Virginia Department for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

Code of Ethics, Revised 2014

INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing’s (VDDHH) Code of Ethics provides direction to all staff members or contractors in achieving ethical conduct in providing consumer services, business practices, marketing practices, and upholding the ethical standards of their professions. These standards are set forward so that consumers, stakeholders, vendors, and the general public may be confident of receiving ethical treatment in all their interaction with the Agency and all of the Staff employed. The Department expects its staff members and contractors to maintain the highest level of ethical conduct.

As ethical decisions are best made in anticipation of possible issues, VDDHH employees and contractors are expected to familiarize themselves with this code as well as appropriate professional codes of ethics in order to prepare themselves in advance for potential dilemmas that require ethical consideration.

VDDHH CODE OF ETHICS

Responsibilities to Consumers

VDDHH employees and contracted staff members are expected to respect the integrity, rights, dignity, and diversity of all consumers. Staff members or contractors should not engage in inappropriate relationships with consumers or take advantage of their professional relationship with consumers that may result in personal gain. Staff members or contractors providing direct services to consumers should be competent and experienced in the services they provide. In addition, service providers should maintain the utmost respect for consumer choice and refrain from imposing personal moral, philosophical or political beliefs during the delivery of services.

Rules of Conduct

Integrity

VDDHH employees and contracted staff members shall perform their work with honesty, diligence, and responsibility. Staff members or contractors shall observe the law and make disclosures required by the law and/or their profession. Further, Staff members or contractors shall not be a party to any illegal activity or engage in acts discreditable to their profession, the Agency, or the Commonwealth.

Objectivity

VDDHH employees and contracted staff members shall exhibit the highest level of professional objectivity in gathering, evaluating, and communicating information about the consumer being served. Staff members or contractors shall make a balanced and unbiased assessment of all relevant circumstances and not be untenably influenced by personal interests or beliefs.

Discrimination

VDDHH employees and contracted staff members shall not discriminate against consumers and/or prospective consumers and their families based on factors that are irrelevant to the consumer’s needs and ability to access services. Staff members or contractors will comply with all State and Federal anti-discrimination laws including the applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Reasonable accommodations will be made for a consumer’s cultural and religious preferences whenever possible.

Dual Relationships

VDDHH employees and contracted staff members shall maintain appropriate professional boundaries and not engage in dual relationships with consumers, consumer family members, legally authorized representative, guardians, and other staff members or contractors. Only services that can be provided without compromise to the professional relationship and do not conflict with the ethical standards of the profession(s) involved may be offered to staff members or contractors and their families.

Paternalistic Intervention

VDDHH employees and contracted staff shall allow consumers to participate in planning and decision making regarding their service(s). Consumer feedback shall be solicited and considered in designing services. Under special circumstances, decisional authority for consumers with diminished capacity or less than 18 years of age may be limited, but all such intervention should be discussed with the relevant guardian.

Impropriety

VDDHH employees and contracted staff members shall not accept any item or offer of nominal value that may affect or impair, or be presumed to impair professional judgment or objectivity.

Confidentiality

VDDHH employees and contracted staff members shall respect the privacy of consumers and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional services to the extent allowed by law. Staff members or contractors shall maintain appropriate confidentiality in creating, storing, accessing, and transferring consumer records, whether these are written, automated, electronic, or any other medium. VDDHH has a duty to protect the confidentiality of information that is gained about a variety of individuals and groups in both individual and aggregate form. Staff members or contractors should not access any consumer information without a legitimate and sanctioned need to know.

Professional Competency

VDDHH staff members or contractors shall provide only those services and use only those techniques for which they are qualified by training, education, and/or experience. Further, all staff members and contractors shall have a commitment to improve their proficiency, effectiveness, and quality of service through personal effort, continuing education, advocacy and collaboration. All staff members and contractors shall represent their qualifications honestly and perform services in accordance with all applicable policies and procedures.

Responsibilities to Co-workers

VDDHH employees and contracted staff are expected to respect the integrity, rights, dignity, and diversity of their co-workers. Staff members or contractors should respectfully consider each person’s contribution and value to the overall mission and service provision of the Agency. All staff members or contractors should be cooperative and collaborative with co-workers whenever possible.

Rules of Conduct

Harassment

VDDHH employees or contracted staff members shall not use abusive or offensive actions or language, written, spoken or signed, at any time. Further, staff members or contractors should not take advantage of power and authority granted by position in the organization to take unfair or unethical advantage of a colleague.

Discrimination

VDDHH employees and contracted staff shall not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, political affiliation, or against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities

Staff-Staff Dual Relationships

VDDHH employees shall maintain appropriate boundaries between professional and personal relationships, always remaining mindful of the effects of their actions on the effectiveness of the work teams. Staff members or contractors should not allow their feelings about other staff members or contractors involved in the team process to affect their objectivity toward consumers and the mission, goals, and objectives of the Agency. Hiring supervisors should not hire direct family members into positions that could influence the work of other family members.

Staff-Supervisor Dual Relationships

VDDHH staff members shall maintain a positive working relationship between employee and supervisor. Supervision should be maintained in a manner that will minimize the likelihood of unethical behavior, illegal activity, and/or non-compliance with existing policy.

Confidentiality

VDDHH staff members shall respect the privacy of co-workers and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of hiring and working with them. Staff members shall maintain appropriate confidentiality in creating storing, accessing, and transferring employee records, whether they are written, automated, electronic, or any other medium.