



Ohio Counseling Association Position Regarding Listserv Use

One of the benefits of utilizing the Ohio Counseling Association (OCA) listserv is assistance in the referral process for clients in need of services. Keeping in mind that even potential clients, once they have reached out and requested assistance, are owed the same rights and privileges as existing clients (Kaplan, 2014), counselors should be ever mindful of their duty to uphold ethical conduct, including nonmaleficence. This includes the way referral requests are made via email, such as the OCA listserv.

The American Counseling Association's *ACA Code of Ethics* (2014) makes clear that counselors should not only avoid harming, but also respect the dignity and welfare of clients (Standards A.1.a and A.4a). This includes monitoring client privacy and confidentiality when coordinating referrals, advocacy, or other communication about clients through electronic means (Standards A.7.b, B.1.b, B.1.c, and B.3.e). Further, counselors are expected to be cognizant of changes in the use of technology in professional settings, and to take all appropriate accommodations to ensure client confidentiality and the security of clients' information (Standards H.Introduction and H.2.d). Such concerns are applicable when coordinating referrals via the OCA listserv.

Even with the best intentions to assist a client, when too much information about a client is shared, it can inadvertently make them recognizable to others, consequently breaching their privacy and confidentiality. OCA expects those utilizing the listserv to take every reasonable precaution to avoid such pitfalls. When using the OCA listserv, individuals should only be sharing the minimal information required for assistance. A good guide would be the client's **general geographical location, age, sex, and basic presenting issue**. Details of presenting issues, treatment recommendation requests, other indicators of client's personal identity, etc. are strongly discouraged (Kaplan, Wade, Conteh, & Martz, 2011).

While listserv members are entrusted to function in ethically appropriate ways, OCA reserves the right to follow-up with any concerning messages sent via the listserv, or remove individuals from the listserv if problems persist. Any questions or concerns regarding the use of the OCA listserv can be directed to the current OCA President (see <http://www.ohiocounseling.org/> for contact information).

American Counseling Association. (2014). *ACA Code of Ethics*. Alexandria, VA: Author

Kaplan, D. M. (2014). Ethical implications of a critical legal case for the counseling profession: Ward v. Wilbanks. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 92*(2), 142-146. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00140.x

Kaplan, D. M., Wade, M. E., Conteh, J. A., & Martz, E. T. (2011). Legal and ethical issues surrounding the use of social media in counseling. *Counseling and Human Development, 43*(8), 1-12.