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**Code of Ethics  
and  
Standards of Professional Conduct  
for  
the Dance Movement Therapy  
Association of Australasia, Inc**

Revised October 2021

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## **Background**

The Dance Movement Therapy Association of Australasia, Inc (DTAA) adopted this Code of Ethics and Rules for Professional Conduct (The Code) at its Annual General Meeting held on 11 October 2020. This document supersedes the Code of Ethics previously adopted in 2003. The Code of Ethics is subject to periodic amendments, which will be communicated to members of the Association, and published on the DTAA's website <https://dtaa.org.au/about/ethics/>

This Code may be cited as the Code of Ethics (2020) and a specific ethical standard should be referred to as "standard A.2. of the Code of Ethics (2020).

## **Introduction**

The Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct set forth the ethical obligations of Clinical, Professional, Provisional, Associate and Student Members of the Dance Movement Therapy Association of Australasia, Inc (DTAA). It articulates standards of practice to guide both dance movement therapists and inform the general public in a clear understanding and expectations of what is considered ethical professional conduct. The rules of conduct governing individuals and the profession of dance movement therapy have been established to safeguard professional standards and protect the public.

## **Purpose of this document**

The purpose of the Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct is to clarify and communicate the professional values and standards of conduct that guide dance movement therapy practice; to provide a resource that supports dance movement therapists in ethical decision making processes; and to provide a reference to standards for use in the processing of ethics complaints. Adherence to The Code and Standards are intended to offer assurance to clients, the community, employers, colleagues, students, supervisees, research participants, and other professions.

Ethics are apparent in the conduct of a person within their relationships. It is in the considered presence within, and in the attention given to all aspects of the client relationship, as well as relationships with colleagues, students, the profession and the broader community, that ethics is put into practice. Ethical practice begins with awareness and understanding of social, cultural and psychological influences and requires relational intelligence, sensitivity and respect. While the Code cannot guide the more nuanced and precise interactive aspects of relationships, it can provide a

foundation for the cultivation of shared values and principles, and standards of practice. In the face of uncertainty and complexity, ethics helps us make more sound and wise decisions, supported by self-reflection and dialogue.

Ethics also identify the values, principles and responsibilities of all members. They promote a professional level of competence and accountability in the field of dance movement therapy as well as provide guidelines for clients, employers and professionals as to what constitutes ethical practice for DTAA members.

### **How members should respond to this document**

Members must ensure that they are conversant with the current version of the Code. Dance movement therapists (DMTs) seeking clarification, advice or complaint procedure regarding ethical matters contained herein, please contact the organisation: [admin@dtaa.org.au](mailto:admin@dtaa.org.au)

### **Values of the Dance Movement Therapy Profession**

This document reflects the following values which underpin the work of the DTAA and our practice as DM therapists, and which appear in the Constitution of the DTAA (<https://dtaa.org.au/about/operations/>). The foundation of our work as DM therapists is based on respect for diversity, culture and social-emotional wellbeing for all people. DTAA encourages its practicing members to adhere to the following values which are core to human growth, development, health and wellbeing:

- *Bodily knowledge*: We integrate a holistic understanding of ‘the body,’ encompassing physical, psychological, emotional, social, ecological, cultural, and spiritual perspectives.
- *Value of dance movement as a healing art*: We acknowledge the deep cultural roots of dance as an intrinsic part of life and affirm its potential to enhance individual, family and community social and emotional wellbeing and healthy relationships including the natural environment.
- *Relational embodied movement experiences*: We focus on our therapeutic relationship with our clients to offer opportunities to explore patterns of physical, psychological and social expression, promoting vitality and improved quality of life
- *Body-mind-emotion integration* – Respecting movement as our basic form of neuro-developmental communication. We understand movement as a non-verbal symbolic

communication providing pathways to self - understanding, body wisdom, emotions and creative responses to life 's challenges.

- *Creativity*: Through dance and movement we encourage and support each client's potential for individual creative expression within individual, group or community settings.

## Values of DTAA Practicing Members

The values listed below will be evident in the personal qualities and behaviours of DTAA's practicing members:

- *Accountability:* We are professionally accountable for the services we provide, seeking to 'do no harm' and following all relevant laws.
- *Client focus:* We focus on our clients to ensure our actions and decisions are in our clients' best interests.
- *Competence:* We are competent to deliver dance movement therapy (DMT) services. <https://dtaa.org.au/dtaas-membership-levels/membership/competencies-dance-movement-therapists/>
- *Cultural responsiveness:* We acknowledge the First Peoples of all countries in Australasia, whose lands, winds and waters we all now share, and pay respect to their unique values, and their continuing and enduring cultures which deepen and enrich the life of our nations and communities.
  - For those practicing in New Zealand this Code needs to be read in conjunction with the Treaty of Waitangi and New Zealand law. New Zealand DM therapists shall seek to be informed about the meaning and implications of the Treaty of Waitangi for their work and understand the principles of protection, participation and partnership with Maori.
- *Diversity:* We value and respect the diversity of clients, carers and communities that reflect the diversity throughout Australasia.
- *Empowerment:* We facilitate empowerment of the client to take responsibility for their mental and physical health and wellbeing, to make decisions about their choice of services.
- *Justice:* We deal with clients fairly in a manner that is right and just and ensure we follow the principle of equitableness and responsiveness (natural justice) in all decisions we make.
- *Human rights:* We respect the human rights of clients and follow accepted human rights conventions in all we provide and communicate.
- *Integrity:* We act with honesty, openness and authenticity in our relationships with clients and others.
- *Professionalism:* We undertake our therapeutic roles with a high level of competence/skill and conduct, behaviour and attitude expected of a professional to ensure clients receive high quality services.
- *Self-awareness:* We recognise and reflect on our own values and perspectives and understand that our biases and insights impact on all that we do.



## General Principles

The Code offered below is built on three general principles – Respect, Propriety, and Integrity. The ethical standards (standards) derived from each general principle provide the minimum expectations with regard to a practicing member’s professional conduct and conduct in their capacity as a member of DTAA. Professional conduct that does not meet these standards is unethical and will be subject to review. These standards are not exhaustive. Where specific conduct is not identified by the standards, the general principles will apply. Each general principle is accompanied by an explanatory statement that can assist DM therapists to understand how the principle is enacted in the form of specific standards of professional conduct.

The general principles are:

- The general principle of **Respect** for the dignity and rights of people and peoples includes the principles of *justice, respect, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality*.
- The general principle of **Propriety** incorporates the principles of *beneficence, non-maleficence, competence, and responsibility*.
- The general principle of **Integrity** covers the requirements that DM therapists have for *good character, to be trustworthy, and understand the impact of their conduct on their clients and upon the profession*.

## **DTAA Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct**

### **I. Respect for the dignity and rights of people and peoples**

The respect for people and peoples includes justice, respect, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality. DMTs demonstrate their respect for people by acknowledging their legal rights and moral rights, their dignity and right to participate in decisions affecting their lives. They recognise the importance of people's privacy and confidentiality, physical and personal integrity, and recognise the power they hold over people when practising as a DMT. They have a high regard for the diversity and uniqueness of people and their right to linguistically and culturally appropriate services. They acknowledge peoples' right to be treated fairly without discrimination or bias.

#### **a. Justice**

- DMT registrants will abide by the ethical standard of justice by
  - a. Ensuring that any unfair discrimination against people on the basis of age, gender, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, or disability does not occur.
  - b. Assisting clients to address unfair discrimination or prejudice
  - c. Safeguarding the physical, mental, and emotional needs of their client by serving all in a non-discriminatory manner.
  - d. Complying with Trauma Informed Care & Practice and Client Centred Practice policies.

#### **b. Respect**

- In the course of their conduct, DM therapists will abide by the ethical standard of respect by
  - a. Communicating to clients, colleagues, and associated parties in a manner that
    - i. Respects the legal and moral rights of others
    - ii. Does not denigrate the character of the person
    - iii. Does not act in a coercive manner towards the person
  - b. Being professional, objective, truthful, and respectful when dealing with colleagues or other professionals in instances of
    - i. Request to review or comment on qualifications, competencies or work of a colleague
    - ii. Requests to review grant or research proposals or materials submitted for publication
    - iii. Discussions of professional issues
    - iv. When participating in groups or individual supervision as

supervisee or supervisor.

**c. Informed Consent**

- In work, DM therapists will abide by the ethical standard of *informed consent* by
  - a. Obtaining documented informed consent from the client or their legal guardian prior to therapeutic procedures
  - b. If the client does not have capacity to give consent or is impaired or limited in capacity, obtaining the consent of people with legal authority to act on behalf of the client.
  - c. Fully informing clients of the therapeutic services, they intend to provide using plain language and qualified interpreters when required
    - i. Explain the nature and purpose of the procedures they intend to use
    - ii. Clarify any risks or possible disadvantages
    - iii. Explain how the client's information will be collected and recorded
    - iv. Explain how long for, where, and how information will be stored and who will have access to that information
    - v. Clarify the expected duration, frequency and cost of therapeutic services to be provided
    - vi. Explain confidentiality and the limits to confidentiality
    - vii. Make clear the conditions under which therapeutic services may be terminated
    - viii. Provide any other relevant information.
    - ix. Explain the adherence to confidentiality when using digital services
    - x. Appropriate use of interpreters.
  - d. Ensuring that consent is obtained before seeking advice or discussing a client's case, personal records or videotapes with colleagues or associated parties.
  - e. Ensuring that a client is aware that supervision of their work may include discussion of the client but without specific identifying details.
  - f. Ensuring client consent when using case studies for training or publication purposes. This includes having a written consent form signed by the client or appropriate person.

#### **d. Privacy**

- In their work DM therapists will abide by the ethical standard of *privacy* by
  - a. Collecting only information relevant to the service being provided to the client
  - b. Not requiring supervisees, students, or trainees to disclose personal information to the training organisation unless it is a normal expectation of a given training procedure and informed consent has been obtained.

#### **e. Confidentiality**

- In their work DM therapists will abide by the ethical standard of *confidentiality* by
  - a. Safeguarding the confidentiality of information obtained during the provision of therapeutic services through
    - i. Making provisions for maintaining confidentiality in the collection, recording, accessing, storage, dissemination and disposal of said information
    - ii. Taking reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality of information after they leave a specific work setting or cease to provide therapeutic services.
  - b. Disclosing confidential information obtained during the course of providing therapeutic services only
    - i. With the consent of the client or their legal guardian
    - ii. Where there is a legal obligation to do so
    - iii. Where there is an immediate and specified risk of harm to an identifiable person or person(s) that can be averted only by disclosure as required by any mandatory reporting requirements of said information
    - iv. During the course of training or supervision that the identity of the client and associated parties has been concealed or informed consent to discuss has been obtained.
  - c. Ensuring that, if collected information about a client is used for a purpose other than the primary reason for collection (e.g. for research after treatment has ceased),
    - i. Informed consent has been obtained
    - ii. Information is de-identified
    - iii. The use is authorized under research or legal standards
  - d. Not refusing any reasonable request by the client to access their own client information
  - e. Only obtaining information from an associated party with the clients

consent and informing them of

- i. The identity of sources from which they intend to collect information
- ii. The nature and purpose of the information collection
- iii. How the information will be collected
- iv. How, where, and for how long the information will be stored
- v. Their (the client's) right to decline the request to obtain information
- vi. The foreseeable consequences of obtaining this information
- vii. Any other relevant information.

## II. **Propriety**

Propriety includes the areas of competence and responsibility. DM therapists must ensure they are competent to deliver the services they offer. They must seek to protect the interests of the people and peoples with whom they work ensuring that the welfare of clients and the public, and the standing of the profession, take precedence over their personal needs. DM therapists must practice within the limits of their competence and know and understand the legal, professional, ethical and, where applicable, organisational rules that regulate the services they provide. They undertake continuing professional development in order to take steps to ensure that they remain competent to practice. They must strive to be aware of the possible effect of their own physical and mental health on their ability to practice competently. Ultimately, the DMT must take personal responsibility for their decision making.

### a. **Competence**

- i. In the course of their work DM therapists will ensure the ethical principle of *competence* by
  - Bringing to and maintaining appropriate skills and attending to learning in their areas of professional practice, through ongoing and regular Continuing Professional Development.
  - Only providing services within the boundary of their professional training and expertise, including
    - a. Working within the limits of their education, training, supervision
    - b. Working at the level appropriate to their professional experience
    - c. Basing their services on the established knowledge of the discipline of DMT
    - d. Adhering to the DTAA's Code of Ethics

- e. Complying with the laws within the jurisdiction in which they work
- f. Ensuring that their own mental, emotional and physical state does not impair their ability to provide appropriate services
- g. Ensuring when unexpected circumstances arise (e.g. accident, sickness etc.) alternative support is available for client (s) if they choose.
- Use of touch: DM therapists understand that touch is fundamental to human growth and development and is inherent in dance and social interactions. Caution and discernment are advised including the following considerations:
  - a. Use only when it provides therapeutic benefits
  - b. Follows informed consent processes and uses good judgement if a client is not able to consent verbally
  - c. Follows protocols relating to cultural and facility practices
  - d. Uses specific touch methods only if the DM therapist has specialized training
  - e. DM therapists offer an alternative methods of connection when touch is engaged in a group context
  - f. Understands and examines their own preferences or biases towards touch.
- Seeking regular and ongoing professional clinical DMT supervision provided by an appropriately credentialed party
- Monitoring their own professional functioning and taking appropriate measures to address challenges by
  - a. Obtaining professional advice about whether they should limit, suspend or terminate provision of services
  - b. Obtaining professional help in the form of additional supervision
  - c. Obtaining professional help in the form of personal therapy
- Making and keeping adequate records of therapeutic services to clients and
  - a. Ensuring that records are kept for a minimum of 7 years since last client contact for adult clients
  - b. Ensuring that records are kept until age 25 years if the client was less than 18 years old when seen or based

on laws of jurisdiction.

**b. Responsibility**

- i. In the course of their work DMTs will demonstrate the ethical standard of *responsibility* by
  - Practicing
    - a. With the care and skill expected of a competent practitioner <https://dtaa.org.au/dtaas-membership-levels/membership/competencies-dance-movement-therapists/>
    - b. With the awareness of the foreseeable consequences of their conduct
    - c. By taking reasonable steps to prevent harm occurring as a result of their conduct
    - d. Only for the period that the services are necessary to the client
    - e. With personal responsibility for professional decisions made
    - f. With reasonable steps to ensure services are appropriately administered
    - g. With awareness of the professional boundaries
    - h. With regular review and revision of contractual arrangements
  - Only agreeing to provision of services to multiple simultaneous clients when
    - a. Explanation of the limits of confidentiality are provided in advance
    - b. The client has the opportunity to consider the limitations and ramifications of this situation
    - c. The client has accepted the limitations of this situation
    - d. The client has not been coerced to accept this situation
  - Establishing a clear and mutually agreed upon therapeutic contract between client (where possible), parent, guardian or appropriate authority, which contains
    - a. Goals
    - b. Procedures
    - c. Expected length of treatment
    - d. Conditions of termination
  - Collaborating with others for the benefit of the client
  - Suspending services only when
    - a. Suitable arrangements for other appropriate

- professionals to be available have been made
  - b. Obtaining client's consent for the above arrangements
- Terminating services when
  - a. It is clear that the client is no longer benefiting from the therapeutic services
  - b. The psychological well-being of the client has been duly considered
  - c. Arrangements for continuity of service have been made, if appropriate
  - d. The DM therapist becomes aware that their level of competence is not sufficient to meet the client's needs
  - e. An explanation regarding the reasons for termination has been given
  - f. The demands of an organization require the DM therapist to violate the general principles set out in this Code
- Applying valid and appropriate assessment procedures
- Basing interpretations on valid procedures and research findings
- Reporting assessment results appropriately and accurately in clear language
- Research publications that
  - a. Comply with codes, guidelines and other national directives
  - b. Remove the identity of any participants
  - c. State clearly if any data upon which the results are based has been previously published
- The following websites and [PACFA Code of Ethics Section 6, pages 16 & 17](#) provide further Research Ethics information: • [Federal Privacy Legislation](#) • [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research \(2007, updated 2015\)](#) • [Keeping Research on Track: A guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about health research ethics \(2005\)](#)

### III. Integrity

Integrity includes the areas of reputable behaviour, healthy communication, conflict of interest, non-exploitation, and addressing ethical concerns. DM therapists must recognise that their knowledge of the discipline of dance movement therapy, their professional standing, and the information they gather place them in a position of power and trust. They must exercise their power appropriately and honour this position of trust. DM therapists will act with probity and honesty in all their conduct including professional relationships.



**a. Reputable Behaviour**

- i. In the course of their work DM therapists will abide by the ethical standard of *reputable behaviour* by
- Avoiding disreputable conduct that reflects on their ability to practice as a DM therapist
  - Avoiding disreputable conduct that reflects on the profession of DMT

ii. **Healthy Communication**

- In the course of their work DM therapists will abide by the ethical standard of *healthy communication* by
  - a. Communicating honestly in the context of their work
  - b. Taking reasonable steps to correct any misrepresentations about themselves or their colleagues
  - c. Ensuring that in announcing or advertising their services, any statements made do not contain
    - i. False, fraudulent, misleading or deceptive statements
    - ii. Testimonials or endorsements solicited in exchange for remuneration or have the potential to exploit a client
    - iii. Any comment claiming or implying superiority for themselves over other DMTs
    - iv. Any comments that are likely to create false or unjustified expectations, particularly of favourable results
    - v. Any comments likely to appeal to a client's fears, anxieties, or emotions concerning failure of other services
    - vi. Any offensive, vulgar or sensational comment that would bring the profession into disrepute.
  - d. Ensuring that accurate credentials and post-nominals are used to represent their level of membership in the Association

iii. **Conflict of Interest**

- In the course of their work DM therapists will avoid the ethical dilemma of *conflict of interest* with clients, students, peers and other professionals by
  - a. Refraining from engaging in multiple relationships that

- i. Impair their competence, effectiveness, objectivity or ability to render appropriate services
  - ii. Harm clients or other associated parties
  - iii. Lead to the exploitation of clients or other associated parties
- b. Consulting with a Clinical Member, (supervisor) of the profession to find an appropriate resolution that is in the best interests of the parties involved
- c. Declaring any vested interests at the onset of services and seeking to find an appropriate resolution

**iv. Non-exploitation**

- In the course of their work DM therapists will abide by the ethical standard of *non-exploitation* by
  - a. Avoiding the unfair treatment of a client in order to derive benefit
  - b. Avoiding the unfair treatment of a colleague, assistant, employee, supervisee or student in order to derive benefit
  - c. Avoid engagement in sexual activity with a client or anyone closely related to the client
  - d. Avoid engagement in sexual activity with former clients until a period of five years has passed.
  - e. Ensure honesty in all financial dealings by
    - i. Making financial arrangements that safeguard the best interests of all parties
    - ii. Avoiding arrangements that may adversely influence the client or the therapeutic services provided
    - iii. Making all arrangements clear and transparent
    - iv. Not receiving remuneration or giving any for referral of clients

**v. Ethical Concerns**

- In the course of their work DM therapists will address *ethical concerns* by
  - a. Drawing attention directly to questionable conduct by first informing the DM therapist whose conduct is of concern or in breach of the Code

- b. Informing the organisation administration of the possible breach of the Code
- c. Reporting the conduct to a relevant regulatory body or Ethics Committee of the Association
- d. Following any established procedures for making complaints regarding breach of the Code \*(see complaints policy)
- e. Not lodging a trivial, vexatious or unsubstantiated complaint against a colleague

vi. **Tele-health and digital communications**

- DMTs may offer services in digital formats including by phone, computer and tablet. In this work, DM therapists should
  - a. follow the ethical code of practice
  - b. Work within their scope of practice and level of training and credentials
  - c. be familiar with the jurisdiction of their practice for service delivery, which includes insurance, informed consent and record keeping (inclusive of digital recordings <https://dtaa.org.au/privacy-policy/>)
  - d. ensure safety in practice with consideration to the client and therapist's space. Request emergency contact information on initial consultation.
  - e. ensure privacy and confidentiality for clients considering the space in which the therapy is occurring
  - f. DM therapists are familiar with community resources where the client resides, in the event that a referral is required.

## DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Code, and unless the context indicates otherwise, the following terms are defined as:

**Associated party any** person or organization other than clients with whom the DM therapist interacts when providing therapeutic services.

**Association/Organisation** the Dance Movement Therapy Association of Australasia, Inc

**Australasia** primarily Australia and New Zealand but also to nearby Oceania, Asia/Pacific countries from which DM therapists have chosen to join DTAA.

**Beneficence** acting in the best interests and for the well-being of another.

**Client** a party or parties to whom a DMT service is being delivered. Clients may be individuals, couples, groups, families, organizations, institutions, communities or those commissioning/paying for the professional service. This could include students and workshop attendees who are being taught by a DTAA registered member.

**Code** the DTAA Code of Ethics (2020), as amended from time to time.

**Conduct** any act or omission by a DM therapist.

**Dance Movement Therapist** a DTAA Registered Clinical, Professional, Provisional Professional or Student Member.

**DM therapist** Dance/Movement Therapist

**Jurisdiction** Australasia which includes the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand and other areas where Professional Members are practicing, which may include Oceania and Asia/Pacific.

**Legal rights** those rights protected under the laws and statutes of the Jurisdiction.

**Moral Rights** the universal human rights as defined by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

**Multiple Relationship** –those that occur when the DMT

- a. in a nonprofessional relationship with the same client
- b. in a different professional relationship with the same client

- c. in a nonprofessional relationship with an associated party
- d. recipient of a service provided by the same client

**Non-Maleficence** not causing harm to another through action or omission

**Professional relationship** – is the relationship between a DM therapist and their client which involves the delivery of a professional therapeutic service.

**Professional service** - means any service provided by the DMT to a client, which can include but is not limited to therapeutic activities, teaching, supervision, research practice, or other professional procedures.

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