

SINGAPORE ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELING ETHICS MANUAL OF PROCEDURES OCTOBER 2015

This SAC Ethics Manual of Procedures was officially launched by Dr Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State for Health and the Environment and Water Resources, on October 15, 2015 at the Inaugural SAC Counselling Symposium held at The Academia, 20 College Road 169856.

The launching of this Ethics Manual of Procedures is another milestone in the effort by SAC to support the ethical practice of counsellors in accordance to our SAC Code of Ethics, to regulate the conduct of our members, and to provide protection for both the counsellor and client.



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SAC – ETHICS MANUAL OF PROCEDURES

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Section 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The primary goal of the complaint procedures for dealing with alleged violations of the SAC Code of Ethics is to ensure that procedural fairness exists for all parties involved in the ethics complaint process. A primary objective will be to facilitate a resolution to the complaint through a mediation process, without the need to hear the complaint.
- 1.2 When the mediation process fails to facilitate a resolution, the matter shall be referred to The Ethics Committee for a hearing.
- 1.3 The ordinary rules of natural justice, shall apply throughout the complaint process.

The term natural justice is used in the sense that it is commonly applied to include that:

- 1.3.1 The respondent shall be informed of the nature of the allegation(s) made.
- 1.3.2 The respondent shall be given an opportunity to respond to the allegation(s) made.
- 1.3.3 Persons called upon to investigate, mediate or adjudicate shall act in good faith without bias and in a dispassionate manner.

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1.3.4 All parties involved in the complaint process shall treat all information received as private and confidential.

1.4 Parties' Use of Legal Counsel

The complainant and respondent may consult with their legal counsels at any time, but both parties shall be active participants in these proceedings.

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Section 2

Summary of the Procedures

2. Preliminary Procedure

- 2.1 A formal written complaint must be filled with the SAC Ethics Committee, addressed to “The Chairperson SAC Ethics Committee” in an envelope marked “CONFIDENTIAL”. A copy of the “complaint form” is available by request from the office of the SAC Ethics Committee (Appendix #1)
- 2.2 The Ethics Committee Chairperson will check to see if the complaint is about a member of SAC.
 - 2.2.1 If the person complained about is not a member of SAC the Chairperson will advise the complainant that the Association has no authority to deal with the matter.
 - 2.2.2 If the complainant is a SAC member the Chairperson will acknowledge the receipt of the complaint by registered mail using the template in Appendix #2.
- 2.3 The Chairperson of the Ethics Committee shall review the complaint about a SAC member and shall determine whether it states allegation(s), which, if proven factual, would constitute violation(s) of the Code of Ethics.

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2.4 If the Chairperson's determination is negative, the Chairperson shall inform the complainant that the Ethics Committee shall not proceed with the complaint.

2.5 If the Chairperson's determination is positive, then the Chairperson shall inform the respondent of the complainant's allegation(s) and request the respondent to respond to the allegation(s) (by registered mail using the template in Appendix #4)

2.6 Mediation

The Chairperson or delegate will contact both parties to determine if the allegations can be resolved through a mediation process.

2.6.1 If the mediation is acceptable to both parties the Chairperson will arrange for a mediator who is acceptable to both parties.

2.6.2 If the mediation is successful, both parties will sign a statement to that effect and the case will be closed. (The file shall be kept in a secure location for one (1) year and then destroyed).

2.7 Hearing

If the mediation process is unacceptable to, or the mediation is unsuccessful, the complaint will proceed to a hearing before the Ethics Committee.

2.8 The Ethics Committee will meet within the time limit (30 days) set within these procedures to hear the matter.

2.9 All parties shall be notified of the date and venue of the hearing and the Ethics Committee shall convene to hear the case, following the procedures laid down for the conduct of the hearing.

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- 2.10 At the completion of the hearing, the Ethics Committee shall decide whether or not the allegations have been proven. *The Chairman shall have the casting vote.*
- 2.11 If the Ethics Committee decides that this allegation(s) has not been proven, the case will be closed and the complainant and respondent shall be advised accordingly. There will be no appeal against this decision. *The Ethics Committee shall decide whether or not the allegation has been proven, no later than twenty one (21) days. An opportunity for the Respondent to mitigate shall be provided and the Ethics Committee may take the Respondent's mitigation into consideration.*
- 2.12 If the Ethics Committee decides that the allegation(s) have been proven, the Ethics Committee may order any of the following actions against the respondent.
- 2.12.1 Make an order to cease and desist.
 - 2.12.2 Censure the Respondent.
 - 2.12.3 Make an order for a person of supervision.
 - 2.12.4 Education, and/or therapy.
 - 2.12.5 Suspension (holding membership in abeyance for a specific purpose, for example, rehabilitation).
 - 2.12.6 Resignation with or without publication.

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2.12.7 Termination of membership

2.12.7.1 Permanent bar to readmission

2.12.7.2 Temporary termination

2.12.7.3 Or any other action, within its' authority, that the Ethics Committee deems appropriate.

2.13 If the Ethics Committee decides upon a finding for suspension or expulsion, the Committee will so report to the President of SAC within ten (10) days of reaching the decision. The President shall forward the findings to the SAC Executive Committee members who must enact requests for suspension or expulsion.

2.14 **Appeal**

The respondent, with reasonable grounds, may appeal the findings, in writing to the President of SAC within fourteen (14) days of the announcement of the decision.

2.14.1 The only basis for appeal to the SAC Board by a respondent regarding the decision of the Ethics Committee is that there was a violation of the procedural rules, and that this violation substantially impaired the respondent's ability to defend against the complaint.

2.15 The President will advise the SAC Executive Committee of the appeal and the Executive Committee shall consider whether or not to grant the appeal within fourteen (14) days of being notified.

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- 2.15.1 The appeal shall be limited to a review of the procedures, evidence and findings, with no new evidence being submitted.
- 2.16 Should the SAC Executive Committee grant an appeal, an Appeal Board consisting of the President of the SAC and two (2) members of the SAC, excluding the members of the Ethics Committee, will convene to consider the application and all relevant materials.
- 2.17 The President of SAC shall issue a written decision on the appeal and shall inform the complainant, respondent and the Ethics Committee of the decision in writing within fifteen (15) days of the meeting. The Appeal Board must either:
- 2.17.1 Affirm the Ethics Committee's decision
 - 2.17.2 Change the findings
 - 2.17.3 Dismiss the case.

Section 3

The SAC Ethics Committee

3. The Ethics Committees

3.1 The SAC Executive Committee will appoint the members of the Ethics Committee. The Committee shall consist of the Chairperson and four (4) members. The terms of office for Committee members will be for two (2) years. Because of the specialized nature of the work of this Committee, members may be re appointed for successive terms. The membership of the Ethics Committee shall include no more than two Board members, who may not serve on an Ethics Appeal Board.

3.2 Code of Ethics

3.2.1 The Ethics Committee will review the SAC Code of Ethics from time to time and interpret it to the membership and to the public.

3.2.2 The Code of Ethics is binding on members of SAC in all membership categories.

3.3 The SAC has jurisdiction over members who are *life members, registered counsellors, ordinary members* and resigned members in relation to complaints of ethical violations that occurred during the period of membership provided the complaints is received within one (1) year of the date of resignation. The SAC has jurisdiction in relation to complaints within a time frame of [five (5) years] from the time of the alleged incident in relation to the complaint by the Complainant.

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3.4 Role of Chairperson of Ethics Committee

3.4.1 Chairperson shall receive, review and decide on the formal complaint, pursuant to clauses 2.1 to 2.4

3.4.2 Chairperson shall appoint a mediator pursuant to clause 2.7

3.4.3 Chairperson shall preside at the hearing of the complaint pursuant to clauses 2.10 to 2.11

3.4.4 Chairperson shall deliver the decision at the end of the hearing pursuant to clause 2.12

3.5 Role of the Ethics Committee

3.5.1 The Committee shall follow the procedures laid down in this manual for handling ethical complaints against SAC members and resigned members, subject to clause 3.3

3.5.2 In the event a mediation is unsuccessful, the Committee shall convene and conduct the hearing of the matter.

Section 4

Filing of a complaint

4. Procedures

- 4.1 A complainant may file a formal complaint with the Ethics Committee through the SAC office, by making such a complaint in writing and supplying the substantiating evidence. An individual submitting a complaint should be aware that in doing so he/she is acting to resolve difficulties, that they may be a party to the mediation or hearing process, and that they may seek no reward.
- 4.2 The Ethics Committee shall receive written complaints from members of the SAC and non-members. The complainant must have personal knowledge of the alleged behaviour complained about or be in position to supply relevant, reliable testimony or other evidence on the subject.
- 4.3 The complaint must be in writing, signed by the complainant person using the form prescribed by the SAC (See "Ethics Complaint Form, Appendix #1) Information required in the form includes:
 - 4.3.1 Details about the complainant: e.g. name, address, contact details, employment position and the position you were in at the time of the alleged ethics violations e.g. client, colleague, etc.
 - 4.3.2 The name, address and contact number(s) of the person/s that the complaint is against (the respondent).

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- 4.3.3 The dates of the alleged violations.
- 4.3.4 The detail of the alleged violation(s) of the SAC Ethics code.
- 4.3.5 The section/s of the Code that the complainant believes has been violated.
- 4.3.6 Any evidence or persons that could help to support complainant's allegations.
- 4.3.7 Any evidence of any action that the complainant has taken to resolve the matter with the respondent before filing a formal complaint as required by the Code and these procedures.
- 4.4 The letter of complaint should be addressed to the Chairperson SAC Ethics Committee, and forwarded to the SAC office with the envelope marked "PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL".

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Section 5

Action on receipt of a formal complaint

5.1 Proper Form

5.1.1 The SAC shall not deal with any oral or written complaint in letter form.

5.1.2 Anonymous complaints shall not be recognized as a basis for action.

5.1.3 In response to an oral or written complaint letter, the SAC may reply to the request (Appendix #1)

5.1.4 When a Ethics Complaint Form (Appendix #2) together with the waiver form ("Waiver of Confidentiality – Privilege and Authority to release information", Appendix #3) are received at the SAC office address, it will be forwarded unopened to the Chairperson of the Ethics Committee.

5.2 Status of respondent

5.2.1 The Chairperson shall check and affirm that the respondent is a SAC member or resigned member, pursuant to clause 3.3

5.2.2 Non SAC members

If the person is not a member, nor a recently resigned or terminated member, the Chairperson of the Ethics Committee shall inform the complainant, and explain that the Association has no authority to proceed against the person and the matter is terminated by the SAC.

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5.2.3 Resigned or terminated member

If the person is a recently resigned member or had his/her membership terminated, the Chairperson of the Ethics Committee will determine whether the alleged violation occurred during the period of the person's membership, provided the complaint is received within one (1) year from the date of resignation. If it is determined that the Ethics Committee has jurisdiction, the complaint process will proceed.

5.3 Determination if grounds for an investigation

The Chairperson or a Review Committee comprising the Chairman and two (2) members of the Ethics Committee and if required, the legal counsel for the Association, shall review the complaint and shall determine whether it states allegations which, if proven factual, would constitute violation(s) of the Code of Ethics.

5.3.1 If the complaint does not state factual allegations that constitute (a) violation(s) of the Code of Ethics, the Chairperson shall so notify the complainant in writing and explain why the allegations do not warrant further action by the Ethics Committee.

5.3.2 If the complaint states allegations which, if proven factual, would constitute (a) violation(s) of the Code of Ethics, the Chairperson shall notify the complainant in writing that the complaint will be proceeded with and forward a copy of the "Summary of Ethics Procedures" to the complainant for his/her information.

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5.4 Confidentially

5.4.1 All correspondence to the complainant shall be marked “confidential” and sent by appropriate means.

5.4.2 Correspondence is not to be faxed or sent by any electronic means unless sender has ensured that only the recipient will see it.

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Section 6

Investigation

6.1 Notification to the respondent

The Chairperson of the Ethics Committee shall notify the respondent of the complaint. The notice to the respondent shall:

6.1.1 Be mailed by appropriate means and marked “confidential”

6.1.2 State the portions of the Code of Ethics relevant to the allegations of the complaint.

6.1.3 Enclose a copy or a summary of the complaint.

6.1.4 Enclose a copy of the Code of Ethics and a copy of the Summary of these procedures

6.1.5 Direct the respondent to respond to the allegations, in writing, within thirty (30) days from receipt of the notification.

For the purpose of notification, the last address received from the respondent with the payment of dues will be used, and mailing to that address will be deemed sufficient notice.

6.2 No response by the respondent

If a respondent does not respond to the allegations, or to each specific allegation, the Ethics Committee may take note of the omission(s) for the purpose of determining the matter.

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6.3 Response by the respondent

After a response is received from the respondent within thirty (30) days, the Chairperson of the Ethics Committee with the advice of legal counsel for the Association shall refer the matter to the Review Committee.

6.3.1. The Review Committee may close the case and the Chairman shall notify the complainant, the respondent, and all members of the Ethics Committee; or

6.3.2 Proceed to the next stage of the Complaint procedure pursuant to clause 6.6.

6.4 Resignation by the respondent

If a respondent resigns from membership in the Association at any stage of the complaint procedure, the Committee will nonetheless proceed and if necessary, come to a decision of the matter.

6.5 Preliminary investigation by the Chairperson

The Chairperson of the Ethics Committee, assisted by legal counsel has the authority to gather sufficient information so that the Committee shall have before it as much of the available evidence as possible for the Committee to make a decision.

6.6 The appointment of an investigator(s)

The Committee shall appoint an investigator for the sole purpose of gathering all the evidence in relation to the matter. *Preferably, the Investigator should be a full-time employee of SAC.*

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- 6.7 When a SAC investigator(s) is appointed, it shall be the investigator's responsibility to assist the Committee. Towards that purpose, the investigator may
- 6.7.1 contact both the complainant and the respondent in order to gather all relevant information.
 - 6.7.2 notify the respondent that they should respond to the complainant's allegations in writing.
 - 6.7.3 give the opportunity to both complainant and respondent to appear before him/her to make a statement, at their expense.
 - 6.7.4 shall have the authority to pursue its investigation by corresponding or interviewing, personally or by telephone, the material person(s) who can assist the Committee in the matter.
- 6.8 After completing its investigation, the investigator(s) shall make a full report to the Ethics Committee, detailing his/her findings of facts and shall include a recommendation as to what allegation(s) should be proceeded with.

Section 7

Appeals

7.1 Grounds for Appeal

The respondent, with reasonable grounds, may appeal the findings of the Ethics Committee within thirty (30) days after it is announced. The only basis for appeal to the SAC Board by a respondent regarding the decision of the Ethics Committee is that there was a violation of the procedural rules, and that this violation substantially impaired the respondent's ability to defend against the complaint. The appeal shall be limited to a review of the procedures, evidence and findings, with no new evidence being submitted.

7.2 Composition and Power of the Appeal Board

The Appeal Board is appointed by the President of SAC and is the duly authorised Committee of the SAC Executive Committee. The Appeal Board is composed of the President and two (2) persons delegated by SAC Executive Committee excluding the Chairperson of the Ethics Committee. The Appeal Board shall have the power to change the findings of the Ethics Committee, or dismiss the case.

7.3 In cases involving the recommendation of suspension or expulsion, the Appeal Board shall have the right, to initiate the process of suspension for a period of up to 12 months or to expel from membership of the Association. Any grounds and procedures contained in the SAC bylaws are to be followed in such cases.

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7.4 Written Statement of the Respondent

In order to affect an appeal, the respondent shall state, in writing, to the President of the SAC Executive Committee, the specific violation of procedural rules and how this violation substantially impaired the respondent's ability to defend against the complaint. The President of SAC shall review the statement to ensure that the appeal is based on the contention that the Ethics Committee violated its procedural rules. If not, the President may deny the appeal.

7.5 Respondent's Deadline

The respondent shall have thirty (30) days from receipt of the Ethics Committee decision to appeal to the President of SAC.

7.6 Ethics Committee Transmittal

7.6.1 If the SAC President grants an appeal, the Ethics Committee shall transmit to the SAC President, all materials related to the matter including the statements of the parties, the investigators' finding, the recording of the hearing and the grounds of the parties, the complaint and various form, the response of the respondent, and the Ethics Committee's decision.

7.6.2 The President of SAC will ensure that all materials are then submitted to the Appeal Board.

7.7 Scheduling the Appeal

The Appeal Board shall consider the appeal within thirty (30) days of receiving the notice of appeal. The appeal will be considered solely on the basis of the respondent's written statement and the response of the Ethics Committee or the Association's legal counsel (which may or may not be in writing), and there shall be no right to a personal appearance

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before the Appeal Board by the respondent or his or her personal representative.

7.8 Vote on the Appeal

A majority vote by the Appeals Board shall determine the outcome of the appeal. Voting will be carried out in a face-to-face meeting.

7.9 Board Decision

The President of SAC shall issue a written decision on the appeal and shall inform the respondent and the Ethics Committee of the decision in writing within fifteen (15) days of the meeting. The Board must either

7.8.1 Affirm the Ethics Committee's decision; or

7.8.2 Change the findings;

7.8.3 Dismiss the case.

7.10 If no appeal is made

7.10.1 If no appeal is made within thirty (30) days after the respondent has been notified of the decision of the Ethics Committee, the decision of the Ethics Committee shall become final.

7.10.2 As soon as the decision becomes final, the Chairperson of Ethics Committee transmits the decision to the Ethics Committee, and then informs the President of SAC, legal counsel of the Association, SAC staff, and to the complainant and respondent.

Section 8

Additional evidence after the findings

8.1 Additional evidence

If additional evidence of the unethical conduct concerning the respondent in the concluded case is brought to the attention of the Chairperson of the Ethics Committee by the complainant or respondent after a matter has been closed, the case may be reviewed by the Chairperson of the SAC Ethics Committee.

- 8.2 The Ethics Committee shall review the additional evidence with the assistance of legal counsel, and if necessary, instruct the investigator to further investigate the matter, submit a report and give his/her recommendation(s).
- 8.3 The Ethics Committee after reviewing the investigation's report and recommendation shall deliberate and decide on the matter, whose decision shall be final.
- 8.4 The Chairperson shall inform the complainant and respondent of his/her decision in relation to the matter.

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Section 9

Confidentiality

9.1 Confidentiality

All information concerning ethical complaints made against SAC members shall be treated in a strictly confidential manner by SAC Ethics Committee members, SAC staff persons, and SAC members. Ensuring that confidentiality is maintained is important in order to protect the rights of the individual members who are the subject of complaints, and to protect SAC from charges of improper disclosure of information. Under the terms of these procedures, all information regarding complaints shall be treated in a strict, confidential manner. Ethics case information is not to be faxed or sent by any electronic means unless the sender has ensured that only the recipient will see it.

9.2 Breaches of Confidentiality

The Ethics Committee may take action if either party alleges a breach of confidentiality by:

9.2.1 Sending letters of warning, or

9.2.2 Terminating proceedings.

If the Ethics Committee determines that a breach of confidentiality has occurred it may demand that all confidential material must be immediately removed from any person to whom the material was given and returned to the SAC office.

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9.3 Staff

Paid staff and volunteers who may have inadvertently received information about complaints should be instructed on the confidential nature of the information.

9.4 Correspondence

Correspondence concerning ethical complaints received by SAC staff should be mailed as "PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL" to the SAC Ethics Committee Chairperson. It should not be faxed or emailed, unless the sender has ensured that only the recipient will see it.

9.5 Discussion of Complaints

Any necessary discussion of cases by Ethics Committee officers, staff or members should take place where conversations cannot be inadvertently overheard by other member of an office, or members of the public.

9.6 Confidentiality Exceptions

All information obtained by the Ethics Committee, including any investigation sub Committee, and all proceedings of the Ethics Committee, shall be confidential except to obtain evidence when participants may disclose that a complaint is under way. The participants should provide the least amount of information and not disclose any identification of the parties involved.

9.7 Publication of Sanctions

Whenever the Ethics Committee orders publication of sanctions such publication shall be an exception to the rule of confidentiality stated above.

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Appendix #1

(COMPLAINANT TEMPLATE LETTER)

Date

XXXXXXX

XXXXXXX

**CONFIDENTIAL
REGISTERED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED**

Dear

I am responding to your letter regarding your complaint against _____.

Since you believe that this member has violated the *SAC Code of Ethics*, you may file a formal complaint with the SAC Ethics Committee by using the enclosed Ethics Complaint Form.

Please read the enclosed copy of the *SAC Code of Ethics*.

Together with the Ethics Complaint Form, you are required to fill up the enclosed Waiver and Release of Information form. In order for the Ethics Committee to proceed with the case, it is necessary that you give the Committee permission to use your name and the information you provide when we contact the respondent with your complaint and when the Committee considers your case.

Please understand that signing of the Waiver to release information grants the Ethics Committee permission to send information and material concerning the allegation(s) to the respondent.

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Appendix #1

We enclose a copy of the SAC Code of Ethics for your information.

Please return the completed Ethics Complaint Form and the Waiver and Release of Information Form, and all relevant materials in an envelope marked “PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL” to:

The Chairperson

SAC Ethics Committee

(Address)

Once you have submitted the complaint and waiver forms, you are advised not to discuss the matter with anyone not directly involved with it. All information should be treated as highly confidential.

We realize that this may be a very difficult as well as lengthy process. We appreciate your patience and cooperation. If you need any further assistance in reaching a decision or in compiling your complaint please feel free to contact the Chairperson of the Ethics Committee.

Thank you for contacting the Ethics Committee with your concerns. Our organization is committed to maintaining high standards of ethical practice.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Ethics Committee Chair

Enclosures: Ethics Complaint Form
SAC Statement of Ethics
Waiver Form
Summary of Procedures for Ethical Complaints

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Appendix #2

ETHICS COMPLAINT FORM

CONFIDENTIAL

Date_____

1. Complainant (Person making the complaint)

Name_____

Address_____

Employment _____

Home Phone ()_____ Business Phone ()_____

Email:_____

2. SAC member (respondent - person being complained about)

Name_____

Address_____

Telephone ()_____ Email: _____

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Appendix #2

- 3. Your relationship with the respondent at the time of the alleged violation (e.g., client, colleague, employee, trainee, etc.)**
-

- 4. Date/s of the alleged unethical behaviour**
-

- 5. Details of the alleged violations**

Write an account of what happened that you believe to be an ethical violation and how the events affected you. Be as specific as possible. Please type or use a computer if possible. Include this when you return the form. You may send additional information at any time up until the Ethics Committee begins its deliberation.

- 6. Any actions that you have taken or are considering taking to deal with the alleged violations (e.g., advising the respondent's employer, initiating a formal grievance process with another body, seeking legal sanctions, etc.)**
-

- 7. Have you filed a formal complaint against the SAC member with any other organization?**

Yes _____ No _____

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Appendix #2

If yes, what organization? Please include a contact number.

- 8. Provide the names, addresses and telephone numbers of witnesses, if any, or others who might provide relevant information about the events you are filing a complaint about. If possible obtain from them a signed statement that can be sent along with this form.**

Signed _____

Date _____

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Appendix #3

WAIVER OF CONFIDENTIALITY PRIVILEGE

AND

AUTHORITY TO RELEASE INFORMATION

I, _____ have filed a complaint with the Singapore
(name of complainant)
Association for Counselling (SAC) dated _____ against a member of
(date of the complaint)
the SAC _____
(name of the SAC member (respondent) against whom the complaint has been filed)

I hereby waive any confidentiality privilege with respect to the member of the SAC against whom I have made a complaint (respondent) so that the member may respond to my complaint and provide confidential information to the SAC Ethics Committee regarding the matters raised in my complaint; and to those people who, in the discretion of the Committee, its staff or legal counsel, it may deem necessary to contact in order to conduct a full and fair investigation of the complaint.

I hereby authorize the release of the information contained in my complaint to the respondent, the members of the SAC Ethics Committee, the investigator/s or investigation sub-Committee who will conduct a thorough and fair investigation of the complaint, the legal counsel for the SAC, and those individuals who in the discretion of the Committee or its legal counsel may need to receive this information. I also authorise the release of this information to those that might carry out any ensuing therapy or supervision resulting from discipline to the respondent.

I waive any claims that I may have or could have against the SAC, its employees or Committee members, relative to the release of information that is the subject of my complaint. *I acknowledge that I will not pursue any claims or actions against SAC at the end of the proceedings.*

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Appendix #3

I authorize the use of my name in the investigation of my complaint by the SAC Ethics Committee, and the legal counsel for the SAC.

Name of Complainant (Please Print)

Date

Signature of Complainant

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Appendix #4

(SAC MEMBER TEMPLATE LETTER)

Date

XXXXXX

XXXXXX

CONFIDENTIAL
REGISTERED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Dear

I am writing to you as Chairperson of the Singapore Association for Counselling Ethics Committee. I regret to inform you that the SAC Ethics Committee has received a formal complaint against you from

_____.

The Ethics Committee will now begin a process of investigation to determine if there has been an ethics violation. At this point, the Ethics Committee makes no assumptions of the validity of the information provided by the complainant. We know that this is a difficult and often lengthy process and we would appreciate your cooperation.

ALLEGATIONS

(Summary of paras. 4 and 5 in complaint form)

YOUR RESPONSE

Please respond to each of the allegations made by the complainant, even if they are not specifically outlined above. If you fail to respond to any specific allegations within thirty (30) days of the date of this letter, the Ethics Committee may take your lack of response as a factor in their determination of the matter.

To assist us in the investigation, please also provide the following information:

- A sequence of events leading up to the time of the alleged violations and following that time
- Any other relevant information such as copies (not originals) of relevant documents such as billing records, letters, clinical records, telephone bills, diaries, letters, etc. which might explain or validate your response

You may also submit information from other people with relevant information. You may send this with your own response or have these people submit this directly to the Chairperson of the Ethics Committee at the address on this letter. Any information submitted should have a signed authorisation for its use in the SAC ethics complaint process from the person releasing the material. *Please do not ask for or submit general letters of support from current or former clients.*

Send your written response within thirty (30) days of receipt of this letter. You may consult with legal counsel, but you must respond to the charges yourself.

PROCESS

A flow chart is enclosed to help you understand the enclosed *procedures* and the process of the investigation as described below.

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The first step will be the investigation conducted by the Chairperson of the Ethics Committee who may seek additional information before the Ethics Committee is fully involved. The SAC Ethics Committee Chair may appoint Investigator/s. These investigations will be conducted largely through correspondence with you, the complainant, witnesses suggested by you and/or the complainant, and other persons with useful information.

It is the Ethics Committee's responsibility to see that investigations are conducted thoroughly and impartially and that its *procedures* are followed. It is your responsibility to cooperate with the investigation, to respond fully and truthfully to inquiries within the deadlines given, and to provide all the information requested by the Ethics Committee and staff.

After this investigation has been completed, the Ethics Committee may refer the parties to the mediation process to seek an amicable settlement. If no mediated resolution to the complaint is reached, the Ethics Committee shall refer the matter to be heard before the Ethics Committee.

You may accept the decision, or you may exercise your right to have the decision reviewed by the Appeals Board.

CORRESPONDENCE

We are sending this notice to you at the last known address we received from you with payment of your fees and mailing that to the address will be deemed sufficient notice.

Please send your response and all other correspondence to the Chairperson of the SAC Ethics Committee at the address shown below. Please include the date, your current address, home and office phone numbers and email address on all correspondence. Please advise which of the addresses will provide confidentiality for any correspondence.

SAC – ETHICS MANUAL OF PROCEDURES

Once you have received notice of a formal complaint you are advised not to discuss the matter with anyone not directly involved with it. All information should be treated as highly confidential. The Ethics manual outlines the procedures for any disclosure of information.

We realize that this may be a very difficult as well as lengthy process for you. We appreciate your patience and cooperation, and will endeavour to maintain and respect confidentiality.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Ethics Committee Chairperson

(Chairperson's address)

Enclosures: Materials from complainant, with Waiver

SAC Code of Ethics

Summary of Procedures for Ethical Complaints