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## COMENSA (Association incorporated under Section 21)

### Revised Code of Ethics

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA) (Association incorporated under Section 21) serves to set the ethical standards for South Africa in the fields of coaching and mentoring. It is likely that this Code of Ethics will change and evolve over the years as coaching and mentoring gain independent recognition as professions.

#### **2. Mission**

- 2.1 To set and uphold an appropriate code of ethics to serve the coaching/mentoring professions of South Africa which defines the ethical behaviour that supports and sustains this expanding profession. We will outline values, standards and fundamental principles to which members of COMENSA agree to abide by, and by which they may be measured and/or supervised and against which they willingly agree to be assessed.

#### **3. Definitions**

- 3.1 The term 'coach' or 'mentor' is used to describe all types of coaching/mentoring that may be taking place, both inside and outside the work environment. COMENSA recognises that there are many types of coaching/mentoring taking place and these will need to be defined as more detailed standards are produced.
- 3.2 The term 'client' denotes anyone using the services of a coach/mentor. We believe the term 'client' is interchangeable with any other term that the parties to the coaching/mentoring relationship may be more comfortable with, such as 'colleague', 'learner', 'partner', 'coachee', protégé or 'mentee'.
- 3.3 It is recognised that there are circumstances where the coach/mentor may have two 'clients', the individual being coached or mentored and the organisation who may have commissioned the coaching/mentoring. In this Code we have used the term 'sponsor' to differentiate the latter.
- 3.4 The term 'supervision' describes the process by which the work of the coach/mentor is overseen and advice/guidance is sought. The process may differ in significant ways from that undertaken in other professions, such as psychotherapy and counselling.

#### **4. COMENSA Code of Ethics**

1. Core values
2. Competence
3. Context
4. Boundary management
5. Integrity
6. Professionalism

## 7. Breaches of the Code

### 4.1 Core values

- 4.1.1 Autonomy – respect the autonomous decisions of adults
- 4.1.2 Beneficence – aim to do good
- 4.1.3 Non-maleficence – do no harm
- 4.1.4 Justice – act fairly when the interests of different individuals or groups are in competition

(Adapted from Beauchamp, T.L. and J.F. Childress (2001), *Principles of Bio-Medical Ethics*, Oxford University Press)

### 4.2 Guiding principles

#### 4.2.1 Inclusivity

Members will embrace all coaches and mentors irrespective of their coaching/mentoring methodology and practice who work within the parameters of the COMENSA code of ethics and serve the over-riding values of the coaching and mentoring professions.

#### 4.2.2 Dignity

The coach/mentor will have respect for the inherent worth of all human beings, regardless of perceived or real differences in social status, ethnic origin, gender, capacities, or other such characteristics. This inherent worth means that all human beings are worthy of equal moral consideration. As such, respect for the dignity and worth of all human beings also includes moral consideration of, and respect for, cultural communities.

#### 4.2.3 Competence

The coach/mentor will:

- (a) Maintain high standards of competence and exercise care in determining how best to serve the needs of the client in the coach/mentor relationship.
- (b) Ensure that they are adequately educated and skilled in the coaching and mentoring technology that they use to deliver their services.
- (c) Develop and enhance their level of competence by participating in relevant training and continuing opportunities for professional development.
- (d) The coach/mentor will establish a relationship with a suitably qualified supervisor, who will regularly assess their competence and support their development. The supervisor will be bound by the requirements of confidentiality referred to in this Code of Ethics.

#### 4.2.4 Context

The coach/mentor will:

- (a) Understand and ensure that the coach/mentor relationship reflects the dynamic context within which the coaching/mentoring is taking place.
- (b) Ensure that the expectations of the client and the sponsor are understood and that they themselves understand how those expectations are to be met.
- (c) Embrace cultural considerations and broad-based issues of empowerment.

- (d) The coach/mentor will conduct themselves in a way that demonstrates an understanding and respect for the dignity and diversity of all people. The coach/mentor is committed to the transformation of South Africa and the promotion of equal opportunities for all.

#### **4.2.5 Boundary management**

The coach/mentor will:

- (a) Maintain professional integrity irrespective of the demands of the sponsor or client.
- (b) Honour the confidentiality agreement in the coaching/mentoring relationship.
- (c) At all times operate within the limits of their own competence, recognise where that competence has the potential to be exceeded and where necessary refer the client either to a more experienced coach/mentor, or support the client in seeking the help of another professional, such as a counsellor, psychotherapist, consultant or business/financial advisor.
- (d) Be aware of the potential for conflicts of interest of either a commercial or emotional nature to arise through the coach/mentoring relationship and deal with them quickly and effectively to ensure there is no detriment to the client or sponsor.
- (e) To maintain transparency of communication with other members of the coaching and mentoring professions within the confines of existing confidentiality agreements.
- (f) Not engage in any sexual contact with existing coaching or mentoring clients, and ensure a period of one year from the conclusion of the coach/mentor relationship before engaging in such contact.
- (g) Acknowledge that the coach/mentor is in a powerful relationship with the client and therefore sexual relations are unethical and unprofessional.
- (h) Disclose information only where explicitly agreed with the client and sponsor (where one exists), unless the coach/mentor believes that there is convincing evidence of serious danger to the client or others if the information is withheld.
- (i) Act within applicable law and not encourage, assist or collude with others engaged in conduct which is dishonest, unlawful, unprofessional or discriminatory.

#### **4.2.6 Integrity**

The coach/mentor will:

- (a) Act with integrity and conduct the coaching/mentoring relationship in a truthful, honest and clear manner.
- (b) Act to the benefit and in the interest of the client in the coaching/mentoring relationship.
- (c) Approach the coach/mentoring relationship with personal commitment and respect for all other professions.
- (d) Ensure that they are both mentally and physically fit to deliver coaching and mentoring services at all times.
- (e) Assume ownership for self learning and self growth.
- (f) Never represent the work and views of others as their own.
- (g) Act responsibly with regards to the assessment of the need for coaching or mentoring as a means of intervention.
- (h) Ensure that any claim of professional competence, qualifications or accreditation is clearly and accurately explained to potential clients and that no false or misleading claims are made or implied in any published material.

#### **4.2.7 Professionalism**

The coach/mentor will:

- (a) Consciously create a coaching/mentoring environment that supports the independence of the client within the coach/mentoring relationship.
- (b) Maintain professionalism and faithfully pursue obligations and agreements made in the coach/mentoring relationship.
- (c) Be focused primarily on maximising the effectiveness of the client in their life and/or work context.
- (d) Not exploit or manipulate the client in any manner including, but not limited to, financial, sexual or those matters within the professional relationship.
- (e) Ensure that the coach/mentoring contract is appropriate and proportional to the objectives of the coaching/mentoring relationship (e.g. fees, coaching/mentoring objectives, duration).
- (f) Understand that professional responsibilities continue beyond the termination of any coach/mentoring relationship. These include the following:
  - (i) Maintenance of agreed confidentiality of all information relating to clients and sponsors.
  - (ii) Avoidance of any exploitation of the former relationship.
  - (iii) Provision of any follow-up which has been agreed to.
  - (iv) Safe and secure maintenance of all related records and data.
- (g) Demonstrate respect for the variety of different approaches to coaching/mentoring and other individuals in the profession.
- (h) Not bring any other coach or mentor's reputation into disrepute through their actions or communications.

#### **4.2.8 Breaches of the Code**

The following principles apply to breaches of this Code of Ethics:

- (a) If a member has ethical questions or queries which are not necessarily complaints, the appropriate channel to seek clarity on such concerns would be through supervision or consultation with a member of the Ethics committee.
- (b) If you encounter an ethical dilemma in your own practice of coaching/mentoring, it is incumbent upon you to seek out supervision from a suitably experienced coach or mentor.
- (c) Where a client or sponsor believes that a member of COMENSA has acted in a way which is in breach of this Code of Ethics, they should first raise the matter and seek resolution with the member concerned. Either party can ask COMENSA to assist in the process of achieving resolution.
- (d) If the client or sponsor remains unsatisfied they are entitled to make a formal complaint to the Ethics Committee.
- (e) COMENSA members will approach a colleague about whom they have reasonable cause to believe they are acting in an unethical manner. They will attempt through this conversation to reach agreement on future behaviour or conduct. Failing resolution, the member is encouraged to forward the matter in writing to the COMENSA Ethics Committee.
- (f) In the event that a complaint should be made against a COMENSA member, that member must co-operate in resolving such a complaint.
- (g) The subject of the complaint has the right to be given the substance of the complaint and details of the complainant in writing, and afforded full opportunity for right of response.

- (h) The COMENSA Ethics Committee is mandated to receive the complaints / concerns, bring them to the attention of the subject of the complaint, and attempt to resolve the issue in as constructive and professional manner as possible.
- (i) The COMENSA Ethics Committee will process all complaints in strictest confidence, will make the complaint 'privileged' and prevent defamation of character.
- (j) The COMENSA Ethics Committee will not entertain frivolous, unsubstantiated and / or anonymous complaints.

## **5. Ethics Committee**

### **5.1 Ethics Committee**

- National Chair, Matthew Shelley ([mattshelley@telkomsa.net](mailto:mattshelley@telkomsa.net))

### **5.2 COMENSA office**

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