



Canadian Association for Marriage & Family Therapy
L'association canadienne pour la thérapie conjugale et familiale

Ethics Committee FAQ Sheet

What is the purpose of the Ethics Committee?

The purpose of the CAMFT/ACTCF Ethics Committee is to ensure the application of professional standards through the upholding of the CAMFT/ACTCF Code of Ethics, and by doing so, to protect the profession, its members and the public.

When does the Ethics Committee become involved?

The Ethics Committee is involved when there is evidence that a member of CAMFT/ACTCF has potentially violated the Code of Ethics. Typically this is a result of complaints from the individuals involved, but third parties who have specific evidence of an ethical violation may register complaints as well. Additionally, the Committee may launch their own investigation when there is evidence in the media or public record of an ethical violation.

Does the Ethics Committee take anonymous complaints?

No. The Ethics Committee needs specific evidence of a violation of the Code of Ethics in order to begin an investigation. If there is evidence in the media or the public record, the committee may launch its own investigation. If the evidence is within a specific therapeutic relationship, the committee needs to be able to interview those involved. Further, in order for proper process to be followed, a member who is subject to a complaint needs to know who initiated the complaint in order for them to present their own defense appropriately.

How long does the process take?

Investigations of ethics complaints can a lengthy process, taking 6mo to a year or longer in some cases. This is because the committee needs to hear from all parties, and each party has the ability to see the evidence and defense and offer further explanations. The Ethics Committee typically meets once per year in the Winter to consider all the evidence in a case and make a decision.

What are the possible outcomes if the Ethics Committee finds that there has been a violation of the Code of Ethics?

The Ethics Committee has many tools at its disposal in the case that there is a finding that an ethical violation has occurred. Depending on the nature of the violation, the impact on those involved and the public, and the contextual factors regarding those involved, the Committee has options that range from no action to removal of membership, publication of the infraction and referral of the matter to regulatory and legal bodies. As stated in the CAMFT Procedures for Handling Ethical Matters, the primary stance of the CAMFT/ACTCF Ethics Committee is that training and re-education are preferred outcomes.

Should I consult with a lawyer?

Each party in a complaint, as well as the committee themselves, have the option at any time to consult with their own lawyer. Complainants do not need legal representation in order to file a complaint as the Ethics Committee handles these matters the same way regardless of representation, but it is their right to do so if they choose. Members who are subjects of complaints are encouraged to consult with their own legal representative to ensure that their rights are protected, especially as the outcome of the process may have significant outcomes in their lives.

Can I appeal an Ethics Committee Decision?

Yes. Either party may appeal a decision by the ethics committee. Appeals must be made in writing within 30 days of the notification of the Ethics Committee's decision in a case. Appeals can only be made on grounds of errors in the evidence, procedure or application of the code of ethics. Appeals are considered by a subcommittee of the CAMFT/ACTCF's Board of Directors, and their decision is final. Please see the CAMFT/ACTCF's Procedures for Handling Ethical Matters for more information.