

## Counselling Changes Lives

Te Roopu Kaiwhiriwhiri O Aotearoa, the New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) with over 2900 members, is the largest professional Association registering counsellors in Aotearoa. NZAC members uphold high standards of proficiency and ethical practice.

The NZAC Code of Ethics states the core values of counselling as:

Respect for  
human dignity

Partnership

Autonomy

Responsible  
caring

Personal  
integrity

Social justice

NZAC counsellors are qualified practitioners who accept referrals and tailor therapy with specialised expertise to meet the needs of clients.

NZAC counsellors align with other health professionals in a multi-disciplinary approach that includes working with ACC Sensitive Claims, addictions, business or employee assistance programmes, community and iwi social services, culture-specific organisations, and educational, justice, medical, Government and Non-Government Agencies. Counsellors work to facilitate positive change with families and individuals of all ages.

### Scope of Practice

Counsellors registered with NZAC work in diverse communities as an accessible, highly experienced, well educated, multi-ethnic mental health workforce. Professional Counselling is positioned alongside Psychology and Psychotherapy, working within a similar scope of practice. Counselling quality is assured by our rigorous membership process, which is necessary to meet registration requirements.

### Membership

Entry-level membership to the Association is provisional. Provisional status is achieved with a minimum of Level 7 Counsellor Education qualifications and evidence of 200 supervised practice hours. Full membership is gained after 18 months as a provisional member, and on completion of a further 300 hours of supervised practice. Candidates for full membership must demonstrate good character and professional cultural competence using Counselling theory and practise. They must also demonstrate an understanding of the NZAC Code of Ethics and Puawānanga Kaitiakitanga<sup>1</sup> using case examples. In addition, they need the support of current NZAC members, and of their employer/manager and their supervisor. The candidate's plans for continuing professional development (CPD) are also considered. A panel interview follows a successful application.

<sup>1</sup>Piripi, T. & Body, V. (2010). Tihei-wa Mauri Ora! New Zealand Journal of Counselling. Vol 30, (1).

Piripi, T. & Body, V. (2013). Tihei-wa Mauri Ora: Te Tipuranga. In Pacific Identities and Wellbeing: Cross-Cultural Perspectives. (Ed). Agee, M. McIntosh, T. Culberston, P. 'Ofa Makasiale, C. Otago University Press.



#### Nga Kete

Ngā Kete o te Matauranga  
(Baskets of Knowledge)

## Self-Regulation

NZAC is the organisation that registers its members to ensure safe practice for clients. The self-regulation process was chosen by Counsellors to be responsive to clients' best interests, using the key principles of equity and partnership guided by Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This point of difference exemplifies leadership by Counsellors in addressing issues of equity. This position directly aligns with Hon. Dr David Clark's comments on delivering equity of health and wellbeing in Aotearoa<sup>2</sup>.

## Complaints

Client complaints are addressed through the NZAC Ethics process to protect the mental health, wellbeing and safety of members of the public. The Health and Disability Commission has recognised the NZAC Code of Ethics and a High Court Judicial review upheld the complaints process used by NZAC as fair, considered and valid.

## Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The self-regulation process ensures public health and safety through:

- professional standards of practice guided by the Code of Ethics
- promoting competence in the ongoing education of Counsellors
- monitoring compliance with NZAC standards

The foundation of the CPD required to maintain an Annual Practising Certificate is ongoing engagement in education. This approach is vital to maintaining the standing of the Association and to ensuring that organisations that contract and employ NZAC Registered Members can have confidence in their abilities. There are 10 predetermined areas of competence from which Counsellor members select two domains for professional development. Each year 10 percent of the Association's membership is randomly audited to ensure the accountability of the CPD programme.

## Supervision

All Counsellors registered with NZAC are required to regularly review and reflect on their practice and CPD work in Supervision. Supervisors are experienced, qualified counselling practitioners who provide a forum for continuous quality improvement and accountability. Cultural safe practice is addressed through developing awareness, knowledge and integration of Puawānanga Kaitiakitanga, using resource tools such as Tihei-Wa Mauri Ora<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Delivered by the Hon. Dr David Clark, Minister of Health, Health Forum, Wellington, October 2019

<sup>3</sup> The NZAC acknowledges Vivienne Body and Teina Piripi for the koha of Tehei-Wa Mauri Ora to be used in the NZAC membership application process.

## Counsellor Education

The principles and values of the Association have shaped the professional counsellor education standards. NZAC-accredited tertiary providers offer counsellor education programmes with a minimum qualification at undergraduate degree level 7 of the NZQA curriculum.

Academic leadership is reinforced by research. The NZAC's NZ Journal of Counselling is published twice a year and exemplifies a high level of scholarship along with thesis research by Masters and Doctoral candidates. Research promotes the integration of Counselling theory and practice as well as recognising principles under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

## In summary

Members registered with NZAC are highly educated and qualified, professionally competent Counsellors working in health, education, justice and social services in Aotearoa. Clients are protected by the membership criteria, professional Code of Ethics, continuing professional development, supervision and complaints processes. These are embedded in the NZAC self-regulation process and in the commitment to Te Tiriti O Waitangi.

For further information please refer to:

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