

# Practice Guidelines for FAM Counsellors



## Foreword

Strong and stable families are the bedrock of our society. Nevertheless, from time to time, families may face challenges in their family relationships. In times like these, Counsellors play a key role in supporting and uplifting families. Through counselling support, families can find constructive ways to resolve their issues, improve communication and emerge stronger.

This document, titled 'The Practice Guidelines for FAM Counsellors' (hereafter referred to as the Guidelines), is a pivotal step forward in establishing professional guidelines and standards for Counsellors supporting families in Singapore. The Guidelines aim to ensure that our Counsellors uphold standards of professionalism, ethics and care in their work. It also provides guidance to help Counsellors navigate the complex situations that often arise when working with families.

The development of the Guidelines has been made possible through a close collaboration between the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and the Singapore Association for Counselling (SAC). We are deeply grateful for the valuable contributions from all our partners who helped to shape the Guidelines. The collective practice wisdom contained in the Guidelines reflects our shared commitment as professionals to continually improve our service and ensure better outcomes for our families.

**Ms Nancy Ng**  
Director/ Family Support Division  
Family Life Group

**Mr Andy Lam**  
President  
Singapore Association for Counselling

## Outline

<b><u>Foreword</u></b>	02
<b><u>Introduction</u></b>	04
<b>1 <u>Fundamental Principles</u></b>	05
<b>2 <u>Counselling Relationship and General Conduct</u></b>	06
2.1 Values underpinning the relationship	
2.2 Boundaries with clients and prohibited relationships	
2.3 Communication and contracting	
2.4 Handling ethical issues	
2.5 Handling complaints	
<b>3 <u>Clinical Responsibilities</u></b>	12
3.1 Consent	
3.2 Confidentiality and limits of confidentiality	
3.3 Duty of care and responsibility to clients	
3.4 Cultural sensitivity and competencies	
3.5 Clinical processes	
3.6 Records and documentation	
<b>4 <u>Professional Competencies</u></b>	18
4.1 Practising within an area of expertise	
4.2 Supervision	
4.3 Capacity to practise	
4.4 Relationship with other professionals and systems	
4.5 Court-mandated clients	
4.6 Laws and legislation	
<b>5 <u>Role of Technology</u></b>	24
5.1 Considerations in use of technology	
5.2 Use of Technology in Cross-Border Services	
5.3 Security and risk issues	
5.4 Social media	
5.5 Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)	

## Introduction

The Practice Guidelines for FAM Counsellors (hereafter referred to as the Guidelines) establishes professional standards for FAM (Strengthening Families Programme) Counsellors working with families. FAM Centres offer programmes and services to support couples who may face greater challenges in their marriage and families showing early signs of stress.

The Guidelines aim to provide guidance for Counsellors navigating complex situations that may arise when working with families. It encompasses key areas such as:

- Fundamental principles
- Values underpinning the counselling relationship and general conduct
- Clinical responsibilities
- Professional competencies
- Role of technology

While this document is primarily designed for FAM Counsellors, we welcome and encourage Counsellors working with families in other settings to adopt these principles and guidelines in their practice. Given the multidisciplinary nature of family support services, practitioners from related fields such as social workers and psychologists who provide counselling to families will also find the Guidelines relevant and applicable to their work.

The Guidelines aim to complement the other existing professional codes<sup>1</sup>. References to corresponding provisions in the SAC's Code of Ethics (2018) are indicated in the right margin. For example, A:2.1 refers to Section A, clause 2.1 of the SAC's Code of Ethics (2018). These cross-references will help Counsellors understand how the Guidelines align with the established ethical standards for counsellors.

While extensive, the Guidelines may not be able to cover every scenario. Counsellors are expected to exercise professional discretion, engage in regular supervision, and refer to relevant professional codes of ethics and legislation when confronted with dilemmas or challenging situations. Agencies play a vital role in ensuring that policies and protocols are in place to support Counsellors in upholding these professional standards and deliver effective services to families.

To remain relevant and effective, the Guidelines will undergo periodic reviews and updates. These revisions will reflect advancements in how Counsellors work with families and adapt to evolving social and technological landscapes in Singapore.

---

<sup>1</sup> [SAC Code of Ethics](#), [SASW Code of Professional Ethics](#) , [SPS Code of Ethics](#)

## **Practice Guidelines for FAM Counsellors**

**1**

# **Fundamental Principles**

**As FAM Counsellors working with families in Singapore, we will adopt the principles set by the Singapore Association for Counselling (SAC). These broad principles include:**

- **Beneficence (to do good)**
- **Non-maleficence (do no harm)**
- **Respect for autonomy**
- **Fairness and truthfulness**



**Practice Guidelines for  
FAM Counsellors**

**2**

**Counselling  
Relationship and  
General Conduct**



## **Section 2: Counselling Relationship and General Conduct**

### **2.1 Values underpinning the relationship**

- 2.1a Protecting clients' interests
- 2.1b Respecting clients' rights
- 2.1c Building trust
- 2.1d Being neutral and objective

### **2.2 Boundaries with clients and prohibited relationships**

- 2.2a List of prohibited and concerning relationships
- 2.2b General conduct

### **2.3 Communication and contracting**

- 2.3a Contracting with clients
- 2.3b Verbal and/or written communication

### **2.4 Handling ethical issues**

- 2.4a Process

### **2.5 Handling complaints**

- 2.5a Process

## 2.1 Values underpinning the relationship

SAC  
(2018)

### 2.1a Protecting clients' interest

**2.1a.1** Counsellors are dedicated to prioritising the interests of families, with emphasis on safeguarding the interest of vulnerable persons (e.g. children, persons with disabilities, etc).

**2.1a.2** Counsellors shall ensure that their main motivation is to support clients in managing their issues.

**2.1a.3** Counsellors shall respect the dignity and promote the interests of clients.

**2.1a.4** Counsellors shall collaborate with families, as far as possible, to devise intervention plans consistent with the needs, abilities, circumstances, values, and cultural background of the family members. C:2.6

**2.1a.5** For families with other needs, Counsellors shall provide relevant information and/or refer them to appropriate support services. A:5.4

**2.1a.6** When the family is receiving services from other professionals or agencies, Counsellors shall consider their interests and avoid duplication of roles or services.

### 2.1b Respecting clients' rights

**2.1b.1** Counsellors shall work in ways that promote client autonomy and well-being, maintaining the respect and dignity of clients and their family members. This includes allowing clients to choose to enter or remain in a counselling relationship and providing them with adequate information about the counselling process. A:2.1

For Court-mandated clients, Counsellors shall consider the legal obligations by helping clients understand the benefits of participating in the counselling process.

When clients present with risks and safety concerns and decide to disengage or exit services, Counsellors shall:

- Assess whether the risks pertain to the client's own safety, pertain to others' safety, or risks inflicted by others to the client;
- Make appropriate referrals to relevant services for the person(s) at risk and/or person(s) posing risk;
- Report to relevant authorities, when necessary.

**2.1b.2** Counsellors shall obtain consent from clients before providing services. For consent regarding minors and vulnerable clients, refer to [Section 3.1b: Minors and Vulnerable Clients](#) A:2.1  
A:2.2

**2.1b.3** Counsellors shall respect the clients' right to hold values, opinions, and lifestyles that differ from their own, as long as it does not harm self or others. (Refer to [Section 3.4a: Respecting diversity and differences](#)) B:2.1

Counsellors shall consult their supervisor when their personal values affect the counselling relationship.

**2.1c Building trust**

**2.1c.1** Trust is key in the counselling relationship with clients. Counsellors shall aim to establish a therapeutic relationship with clients through authenticity, genuineness, and empathy. In situations where these qualities may be challenged, Counsellors shall consult their supervisor on the next steps.

**A:1.1****2.1d Being neutral and objective**

**2.1d.1** Counsellors shall maintain neutrality and objectivity when managing cases.

When a Counsellor provides services to two or more persons who have a relationship with each other, the Counsellor shall clarify the nature of the relationships that the Counsellor will have with each person at the onset.

**2.1d.2** Counsellors shall navigate the dynamics of the family relationships with sensitivity and professionalism. Counsellors shall strive to adopt a neutral and balanced approach, acknowledging the perspectives and needs of all persons involved.

**B:2.7**

**2.1d.3** Counsellors shall not have dual relationships with clients that could impair professional judgement or potentially lead to a conflict of interest. (Refer to [Section 3.2: Boundaries with clients and prohibited relationships](#))

When Counsellors are uncertain about how to handle possible dual relationships, they shall consult their supervisor on the next steps.

**2.2 Boundaries with clients and prohibited relationships****2.2a List of prohibited and concerning relationships**

**2.2a.1** Counsellors shall not provide counselling services for clients with whom they had prior sexual and/or romantic relationships.

**A:3.2**

**2.2a.2** Counsellors shall not have any sexual and/or romantic relationships with current clients and/or their clients' family members.

**A:3.1**

**2.2a.3** In the event of any enduring non-romantic personal or professional connection developing between a Counsellor and their client, their client's family member or friend, the Counsellor shall consult their supervisor.

**A:3.4**

**2.2a.4** Counsellors shall not exploit clients emotionally, financially, physically, sexually, or in any other way. This includes behaviours such as sexual solicitation, physical advances, or any form of touch that may be open to misinterpretation.

**A:3****B:2.4****B:2.5****2.2b General conduct**

**2.2b.1** Counsellors shall not engage in inappropriate behaviour (e.g. harassing, demeaning) towards clients based on factors such as their age, sex, race,

**B:2.4**

ethnicity, cultural background, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, language, or socio-economic status.

**2.2b.2** Counsellors shall carefully consider the implications of accepting or declining gifts during or after the therapeutic relationship. **B:2.6**

Counsellors are to adhere to their agency's protocol, and in the absence of such, to decline with explanation any gifts, gratuities, or favours from clients.

**2.2b.3** Counsellors shall not solicit goods, services, or other non-monetary remuneration from clients in return for their services. **B:2.5**

**2.2b.4** Counsellors shall conduct themselves in a professional manner when providing services.

**2.2b.5** Counsellors shall be vigilant in identifying and addressing any situations that may pose a risk to the safety and well-being of clients. (Refer to [Section 3.3a: Taking reasonable action when there is clear and imminent danger to clients and others](#)) **D:2.2**

**2.2b.6** When Counsellors face threats, verbal abuse, or harassment from clients, they shall escalate the matter according to their agency's protocol to decide the next course of action or report the matter to the police.

## 2.3 Communication and contracting

### 2.3a Contracting with clients

**2.3a.1** Counsellors shall establish and communicate clear professional boundaries when initiating a counsellor-client relationship.

**2.3a.2** Counsellors shall set clear and transparent service agreements and/or terms and conditions for clients, in writing where appropriate.

**2.3a.3** When counselling involves different family members, Counsellors shall inform all parties of their involvement and explain to them why their participation is helpful. (Refer to [Section 2.1d: Being neutral and objective](#))

**2.3a.4** Counsellors shall collaborate with the family members to set counselling goals. The goals shall be adjusted, where necessary, to accommodate the changing needs and circumstances of the family.

For Court-mandated clients, primary counselling goals are typically prescribed by the Courts. Counsellors may work with the family to set additional goals, where necessary, to complement and enhance the court-directed goals.

### 2.3b Verbal and/or written communication

**2.3b.1** Counsellors shall obtain consent from clients and inform them of the purpose of the counselling services. **A:2.1**

**2.3b.2** Counsellors shall discuss key issues such as the nature and process of counselling and confidentiality with clients at the earliest opportunity. **B:3.1**

<b>2.3b.3</b>	Counsellors shall make reasonable efforts to respond to clients' queries and prevent misunderstandings.	<b>B:3.2</b>
<b>2.3b.4</b>	Counsellors shall discuss realistic outcomes and limitations of the service offered with clients to ensure that clients have an adequate understanding of the nature and scope of services.	<b>B:3.1</b>
<b>2.3b.5</b>	Counsellors shall establish if clients are known to any other helping services and consider whether their agency's services are suitable and timely.	
<b>2.3b.6</b>	Counsellors shall obtain consent from clients before conferring with other professionals, except in situations where confidentiality needs to be breached. (Refer to <a href="#">3.2b Situations where limits of confidentiality apply</a> )	<b>B:4.2</b> <b>B:4.3</b>
	When working with Court-mandated clients, Counsellors shall inform clients at the onset that they will report the family's progress to the Courts and seek the Court's directions, when required.	<b>B:4.2</b>
<b>2.3b.7</b>	Counsellors shall make reasonable efforts to establish an agreement with clients on how they will work together and to periodically review their progress.	

## 2.4 Handling ethical issues

### 2.4a Process

**2.4a.1** When encountering ethical issues, Counsellors shall seek guidance through supervision and consultation in a timely manner.

## 2.5 Handling complaints

### 2.5a Process

**2.5a.1** Counsellors shall cooperate with the complaint investigation process and provide all relevant information requested.

**Practice Guidelines for  
FAM Counsellors**

**3**

**Clinical  
Responsibilities**



## **Section 3: Clinical Responsibilities**

### **3.1 Consent**

- 3.1a Usage of services, data storage and data sharing
- 3.1b Minors and vulnerable clients

### **3.2 Confidentiality and limits of confidentiality**

- 3.2a General requirements of confidentiality
- 3.2b Situations where limits of confidentiality apply

### **3.3 Duty of care and responsibility to clients**

- 3.3a Taking reasonable action when there is clear and imminent danger to clients and/or others
- 3.3b Maintaining high standards of conduct and competency
- 3.3c Responsible use of professional influence

### **3.4 Cultural sensitivity and competencies**

- 3.4a Respecting diversity and differences

### **3.5 Clinical processes**

- 3.5a Clinical considerations for referral and closure
- 3.5b Importance of supporting research and evaluation of services

### **3.6 Records and documentation**

- 3.6a Maintaining proper documentation
- 3.6b Secure data and records storage
- 3.6c Disposal of records

### 3.1 Consent

#### 3.1a Usage of services, data storage and data sharing

**3.1a.1** Counsellors shall obtain consent from clients before providing services and/or sharing clients' data with third parties.

Consent can be revisited at any time and Counsellors shall respect their clients' rights to refuse or withdraw consent at any point.

**3.1a.2** Counsellors shall inform clients that sessions may be recorded. (Refer to [Section 5.3a: Guidelines related to using technology](#))

#### 3.1b Minors and vulnerable clients

**3.1b.1** Counsellors shall obtain consent from parents and/or legal guardians, in writing where possible, before delivering services for children/young persons (under 18 years of age) and/or persons who are incapable of providing consent.

In cases where parents are divorcing/divorced, Counsellors shall obtain consent from both parents. In situations where Counsellors are unable to do so, Counsellors shall:

- Document all attempts made to contact the parent (if applicable);
- Document the reasons why consent could not be obtained or not required; and
- Consult their supervisor on the next steps

**3.1b.2** When working with children/young persons, Counsellors shall involve them in decision-making, where possible and appropriate.

### 3.2 Confidentiality and limits of confidentiality

#### 3.2a General requirements of confidentiality

**3.2a.1** Counsellors shall respect their clients' privacy and safeguard their clients' rights to confidentiality, except in cases where limits of confidentiality apply. (Refer to [Section 3.2b: Situations where limits of confidentiality apply](#))

Counsellors shall explain how confidentiality applies within the family unit and how information shared by each family member will be handled.

**3.2a.2** Counsellors shall obtain and retain only information relevant to their work with clients.

**3.2a.3** When working with Court-mandated clients, Counsellors shall inform clients that data may be shared with the Courts and other relevant parties (e.g. MSF), where necessary.

**3.2a.4** Counsellors shall conduct counselling with clients in a suitable and safe environment that ensures the clients' identity and privacy.

A:2.1

D:3.2

A:2.2

B:4.1

B:4.2

B:4.3

B:4.2

D:3.3

### 3.2b Situations where limits of confidentiality apply

**3.2b.1** Counsellors shall maintain confidentiality and security of clients' personal information, except when necessary for client/public safety, or when legally required. Counsellors shall consider the clients' developmental level or cognitive capacity when explaining and applying confidentiality. B:4.1  
B:4.2

**3.2b.2** Counsellors shall, at the onset, share with clients the limits of confidentiality which includes sharing information with third parties/agencies, when required. Counsellors shall remind clients of these limitations, where appropriate. B:4.2  
B:4.3

**3.2b.3** If a client refuses counselling due to concerns regarding the limits of confidentiality, the Counsellor shall consult their supervisor on the next steps.

Some situations where limits of confidentiality apply:

**Risk of Harm:** When a client poses an imminent risk of harm to themselves or others

**Child Abuse or Neglect:** When there is suspicion or evidence of child abuse or neglect to a child/young person under the age of 18 years

**Family Violence:** When there is ongoing or potential family violence within the family, household, current or former intimate relationships

**Abuse of Vulnerable Adults:** When there is ongoing or potential abuse of vulnerable adults aged 18 years and above

**Court Orders:** When the Courts order the disclosure of case information

**Duty to report:** Counsellors have a legal duty to immediately report information to the police if they become aware that a person has committed or intends to commit any offence mentioned in Section 424 of Criminal Procedure Code 2010. This includes any arrestable offence affecting the human body which is punishable under the Penal Code 1871

**Supervision:** When Counsellors share case information for supervision purposes to ensure the best possible care for clients

### 3.3 Duty of care and responsibility to clients

#### 3.3a Taking reasonable action when there is clear and imminent danger to clients and/or others

**3.3a.1** When there is clear and imminent danger to the safety of individuals, Counsellors shall take all reasonable steps to ensure their safety. D:2.2

**3.3a.2** Counsellors shall proactively monitor the safety of the client and relevant persons until the situation is stabilised (e.g. prompt follow-up on previous recommendations given to the client). D:2.2

**3.3a.3** Counsellors shall abide by their agency's escalation processes and policies. Counsellors shall escalate any concern of risk of harm to relevant authorities. D:2.2

**3.3b Maintaining high standards of conduct and competency**

**3.3b.1** Counsellors shall uphold the values and ethics of their profession and conduct their work in a legal and ethical manner.

**3.3b.2** Counsellors shall be aware of their own biases and assumptions that may affect their work with clients. They shall maintain professional boundaries to protect the therapeutic relationship and seek supervision when necessary.

**3.3b.3** Counsellors shall maintain professional conduct and take appropriate actions to uphold standards in accordance with the Guidelines.

**3.3b.4** Counsellors shall maintain high standards of professional competence and conduct through continuing education, supervision and self-care.

**B:2.1  
B:2.2  
B:2.3****D:2.4****E1****3.3c Responsible Use of Professional Influence**

**3.3c.1** Counsellors shall be mindful of how their personal, financial, social, organisational, or political views may impact their clients' lives.

**3.3c.2** Counsellors shall not exploit their position against those under their authority, including clients, students, supervisees, employees, and research participants.

**D:2.5****B:2.5  
D:2.5****3.4 Cultural sensitivity and competencies****3.4a Respecting diversity and differences**

**3.4a.1** Counsellors shall be aware of their cultural competence and biases and engage in ongoing learning about other cultures.

**3.4a.2** Counsellors shall not impose their own values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours on clients.

**3.4a.3** Counsellors shall provide the same level of professionalism and respect to all clients regardless of factors such as their nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, and disability.

**B:2.2****B:2.2****3.5 Clinical processes****3.5a Clinical considerations for referral and closure**

**3.5a.1** Counsellors shall conduct holistic assessments and regularly review their cases to ensure that they render professional assistance in accordance with the Guidelines.

**3.5a.2** After making a referral, Counsellors shall ensure that:

- the receiving agency has accepted the case, before terminating services for the family, or
- they work collaboratively with the other agency, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

<p><b>3.5a.3</b> Counsellors shall end the service when the family's needs and goals are met or when services are no longer required. Counsellors may make appropriate arrangements for the continuation of services, when necessary (e.g. refer them to other services to address ongoing needs).</p>	<b>A:5.3</b> <b>A:5.4</b>
<p><b>3.5a.4</b> Counsellors shall ensure the continuation of services or inform their clients of service interruptions in advance.</p>	
<p><b>3.5b Importance of supporting evaluation of services</b></p>	
<p><b>3.5b.1</b> Counsellors shall seek to improve their practice through participating in research and programme evaluations.</p>	<b>G1.1</b>
<p><b>3.5b.2</b> Counsellors shall obtain consent from clients for research and programme evaluation participation by explaining the purpose, rationale, and objectives. They shall respect the clients' right to refuse or withdraw from the research or programme evaluation at any time.</p>	<b>G:2.2</b> <b>G:2.2.5</b>
<p><b>3.6 Records and documentation</b></p>	
<p><b>3.6a Maintaining proper documentation</b></p>	
<p><b>3.6a.1</b> Counsellors shall maintain timely and detailed records of services provided, in accordance with their agency's requirements.</p>	<b>D3.4</b>
<p><b>3.6b Secure data and records storage</b></p>	
<p><b>3.6b.1</b> Counsellors shall maintain the confidentiality and security of all personal information, ensuring that records and documentation are secure and accessed only by authorised personnel. Storage of data shall comply with their agency's requirements.</p>	<b>B:5.1</b> <b>D:3.5</b>
<p><b>3.6c Disposal of records</b></p>	
<p><b>3.6c.1</b> Counsellors shall dispose of client records and recordings in accordance with their agency's requirements, the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) and other applicable data security instructions.</p>	

**Practice Guidelines for  
FAM Counsellors**

**4**

**Professional  
Competencies**



## Section 4: Professional Competencies

### 4.1 Practising within an area of expertise

4.1a Training, qualifications and professional credentials

### 4.2 Supervision

4.2a Role of supervisees  
4.2b Qualifications and training of supervisors  
4.2c Role of supervisors

### 4.3 Capacity to practise

4.3a Taking care of self and colleagues

### 4.4 Relationships with other professionals and systems

4.4a Relationships between Counsellors and stakeholders  
4.4b Working in multidisciplinary teams

### 4.5 Court-mandated clients

4.5a Working with Court-mandated clients

### 4.6 Laws and legislation

4.6a Knowledge of national laws and legal requirements

## 4.1 Practising within an area of expertise

### 4.1a Training, qualifications and professional credentials

**4.1a.1** Counsellors shall meet the prevailing professional requirements stipulated by their agency including qualifications, training, relevant work experience, and professional credentials.

C:2.1

**4.1a.2** Counsellors shall engage in ongoing reflective practice and maintain their professional knowledge and skills at a level to ensure competent service delivery to families.

**4.1a.3** Counsellors shall practise only within their areas of competence. When an issue falls outside of the Counsellor's competence, the Counsellor shall consult their supervisor on the next steps.

C:2.1

C:2.2

Counsellors shall refrain from providing advice to clients on legal matters. Counsellors shall inform clients to discuss the matter with their lawyer(s) and/or the Courts.

C:2.4

**4.1a.4** Counsellors shall not claim or imply professional qualifications exceeding those possessed by them. They shall correct any misrepresentation of those qualifications by others.

**4.1a.5** Counsellors shall take ownership of their professional development by receiving ongoing training and education to enhance their competencies in working with families.

E1

## 4.2 Supervision

### 4.2a Role of Supervisees

**4.2a.1** Supervisees shall proactively seek and actively participate in regular supervision sessions.

**4.2a.2** Supervisees shall keep a record of their supervision hours and issues discussed during supervision sessions.

### 4.2b Qualifications and training of supervisors

**4.2b.1** Supervisors shall meet the prevailing professional requirements stipulated by their agency.

C:3.2

**4.2b.2** Supervisors shall be trained in supervision methods and techniques and stay updated on best practices in supervision.

**4.2b.3** Supervisors shall receive supervision for their work as supervisors.

**4.2b.4** When using technology in supervision, supervisors shall take reasonable precautions to protect the confidentiality of all information exchanged through any electronic means.

#### 4.2c Role of supervisors

<b>4.2c.1</b>	Supervisors' primary role is to ensure Counsellors provide services that promote their clients' interest. Supervisors may also be tasked to assess and manage the performance of their supervisees within their agency.	<b>C:3.1</b>
<b>4.2c.2</b>	Supervisors shall be committed to comply with the policies, procedures and professional standards and ensure that supervisees under their guidance comply as well.	
<b>4.2c.3</b>	Supervisors shall establish procedures for contacting alternate supervisors when the primary supervisor is not available.	
<b>4.2c.4</b>	Supervisors shall ensure that supervisees uphold ethical and legal standards in their practice. They shall provide supervision, support, and clear guidance to prevent or mitigate harm to clients and/or other relevant persons and monitor supervisees' progress.	<b>C:3.1</b>
<b>4.2c.5</b>	Supervisors shall create a supportive and safe environment that encourages and facilitates supervisees' self-development, self-awareness, and professional growth.	
<b>4.2c.6</b>	Supervisors shall maintain ethical and professional boundaries in their relationships with supervisees.	<b>C:3.3.4</b>
<b>4.2c.7</b>	Supervisors shall not have dual relationships with supervisees that could impair professional judgement or potentially lead to a conflict of interest.	<b>C:3.3.4</b>
<b>4.2c.8</b>	Supervisors shall recognise and be sensitive to individual and cultural differences that shape the supervisory relationship and Counsellor-client relationship.	<b>C:3.3.3</b>
<b>4.2c.9</b>	Supervisors shall be mindful of and sensitive to the challenges supervisees may encounter while working with families. They shall provide support to supervisees in processing these challenges.	
<b>4.2c.10</b>	Supervisors shall support supervisees' self-care practices.	
<b>4.2c.11</b>	Supervisors shall encourage continuous education and training for their supervisees. They shall jointly identify areas for professional development.	<b>E1</b>
<b>4.2c.12</b>	Supervisors shall initiate discussion with their supervisee(s) to establish a supervision agreement on matters including supervision goals, roles, and responsibilities.	

#### 4.3 Capacity to practise

##### 4.3a Taking care of self and colleagues

<b>4.3a.1</b>	Counsellors shall be responsible for maintaining their health. They shall ensure that their professional duties are not affected by their own emotional and physical issues.	
---------------	--	--

They shall proactively seek help from their supervisor and/or agency when they encounter issues that may affect their professional duties.

**4.3a.2** Counsellors shall be open to learning about self-care practices and utilising available support resources.

**4.3a.3** When Counsellors identify concerns of a colleague's potential professional impairment, they shall, in a timely manner, encourage the colleague to share their concerns with the agency.

In situations where confidentiality would need to be breached, Counsellors shall report their concerns to the appropriate supervisor(s) or relevant authorities in a timely manner. ([Refer to Section 3.2b: Situations where limits of confidentiality apply](#)).

**B:4.3**

## 4.4 Relationships with other professionals and systems

### 4.4a Relationships between Counsellors and stakeholders

**4.4a.1** Counsellors shall strive to build professional working relationships and effective communication with other stakeholders.

**4.4a.2** Counsellors are encouraged to contribute to policy development by providing feedback to their agency, MSF, and professional bodies when opportunities arise.

### 4.4b Working in multidisciplinary teams

**4.4b.1** Counsellors shall take a collaborative approach when working in multidisciplinary teams, recognising the value of diverse expertise in addressing complex client and family needs.

**4.4b.2** Counsellors shall respect other approaches of counselling practice and practices from other professional fields. Counsellors may use multidisciplinary meetings as platforms to facilitate collaboration among professionals.

## 4.5 Court-mandated clients

### 4.5a Working with Court-mandated clients

**4.5a.1** Counsellors shall make reasonable efforts to engage Court-mandated clients who refuse services. They shall ensure clients are benefiting from services and actively involved in decision-making processes within the scope of the Court-mandated requirements.

**4.5a.2** When working with Court-mandated clients, Counsellors shall inform clients of the limits of confidentiality. Counsellors shall inform clients that they will report the family's attendance, participation and progress to the Courts, when required.

**B:4.2**

## 4.6 Laws and legislation

### 4.6a Knowledge of national laws and legal requirements

**4.6a.1** Counsellors shall have knowledge of and abide by the relevant laws and legislation of Singapore. These include, but are not limited to:

- [Administration of Muslim Law Act 1966](#)
- [Children and Young Persons Act 1993](#)
- [Guardianship of Infants Act 1934](#)
- [Maintenance of Parents Act 1995](#)
- [Section 424 of Criminal Procedure Code 2010](#)
- [Women's Charter 1961](#)
- [Vulnerable Adults Act 2018](#)

## **Practice Guidelines for FAM Counsellors**

**5**

## **Role of Technology**



## Section 5: Role of Technology

### 5.1 Considerations in use of technology

5.1a Suitability of technology

### 5.2 Use of Technology in Cross-Border Services

5.2a Provision of services in Singapore

### 5.3 Security and risk issues

5.3a Guidelines related to using technology

### 5.4 Social media

5.4a Use of social media

### 5.5 Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

5.5a AI ethics

## 5.1 Considerations in use of technology

SAC (2018)

### 5.1a Suitability of technology

**5.1a.1** To maximise the benefits of technology-assisted sessions, Counsellors shall make reasonable efforts to verify that the family members have the:

- Ability to access and use technology;
- A conducive environment for the sessions;
- Secured internet access;
- Willingness to use technology.

**5.1a.2** Counsellors shall propose alternative methods when digital tools or technology-assisted service delivery limits effective assessment or intervention.

**5.1a.3** When providing counselling via audio or video platforms, Counsellors shall, at the onset, inform clients about the boundaries of engagement.

H:4.1

H:4.2

H:4.1

## 5.2 Use of Technology in Cross-Border Services

### 5.2a Provision of services in Singapore

**5.2a.1** Counsellors who conduct cross-border counselling, particularly when the client is physically not present in Singapore, shall consider the following:

- Seek their agency and legal team's advice on the legal implications of providing the services and whether it is appropriate to serve these clients;
- That they may be subjected to laws and regulations of both the Counsellor's practicing location and the client's location;
- Ensure that the terms in [Section 5.1a: Suitability of technology](#) are fulfilled; and
- To inform clients of the limits of confidentiality ([Refer to Section 3.2b: Situations where limits of confidentiality apply](#)).

H:2.1

H:3.1

B4

## 5.3 Security and risk issues

### 5.3a Guidelines related to using technology

**5.3a.1** Counsellors shall verify client identity prior to the commencement of services and inform clients of the associated risks. In the event of technology failure, Counsellors shall offer face-to-face sessions or the option to reschedule.

**5.3a.2** Counsellors shall take reasonable measures to protect the security and confidentiality of client information during the therapeutic process or when sharing the information with third parties.

H:3.1

H:3.2

<b>5.3a.3</b>	Counsellors shall establish professional boundaries regarding the appropriate use and limitations of technology within the therapeutic relationship.	<b>H:4.1</b>
<b>5.3a.4</b>	Counsellors shall consider the differences between face-to-face and electronic communication (e.g. Lack of nonverbal and verbal cues) and how these may affect the counselling process.	
<b>5.3a.5</b>	Counsellors shall clarify under which circumstances and for which purposes technology-based communication will be used.	
<b>5.3a.6</b>	Counsellors shall discuss confidentiality issues related to electronic communication with the clients.	
<b>5.3a.7</b>	Counsellors shall inform clients that sessions may be recorded and how the recordings will be used.	<b>D:3.2</b>
	Counsellors shall ensure that recorded sessions are stored securely in accordance with data protection policies and/or requirements.	
<b>5.3a.8</b>	If clients record sessions without permission, Counsellors shall address the situation with the clients respectfully. If the client's actions impact the efficacy of the therapeutic practice, Counsellors shall consult their supervisor on the next steps.	
<b>5.3a.9</b>	Counsellors shall be aware of potential risks involving the use of technology such as technical problems, system failure and unauthorised access to communication.	
<b>5.3a.10</b>	Counsellors shall ensure stable internet connection, functioning hardware, software, security systems and have backup plans in place. Counsellors shall inform clients of possible technological issues that could potentially lead to misunderstandings.	

## 5.4 Social media

### 5.4a Use of social media

- 5.4a.1** Counsellors shall not disclose client-identifying information, such as names or photos, through social media without consent.
- 5.4a.2** Counsellors shall inform clients of their professional boundaries regarding social media engagement, as this may imply a dual relationship.
- 5.4a.3** When Counsellors use a professional account to provide information to the public, Counsellors shall take reasonable steps to ensure that the information they disseminate is accurate and valid. They shall maintain ethical and professional communication when using social media platforms.

<b>5.4a.4</b>	Counsellors shall respect the privacy of their clients' presence on social media unless their clients provide consent to view their social media content (e.g. in session via a client's device).	<b>H:5.2</b>
<b>5.4a.5</b>	Counsellors shall maintain separate professional and personal social media presence accounts and take reasonable steps to ensure that professional interactions are distinct from personal activities. Counsellors are advised to set their personal accounts to private.	<b>H:5.1</b>
Counsellors shall take necessary actions in the event of breaches and inform their agency of situations that could affect their ethical responsibilities to the clients (e.g. disclosure of Counsellor/client identity on social media).		

## 5.5 Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

### 5.5a AI ethics

<b>5.5a.1</b>	Counsellors are encouraged to explore and leverage AI tools and technologies to enhance service delivery. This includes staying updated on developments and applications of such tools and technologies in the field.
<b>5.5a.2</b>	Before using any AI tool or technology, Counsellors shall have a good understanding of the tool and be able to use it competently and ethically.
<b>5.5a.3</b>	Counsellors shall inform clients when AI tools or technologies are used and their purpose in service delivery, if such tools are likely to cause concern with clients.
<b>5.5a.4</b>	Counsellors shall ensure that safeguards are in place when using AI tools or technologies e.g. not to input identifiable data into AI tools, if there are inadequate data protection measures in place.
<b>5.5a.5</b>	Counsellors shall maintain accountability for their clinical decisions, assessments and intervention outcomes. This includes maintaining human oversight over AI-generated or suggested interventions.

## References

American Counseling Association. (2014). Code of Ethics. [https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/ethics/2014-aca-code-of-ethics.pdf?sfvrsn=55ab73d0\\_1](https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/ethics/2014-aca-code-of-ethics.pdf?sfvrsn=55ab73d0_1)

Association of Psychotherapists and Counsellors Singapore. (2022). Standards of Ethics and Conduct. <https://apacs.org.sg/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/SAPAC-MOP-P11-Standards-of-Ethics-and-Conduct-2022-Jan.pdf>

Australian Counselling Association. (2024). Code of Ethics and Practice (Version 16). <https://theaca.net.au/viewdocument/code-of-ethics-and-practice-1>

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. (2018). Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions. <https://www.bacp.co.uk/media/3103/bacp-ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions-2018.pdf>

Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. (2020). Code of Ethics. <https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CCPA-2020-Code-of-Ethics-E-Book-EN.pdf>

Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. (2021). Standards of Practice (6th ed.). <https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/CCPA-Standards-of-Practice-ENG-Sept-29-Web-file.pdf>

Hong Kong Professional Counselling Association. (2021). Code of Ethics and Practice for Counsellors. <https://www.hkPCA.org.hk/about/code-of-ethics/>

International Association for Counselling. (2023). Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Professional Counsellors. <https://www.iac-irtac.org/sites/default/files/IAC%20UDEPPC.pdf>

National Association of Social Workers. (2017). Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice. <https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/NASW-Practice-Standards-Guidelines/Standards-for-Technology-in-Social-Work-Practice>

National Board for Certified Counselors. (2024). Ethical Principles for Artificial Intelligence in Counseling. [https://www.nbcc.org/assets/Ethics/EthicalPrinciples\\_for\\_AI.pdf](https://www.nbcc.org/assets/Ethics/EthicalPrinciples_for_AI.pdf)

National Counselling Society. (n.d.). Code of Ethical Practice. <https://ncps.com/about-us/code-of-ethics>

New Zealand Association of Counsellors. (2020). Code of Ethics: A Framework for Ethical Practice. <https://nzac.org.nz/document/6629/NZAC-Code-of-Ethics-2002-Revised-2020.pdf>

Professional Regulation Commission Manila. (2008). Code of Ethics for Registered and Licensed Guidance Counsellors.

<https://prc.gov.ph/sites/default/files/COE-GUIDANCE%20AND%20COUNSELING%202008-05.pdf>

Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia. (2024). Integrating Artificial Intelligence in Counselling and Psychotherapy.

[https://www.pacfa.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/PCFA/Documents/GoodPracticeGuidelines-o\\_IntegratingAI.pdf](https://www.pacfa.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/PCFA/Documents/GoodPracticeGuidelines-o_IntegratingAI.pdf)

Singapore Association for Counselling. (2018). Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct.

<https://sacsingapore.org/membership/code-of-ethics/>

Singapore Association of Social Workers. (2017). Code of Professional Ethics (3rd rev.).

<https://sasw.org.sg/code-of-professional-ethics/>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to extend our thanks and heartfelt appreciation to the following partners for their valuable contributions in shaping the Practice Guidelines for FAM Counsellors:

### Social Service Agencies/Charities/Non-Profit Organisations

- **AMP Singapore**
- **APKIM Centre of Social Services (ACOSS)**
- **Asian Pastoral Institute Care and Counselling (APICC)**
- **Care Corner Counselling Centre**
- **Catholic Family Life (CFL)**
- **Club HEAL**
- **Community Psychology Hub (CPH)**
- **Counselling and Care Centre (CCC)**
- **Darul Arqam (Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore)**
- **Eagles Mediation and Counselling Centre**
- **FAM (Allkin)**
- **FAM (Care Corner - Eunos)**
- **FAM (Care Corner - Woodlands)**
- **FAM (Fei Yue)**
- **FAM (Kampong Kapor Community Services)**
- **FAM (Lakeside Family Services)**
- **FAM (Methodist Welfare Services)**
- **FAM (Montfort Care)**
- **FAM (Thye Hua Kwan)**
- **FAM (TRANS)**
- **FAM (PPIS)**
- **Fei Yue Family Service Centre**
- **Tsao Foundation**  
Hua Mei Counselling and Coaching
- **PPIS Family Service Centre**
- **PPIS SYM Academy**
- **REACH Community Services**
- **SAGE Counselling Centre**
- **Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)**
- **SHINE Children and Youth Services**
- **Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH)**
- **Thye Hua Kwan Family Service Centre**
- **TOUCH Community Services**
- **TRANS Family Service Centre**
- **WE CARE Community Services**
- **Wings Counselling Centre**

Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs)

- **James Cook University (JCU)**
- **Nanyang Technological University (NTU)**  
National Institute of Education (NIE)
- **Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS)**

Other Organisations

- **Executive Counselling and Training Academy (ECTA)**
- **Institute of Mental Health (IMH)**  
National Addictions Management Service (NAMS)
- **Tech Tree Global**

Ministries/Statutory Boards

- **Family Justice Courts (FJC)**
- **Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY)**  
Syariah Court
- **Ministry of Education (MOE)**  
Guidance Branch
- **Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)**  
Clinical and Forensic Psychology Service (CFPS)  
Office of the Director-General of Social Welfare (ODGSW)  
Office of the Chief Psychologist (OCP)
- **National Council of Social Service (NCSS)**
- **Singapore Armed Forces' Counselling Centre**
- **Singapore Prison Service (SPS)**

For questions relating to the Guidelines, please write to: [familyassist@msf.gov.sg](mailto:familyassist@msf.gov.sg)

## About the Design

Inspired by the Ministry of Social and Family Development logo, the key visual design adopts a single-line illustration style to symbolize **unity** and **interconnectedness** in the family ecosystem.

At the heart of the design, the single continuous line transforms into two core visuals:

**A home with a heart** – Family is the foundation of emotional support, care, and stability. It embodies the idea that home is not just a place, but a space built on love and understanding.

**A family representation** – A depiction of familial bonds and the counsellor's role in helping families strengthen their bonds. It acknowledges that each family member brings unique perspectives and needs to the counselling process.

The single line itself is composed of many short lines in different colours, signifying the diverse roles in supporting families—Counsellors working in partnership with other professionals, stakeholders, and family members themselves as each contributes their unique perspectives and expertise. Together, these individual elements come together to form a unified support system, reinforcing the collaborative effort in strengthening families and building a more resilient community.

This visual language reflects **connection** and **collective impact**, aligning with the mission of supporting and empowering families.

Copyright © 2025 Ministry of Social and Family Development, Republic of Singapore

First released in July 2025. All rights reserved. Reproduction of this publication in whole or in part in any material form is prohibited without the prior written permission of the copyright holder.

**Family Support Division  
Family Life Group  
Ministry of Social and Family Development**

CPF Bishan Building  
3 Bishan Place, #04-00  
Singapore 579838

**Singapore Association for Counselling**

151 Chin Swee Road  
#03-12 Manhattan House  
Singapore 169876