



## DECLARATION OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

The Swedish Association of Guidance Counsellors is a non-profit association that works to reinforce and develop career guidance as a field of activity and as a profession. The aim behind this Declaration of Ethical Principles is that it should act as a source of support for those who work with guidance, and those who come into contact with guidance.

Guidance covers a whole range of activities and areas in education and employment, both in the private and public domain, and is centred on the career processes of individuals. Career processes refer to the individual's questions and thoughts regarding choice, transition and learning in relation to education, working life and employment options. Counselling should be characterised by professionalism and compliance with generally accepted ethical standards.

The work of the counsellor encompasses a range of questions and issues relating to professional ethics. Guidance exists in an arena marked by complex issues, and where different needs and obligations often need to be set against each other, and many questions are open to interpretation. Guidance often takes place in contexts where there could be a conflict between the interests of the individual and the interests of society/organisations, and where differing needs and obligations need to be considered and compared. A conflict of loyalty could arise where the counsellor is faced with demands that are at variance. Nor is the relationship between counsellor and client equal when it comes to the standpoint and situation of those involved. In many instances, the target groups for counselling comprise individuals who are vulnerable in one way or another. Questions and standpoints relating to professional ethics are permanent elements underlying counselling practice. Ethical issues change and are challenged in relation to societal changes and technological development.

An ability to work reflectively and consciously is vital in situations that require the adoption of an ethical position. Complexity with regard to the prerequisites and issues that arise in counselling impose strict demands on the ethical awareness of the counsellor. Ethical awareness is essentially about knowledge, critical thinking, analytical capability, and the capacity to make relevant assessments. The development of ethical awareness is crucial to the credibility and integrity of a profession.

SVF's Ethical Guidelines are intended to serve as a source of support and a basis for discussion and reflection in conjunction with ethical standpoints and dilemmas. Through the guidelines, SVF is also seeking to direct the attention of the counsellor towards the multiplicity of ethical issues that could arise in the field. The Guidelines will also help counsellors to act independently in the event of a conflict of interest, and/or when the client is affected by inequitable and potentially prejudicial conditions.

SVF has an Ethics Committee that is charged with the task of specifically developing and monitoring issues relating to ethics in counselling. The Ethics Committee can also function as a source of support in addressing any ethical issues that may arise.

SVF's professional ethics are founded on values that can be traced back to the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the EU Resolution on Guidance 9286/04, and Career Guidance – A Handbook for Policy Makers, (OECD 2007).



## ETHICAL GUIDELINES

**The equal value of all human beings** should form the basis for all counselling work. Counsellors respect the unique and equal value of every human being. They promote justice and equal treatment, and counteract all forms of discrimination.

Counsellors support the conscious and carefully considered educational and professional choices made by individuals. Counsellors **focus on the individual** and are not influenced by special interests. Freedom of action, freedom of choice, self-determination, and personal decisions are principles embodied in the observation and preservation of human dignity, and involve respecting and strengthening the individual.

Counselling **is founded on scientific theory and methodology** and uses theory formation in the counselling field as a starting point. Counselling is also founded on established professional experience.

### Profession

- Counsellors endeavour to maintain and develop their professional expertise.
- Counsellors seek to learn from each other and to systematically share their experience and knowledge.
- Counsellors follow advances in methods, theories and research within their field.
- Counsellors strive to achieve good self-knowledge and awareness of their own attitudes and values in relation to the individual and society.
- Counsellors highlight the limits of their profession and enlist the aid of other experts when doing so would be in the client's best interests.

### Individual

- Counsellors treat individuals based on respect and the ambition to establish good relationships.
- Counsellors treat information they receive about an individual's personal circumstances with the utmost respect in their endeavour to safeguard the integrity of the individual.
- Counsellors have knowledge of and monitor current laws and regulations governing their duty of confidentiality.
- Counsellors are clear when setting out the conditions for the meeting and about their own expertise, and they adapt the counselling process to the particular needs and situation of the client.
- Counsellors seek to provide relevant, clear and objective information.
- 

### Society

- Counsellors have knowledge of the laws, ordinances and goals that regulate and influence counselling.
- Counsellors highlight societal injustice and make every effort to represent the individual.
- Counsellors strive to achieve impartiality and neutrality when making choices, and they are prepared to justify their views and actions.