

# Hong Kong Association of Drama Therapists Code of Ethics

## Preamble

Hong Kong Association of Drama Therapists (HKADT) is a registered society founded in 2009 to connect and promote professional development of drama therapists in Hong Kong. The Association serves professionals registered with internationally recognized bodies, including the North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA), UK Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC), and New Zealand and Asian Creative Arts Therapies Association (ANZACATA), as well as students study in drama therapy programs accredited by any of the above organizations.

Drama therapy is a therapeutic practice that involves using drama and theatrical techniques in an intentional and systematic manner to facilitate clients' (individual and group members) personal growth and enhance their mental health wellbeing.

Drama Therapists are duly registered professionals who possess dignity and reputation with high moral values as well as professional competence in the practice of their profession, and they shall adhere to, observe, and practice this set of ethical and moral principles, standards, and values.

## Purpose

This Code of Ethics reflects the ethical principles and values of the HKADT, serving as an aspirational guide to professional conduct. The purpose of this Code is to serve its members and the general public by providing standards of professional competence and ethics in the field of drama therapy.

## Applicability

This Code Ethics is applicable to all members of the HKADT. It is incumbent upon every member to acquaint themselves with this Code, understand its application to their professional conduct, and strive to adhere to its principles and standards.

## Core values

This Code of Ethics is grounded in 4 core values:

1. Clients' safety & benefits as the first priority
2. Transparency & Equality in Communication
3. Congruence & Honesty
4. Respect for clients' rights

These core values should be considered in determining all ethical courses of action.

## 1. Professional Integrity

a. A drama therapist should uphold responsibility for actions in clinical work, teaching, supervision, research, public speech and/or any other occasions in which this professional identity is used or reasonably expected, and complies with ethical and legal standards of behavior.

b. A drama therapist shall not knowingly make statements that are false, deceptive, or fraudulent concerning research, clinical or business practices, or other work activities on behalf of themselves or those organizations with which the member is affiliated, nor casually make ungrounded or potentially misleading statements to clients, students, colleagues and the public.

c. A drama therapist shall always perform their service in good faith, accurately represents their training, techniques and skills, and shall not present information that is misleading or inaccurate. A drama therapist recognizes professional credentials not only as a sign of training background/qualification but also as an agreement to be regulated by the corresponding institution, serving as a ground for the public trust. A drama therapist uses only credentials to which they are legally entitled, for example: degree(s) from an accredited institution and/or registration or certification from professional organizations. A drama therapist shall not use any credential without full completion of relevant trainings, shall not represent organizational membership as indication of credentialed status or use idiosyncratic professional titles and initials that may be misleading.

d. A drama therapist is fully accountable for the professional judgement, action, and words/verbal presentation/communication under professional identity, adhering to the relevant ethical standard.

e. A drama therapist has an active responsibility to uphold ethical standard, to make ethical professional judgements in relation to concrete situation, and to communicate with relevant parties regarding such judgements. A drama therapist shall not perform any action that violates ethical standards even if such action is not illegal.

f. If the request of agencies, clients, or other parties in collaboration may not match or would potentially violate with the ethical code or principles, a drama therapist should make further clarifications regarding the ethical standards that they uphold as a response. If such communication is not effective, a drama therapist should seek assistance from supervisor and/or the HKADT.

g. A drama therapist is responsible to report any conduct by another drama therapist or helping professional that is

or is likely to be harmful to a person or organization.

h. A drama therapist is obligated to cooperate in any ethical investigations or proceedings required by the HKADT in response to complaints or inquiries.

i. A drama therapist gives accurate and objective information, and offers adequate feedback to students/supervisees regarding knowledge, skills and ethics while teaching or training. In a teaching or supervising role that safeguard the professional standards, a drama therapist shares also a part of the responsibility for the ethical standards of students and supervisees, and has to take sufficient action in regulating student's behaviors and reporting student's unethical misconduct if such regulating action is ineffective.

j. A drama therapist educator shall not teach techniques/procedures of which the drama therapist has not been sufficiently trained with respect to related qualification, training standard, and/or credential system. Drama therapist educators evaluate trainees' performance on relevant and established program requirements throughout training.

k. A drama therapist refrains from engaging in any behavior which could reasonably be interpreted as harassment, sexual or non-sexual to clients, students, supervisees, colleagues or the public. Especially in clinical practices, they monitor their therapeutic relationships to ascertain if clients perceive any harassment and address that concern promptly.

l. The HKADT may take action against a member after their conviction of a criminal offence, expulsion or suspension from another affiliated psychological and/or drama therapy association. The association may notify the public, other bodies and individuals of its actions.

## 2. Competence to practice

a. When the therapeutic needs of a client exceed therapists' level of competence, a drama therapist seeks supervision/consultation, refers to other professionals, and helps client to seek better service.

b. A drama therapist provides services and represents themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, professional consultation, supervised experience, or other relevant professional experience.

c. A drama therapist provides services in substantive areas or use intervention techniques or approaches that are new to them only after being engaged in appropriate studies, training, professional consultation, and supervision by people who are competent in those interventions or techniques.

d. When generally recognized standards do not exist with respect to an emerging area of practice, a drama therapist exercises careful judgment and takes responsible steps, including appropriate education, research, training, professional consultation, and supervision, to ensure the competence in their work and to protect clients from harm.

e. A drama therapist takes adequate steps, through supervision or personal psychotherapy (individual & group), to prevent personal circumstances from interfering with the quality of service offered to others. If there is a likelihood that personal circumstances will prevent them from performing work-related activities in a competent manner, a drama therapist takes appropriate measures, such as obtaining professional consultation or assistance, to determine whether to limit, suspend, or terminate work-related duties to protect clients from harm.

f. A drama therapist receives systematic training in a competent manner in accordance with policies, procedures, care standards, knowledge competences, and code of ethics of the professional body/bodies that accredited their drama therapy credential(s).

g. A drama therapist keeps up to date with new clinical developments related to practice, continues to develop professional skills and cultural competence, and maintains credentials through continuing education.

h. A drama therapist practices in a competent manner in accordance with policies, procedures, care standards, knowledge competences, and code of ethics of the professional body/bodies that accredited their drama therapy credential(s).

i. A drama therapist has the sensitivity towards physical interaction and nonverbal communication, which is the base of the use of therapeutic touch and movement intervention.

j. A drama therapist educator is knowledgeable regarding ethical aspects of the profession and makes students/supervisees aware of their responsibilities.

k. A drama therapist follows standard guidelines for referencing another's theories, research or clinical work in publications or presentations.

### 3. Informed consent

a. A drama therapist actively informs clients and organizations which recruit the clients, including providing written materials (e.g. documents with service descriptions, promotion materials, or consent forms) and/or verbal descriptions, of 1) the nature of the service provided, 2) the associations that they are affiliated with (if any), 3) the purpose and expected duration of the service, 4) clients' rights to decline or withdraw from the service at any time once the services has begun, 5) foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawal, 6) reasonably foreseeable factors that might affect clients' participation in the therapy process (e.g. potential discomfort), 7) fee(s) structure of therapy, 8) limits of confidentiality, and 9) contact information for inquiries about the therapy. This information should be communicated to clients and organizations in advance. A drama therapist provides opportunities for potential clients to ask questions and receive answers regarding the information provided. A drama therapist ensures the contents informed are accurate, timely, complete/comprehensive, and in accordance with the local law and regulations.

b. A drama therapist uses culturally, developmentally and literacy appropriate language on the consent form that is understandable to the person(s) providing the consent.

c. Where limitations to understanding are apparent such as cognitive deficits or with young children, a drama therapist secures informed consent from a legal guardian and obtains assent from the individual.

d. A drama therapist specifies their qualifications, nature of the sector of organization and the nature of service provided in the consent form and other materials given to clients in advance of the service.

e. A drama therapist educator ensures that a current and accurate description of program goals and objectives, course descriptions, curriculum and content, fee structures, and completion criteria that must be satisfied for completion of the program is provided to students.

f. When conducting therapy, training, training therapy, supervision, research, or providing assessment or consulting services, a drama therapist obtains informed consent of the individual(s) or legal guardian(s).

g. A drama therapist actively informs research participants, including providing written materials (e.g. a consent form) and verbal descriptions, of 1) the purpose, expected duration and procedures of the study, 2) their rights to decline or withdraw from the research at any time once the research has begun, 3) foreseeable

consequences of declining or withdrawing, 4) reasonably foreseeable factors that might affect their participation in the research (e.g. potential risk, discomfort or adverse effects), 5) any prospective research benefits, 6) incentives for participation, 7) limits of confidentiality, and 8) the principle investigator and the contact person for any questions or complaints about the research study. This information should be communicated to research participants in advance even participants did not ask for them. A drama therapist provides opportunities for potential participants to ask questions and receive answers regarding the information provided.

h. A drama therapist gains permission from the individual(s) to whom services are provided, or their legal representatives, before recording voices or images.

i. A drama therapist informs clients the implication of any assessment, record keeping, therapeutic plan, and have an realistic and reasonable expectation based on this understanding. A drama therapist allows reasonable time for clients to understand these information, and provided opportunities for them to ask questions and receive answers.

j. A drama therapist periodically reviews their informed consent procedures with clients.

k. If a drama therapy program is affiliated with organization(s) outside Hong Kong, a drama therapy educator should clarify with the students and prospective students the organization's linkage with the affiliated program(s), and the nature, legitimacy and responsibilities of the organization and the program(s), and the qualification acquired upon completion of the program.

l. A drama therapist shall obtain informed consent from clients for the above activities.

## 4. Confidentiality

- a. A drama therapist has a primary responsibility to maintain confidentiality with respect to 1) the therapeutic relationship, 2) all information and creative works resulting from clinical sessions and the therapeutic relationship, 3) information obtained in the course of practice, supervision, teaching, or research, and 4) client's personal data, with reference to local regulations and ordinance, e.g. The Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. Exception to confidentiality is subject to the local law and regulations.
- b. A drama therapist must protect children's confidentiality except 1) when it is necessary to prevent children from harm, and/or except 2) when it is required in accordance to legislation relating to child protection. In any other cases, drama therapist prioritizes the children's safety, needs and willingness. The children's parents, guardians, and carers must be clearly informed about this principle of confidentiality.
- c. A drama therapist ensures that clients are well informed about the scope and limitations of confidentiality, the record keeping of client's information, and the obliterating procedures of personal information after the therapeutic relationship is terminated.
- d. A drama therapist takes strict precautions to ensure clients' records are stored in a secure location, and ensures records and clients' information are available to authorized personnel only.
- e. A drama therapist ensures that the therapeutic environment (e.g. physical space, collaboration with other helping professionals) allows the actualization of confidentiality (e.g. adjustments in the therapeutic process where necessary).
- f. A drama therapist ensures that clients are informed about their responsibilities of confidentiality with respect to all information and creative work in group settings, and also the consequences of violating these agreements.
- g. A drama therapist obtains informed consent before releasing confidential information about a client or use the confidential information about a client in any occasions beyond the session, including but not limited to: giving information about a client through publications, or written or verbal presentations.
- h. A drama therapist communicates that the compliance to confidentiality agreements by participants in group, couple and family therapy could not be guaranteed. Nevertheless, a drama therapist discusses the importance

of confidentiality and requests adherence by all participants.

- i. A drama therapist recognizes that privacy extends to interactions in the community, and monitors both public and private interactions with and about clients and former clients.
- j. A drama therapist has a primary responsibility to maintain confidentiality of clients' information even after the termination of the therapy service. A drama therapist ensures that the clients are well informed about this responsibility prior to the beginning of the therapy services.
- k. A drama therapist must protect the confidentiality of people who are developmentally impaired except 1) when it is necessary to prevent them from harm, and/or except 2) when it is required in accordance to legislation relating to protection of people who are developmentally impaired. In any other cases, drama therapist prioritizes the safety, needs and willingness of people with developmental impairments. The parents, guardians, and carers of people with developmental impairments must be clearly informed about this principle of confidentiality.



## 5. Body Touch

a. A drama therapist understands touch as fundamentally supportive to human growth and development, and that it is inherently involved in drama activities and social interaction. In the context of therapy, touch shall 1) provide safety; 2) support the client's grounding, organization, and regulation; 3) establish body boundaries; 4) facilitate self-awareness, human connection, and group cohesion; 5) provide comfort and ease pain.

b. A drama therapist examines their therapeutic motivations for using touch, and makes intentional decisions about touch in consideration of, but not limited to: client's diagnosis, developmental level, transference, group dynamics and process, client's touch history, client's ability to usefully integrate touch experiences, medical conditions, socio-cultural context and the nature of the therapeutic relationship. A drama therapist employs touch only as they can reasonably expect that it will provide therapeutic benefit to clients.

c. A drama therapist gives explanations regarding the different uses of therapeutic touch, and asks for permission from a client when therapeutic touch is used. A drama therapist ensures that clients understand their rights to decline touch or change the agreement at anytime during the therapeutic process. In group settings, a drama therapist offers alternatives for clients to maintain interpersonal connection when touch is involved.

d. A drama therapist observes and is responsive to clients' nonverbal communications about touch, with an understanding that consent may not accurately reflect problems with touch of which clients are unaware.

e. A drama therapist is aware of their own personal discomforts with touch and refrains from using touch when there is any discomfort or question. A drama therapist seeks supervision and consultation as issues arise related to touch in therapy.

f. When working with significantly cognitively or communicatively limited clients, a drama therapist relies on sound clinical judgment when touch is considered to be of therapeutic benefit and guardian consent or clients' assent is not possible.

g. A drama therapist is prohibited from using touch that involves body parts or a manner of touch that is reasonably sexually arousing or experienced by clients as a violation, considering the sociocultural context where clients belong.

h. A drama therapist maintains appropriate touch

boundaries with regard to their own behaviors and those of their clients, and pays particular attention to the potential for dependent, infantile or erotic transference and seeks healthy containment rather than therapeutically inappropriate accentuation of these states. Genital or other sexual touching by a drama therapist or a client are always inappropriate, never appropriate.

i. A drama therapist shall not use touch when prohibited by institutional policy or legal standards. Nevertheless, a drama therapist is encouraged to communicate the value of ethical touch in their work and advocate for change when policy or standards are unduly prohibitive.

## 6. Professional Relationships

- a. A drama therapist shall not engage in sexual solicitation, physical advances, and/or verbal or non-verbal conduct that is sexual in nature with clients, students, supervisees, or research participants in connection with the drama therapist's activities.
- b. A drama therapist shall not engage in sexual relationships with clients, students, supervisees, interns, or research participants over whom they exercise professional authority. A drama therapist who considers engaging in sexual intimacy with a former client, student, supervisee, intern after a minimum of 2 years following cessation or termination of their relationship bears the burden of demonstrating that there has been no exploitation, in light of all relevant factors that would influence the client's, student's, supervisee's, intern's ability to freely enter such relationship. A drama therapist shall not accept as therapy clients persons with whom they have engaged in sexual intimacies to prevent the person from any risk of exploitation or potential harm.
- c. A drama therapist refrains from engaging sexually with individuals they know to be the parents, guardians, spouses, partners, offspring, or siblings of current clients. A drama therapist does not terminate therapy to circumvent this rule.
- d. A drama therapist should avoid entering into dual relationships with clients, students, supervisees, interns, or research participants where conflicts of interest might arise. A dual relationship exists if, for example, a client is referred who is known socially to the drama therapist or if a former client asks for supervision, having themselves trained as a therapist. A drama therapist should take appropriate precautions, such as informed consent, supervision, consultation and documentation of the results for any such dual relationships before the dual relationship is either proceeded with or terminated.
- e. A drama therapist defines and maintains appropriate professional, social, and ethical boundaries with students, supervisees, interns, or research participants. Potential conflicts of interest are identified and a drama therapist should take appropriate precautions, such as informed consent, supervision, consultation, and documentation before the relationship is either proceeded with or terminated, to ensure the best interests of the students, supervisees, interns, or research participants.
- e. A drama therapist educator who is responsible for a program/course that requires the students to have individual or group therapy ensures that the faculty who are or are likely to be responsible for evaluating

students' academic performance do not themselves provide that therapy.

- f. A drama therapist in education, training, or supervision relationships shall not engage in clinical relationships as therapist/client with students and/or supervisees, even if the program prescribes training therapy for the students. Instead, a drama therapist refers them to another professional.

### 6.1 Relationships with public, potential clients and their agents

- a. A drama therapist takes reasonable measures, such as informed consent, supervision, consultation, and documentation to ensure the best interests of the third parties, the public and the client, to protect third parties and the public when there is a foreseeable risk of serious harm by a client. A drama therapist attempts to clinically manage the risk and, in accordance with legal requirements, protect the third parties, the public and the client by warning or reporting.
- b. A drama therapist addresses professional impairment, institutional misconduct, and detrimental institutional conditions or policies that endanger clients, significantly limit therapeutic effectiveness, or violate client rights. A drama therapist determines the nature of the addressing action consistent with the nature and seriousness of the conduct of concern.
- c. A drama therapist should make good faith efforts to resolve any of the concerns noted above through informal consultation with the colleague(s) or institution(s) causing the concern, unless the conduct has substantially harmed or is likely to substantially harm clients. A drama therapist directly and respectfully communicates concerns to the colleague(s) or institution, solicits response, and supports remedial action as warranted. A drama therapist documents the communication and any identified remediation expectations.
- d. A drama therapist formally reports concerns regarding colleague(s) & institution(s) to those who are in the position to intervene (e.g. supervisors, employers, ethics boards, credentialing, licensing or accrediting bodies, law enforcement) and without conflict of interest, when it is warranted by the seriousness of the concerns or when informal consultation has not resulted in resolution.
- e. A drama therapist maintains the right of client confidentiality when addressing professional impairment or misconduct and obtains permission to discuss information obtained by client report.
- f. Drama Therapists assist the public in identifying drama

therapists who can provide competent service.

g. Drama therapists ensure the marketing contents (verbal/written) are accurate, timely, comprehensive and honest when communicating with the potential clients and their agents regarding drama therapy practice. Drama therapists do not include any false, inaccurate or misleading information, or omit any information in the presentation of their practice and the therapeutic process.

h. Drama therapists adhere to professional standards and are aware of their professional boundaries and competence in advertising their services. Drama therapists also refrain from sharing information that is beyond their expertise or in area in which they do not have sufficient training and knowledge.

i. Drama therapists may not solicit testimonials from current or former clients or others who may be vulnerable to undue influence.

j. Drama therapists ensure that the potential clients enter the therapeutic relationship on the client's own accord.

k. Drama therapists do not induce the potential clients or their agents to terminate the potential clients' therapy elsewhere in order to begin the therapeutic process with them.

## 6.2 Relationships with colleagues

a. Drama therapists are faithful to workplace contracts, respectful to colleagues, and contribute to creating a professional and ethical workplace culture by modeling professionalism and upholding ethical obligations. They work collaboratively, cooperatively, and respectfully with members of the workplace administration, treatment team colleagues, and support staff.

b. Drama therapists understand and adhere to the employment contract and the policies and regulations of the workplace unless in conflict with the stated purposes and ethical standards of the Hong Kong Association of Drama Therapists and that of the regulatory body that accredited the credentials that they possess, or in conflict with legal requirements.

c. Drama therapists understand the procedures and treatment orientation of the facilities within which they work and they function in accordance.

d. Drama therapists on whom a team decision raises ethical concerns should attempt to resolve the disagreement through appropriate channels. If the disagreement cannot be resolved, drama therapists should pursue other appropriate avenues to address their concerns consistent with clients' well-being.

## 6.3 Relationship with clients

a. Drama therapists have a primary responsibility to respect and promote the welfare of their clients and to avoid any multiple relationships or conflicts of interest that could impair professional judgment or increase the risk of harm to clients.

b. A drama therapist may not engage in unfair discrimination based on, but not limited to, age, gender, identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, physical appearance or attributes, or any basis proscribed by law.

c. Drama therapists avoid personal, professional, financial, or academic conflicts of interest that might interfere with their ability to provide competent, effective or objective services to clients.

d. Drama therapists make sure their clients fully understand and consent to the therapeutic process. If any of the therapeutic conditions has changed, drama therapists will fully inform their clients and seek their consent to the respecting conditions.

## 6.4 Relationship with performers in Self-Revelatory performances

a. Drama therapists who direct a performer in creating their self-revelatory performance may not be the therapist of the performer to avoid dual relationships or conflict of interest that could impair professional judgment or increase the risk of harm to performer. A drama therapist should take appropriate precautions, such as informed consent, supervision, consultation and documentation of the results for any such dual relationships before the dual relationship is either proceeded with or terminated.

## 6.5 Relationship with research participants

a. A research therapist maintains anonymity of research participants in the data collection, processing, submission, journal publication and presentation processes.

b. A research therapist takes secure and proactive measures to protect the data. A research therapist informs the participants the persons who will have access to the collected data.

c. Research therapists prioritize, and inform the participants that they prioritize, the benefits of the participants throughout the research process.

d. A research therapist clearly communicates their role in the study with the participants before the study begins.



## 7. Professional Teaching & Training

a. Drama therapists who provide supervision or professional consultation should possess and maintain necessary knowledge, skills and methodology through appropriate education, training, consultation and research to facilitate them to perform the tasks in professional supervision and training competently. Drama therapists should provide training or instructions only within their areas of knowledge or competence.

b. A drama therapist who provides supervision should recognize a supervisor's educational, supportive, developmental and work-focused role and should not abuse the professional relationship with supervisees for any interests.

c. Drama therapists who provide supervision should monitor their supervisees to act in accordance with this Code of Ethics.

d. Without the explicit permission of the author of the communications between co-workers/collaborators, a drama therapist should not convey to clients any contents of such communications that are beyond the scope of the clients' personal particulars.

e. Drama therapists should act constructively and responsibly to influence and to improve policies, procedures, and practice of their employing agencies in order to continuously protect the interest of clients and to prevent themselves from violating this Code of Ethics when enforcing agency policies.

## Supplementary Guidelines for Teletherapy

The Supplementary Guideline for Teletherapy provides additional information that may be helpful to members who currently provide, or who are considering providing drama therapy services or clinical supervision using communication technologies.

- a. Drama therapists are considered to have a teletherapy practice when they utilize communication technologies to engage with clients in the therapeutic process. Examples of communication technologies that have been relied upon for this purpose include the following: phone or voiceover internet protocol (VOIP), email or direct messaging, video conferencing, and other formats whether variations thereof or entirely novel.
- b. Prior to commencing teletherapy, drama therapists actively and clearly inform the clients the therapeutic process, including the risk assessment, safety and confidentiality measures, and the limits of confidentiality. These information should be conveyed accurately, timely, comprehensively, and in accordance with the local laws and regulations.
- c. Drama therapists shall provide teletherapy only within the scope of their education, training, license, certification, professional consultation, supervised experience, or other relevant professional experience.
- d. Drama therapists actively seek additional training as needed to support and enhance their competence in teletherapy.
- e. Drama therapists shall, under their professional judgment, have adequate knowledge and competence in the constraints, safety measures, confidentiality, and the therapeutic process of teletherapy.
- f. Drama therapists shall make sound professional judgment based on factors such as clients' psychological conditions, family dynamics, and other circumstantial conditions, in determining the suitability of teletherapy for the clients.
- g. Drama therapists take adequate measures to safeguard clients' well-being, such as providing and/or seeking emergency contacts, local mental health resources and crisis intervention information. They also offer

guidelines for clients to prepare their physical and online environment to protect confidentiality and psychological safety.

- h. When providing teletherapy, drama therapists take reasonable precautions to verify the true identity of the clients.
- i. Drama therapists provide guidelines and protocol for the clients in case of signal termination or connection disruptions to uphold clients' safety and confidentiality.
- j. Drama therapists offer alternatives to teletherapy upon mutual agreement between the client and/or therapist when electronic therapy is deemed a safe modality of therapy.
- k. When providing teletherapy to clients in different jurisdictions than their own, drama therapists ensure that they understand and abide by the law and regulation in which the clients reside.
- l. Drama therapists maintain professional liability insurance, both locally and internationally, to support their provision of teletherapy services.
- m. Drama therapists consider clients' digital literacy and prior experiences with digital means and provide adequate support for clients to engage in teletherapy.