competence is related to education, training, experience, behavior, and reputation. It is important to have a clear understanding of what you have been trained to do and your designated role. When in doubt, always consult and ask for help.

As you use the knowledge and training you have received and operate within the boundaries of your limitations, you can also grow and be stretched and challenged beyond your own expectations, which will increase your confidence.

### Integrity

**Serve others with honesty and integrity.** Keep your promises, follow through on commitments, be up front about what you will and won't do, and give willingly. Make honest judgments about whether or not you are the best person to help in that situation.

Pay attention to your own emotional and physical needs and be sure to get help for yourself when you are impacted by the crisis situation. Make sure to get consultation and make appropriate referrals when additional expertise is needed.

### Humility

**Consider others at least equal to if not better than yourself.** Honor and respect those you work with, remembering that they are in pain and in a very vulnerable state. While others may be judging them or thinking less of them in their weakness, your responsibility is to see the best in them and the potential in them, just as Jesus does in us.

You can also have an important role in helping others to raise their esteem of the people you are helping.

## Confidentiality

**Always maintain respect for the workers you serve by honoring their personal privacy.** Except in circumstances of child abuse or imminent danger to self or others, an individual should maintain the right to determine who becomes aware of their personal information. It will be very tempting to answer probing, curious questions from other peers, so this will be a difficult principle to practice and yet it is crucial for the trust of the ones you serve and for your own integrity as a crisis responder.

It should be made clear at the beginning of an intervention who will be given information if a request is made by their organization. Remember, it IS appropriate to discuss confidential information with a person qualified to provide professional consultation.

Additional Resources/Supporting Documents:

---

<sup>1</sup> For American Association of Christian Counselors Code of Ethics, go to <https://www.aacc.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/AACC-Code-of-Ethics-Master-Document.pdf>