

# **Department of Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling**

## **Professional Behavior Internal Operating Procedures**

The Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling Department focuses on preparing professionals who respect differences, celebrate diversity, and demonstrate the requisite skills, knowledge, and behaviors expected of a professional working with children and families in a variety of settings. Using the Core Values put forward by the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences and Principles present in the Belmont Code, the department seeks to prepare students to “believe in the family as a fundamental unit of society, embrace diversity and value all people, support life-long learning and diverse scholarship, and exemplify integrity and ethical behavior...” as well as provide services that are respectful of the dignity and autonomy of those served, safe and appropriate, as well as beneficial and fair.

Professional behaviors are a vital component of professional preparation. Prospective child and family professionals at Texas Woman’s University are expected to develop and practice behaviors that reflect these attitudes, values, and beliefs throughout their preparation for jobs working with children and families. The Code of Ethics developed by the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences describes the professional competencies necessary for effective work with children and families. These professional competencies include, *“Integrity, Professional Competence, Respect for Diversity, Confidentiality, and Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest”*.

Upon acceptance into a Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling program or enrollment in a Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling course, students will be given access to the Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling Professional Behavior Policy established and approved by the faculty of the Department of Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling. An explanation of these behaviors will also be included on the Department of Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling website and a link to this policy will be placed in all Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling course syllabi. Students will also be required to abide by the Code of Ethics for their particular discipline, including any codes of ethics espoused by their accrediting body or guiding professional organization (e.g., ACA, AAMFT, NCFR, NAEYC, SRCD, etc.)

### **Professional Behaviors for Working with Children and Families and Other Professionals**

Students enrolled in courses offered by the TWU Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling Department are expected to:

1. Exhibit sound and professional judgment by following established university policies when interacting with peers, children, students, parents, clients, or members of the community.
2. Maintain confidentiality of student /client records, correspondence, and conversations.
3. Use emotional and social self-control and self-determination in personal interactions.
4. Demonstrate professional appearance and use appropriate hygiene.
5. Maintain and use a professional relationship with peers, colleagues, professors, site supervisors, clients, and students.
6. Demonstrate respectful attitudes toward the profession, students, parents, clients, colleagues, other educators, and support personnel.

7. Demonstrate ethical behavior as defined by the student's profession (counseling, marriage and family therapy, child development, family studies) and by the Code of Conduct at Texas Woman's University.
8. Exhibit a code of conduct that includes honesty, cooperation and integrity related to any course requirements and interactions with TWU professors, peers, and personnel (TWU Student Code of Conduct).
9. Exhibit a collaborative approach applied to seeking solutions to problems with peers, students, clients, faculty, parents, and administration.
10. Demonstrate the ability to work in a professional and respectful manner with diverse individuals.
11. Exhibit competence and professionalism in oral, written, and electronic communications

### **Student Code of Conduct Issues**

In addition to the importance of professional behaviors specific to working with children and families, students in the Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling Department are required to abide by all university policies and procedures, including the Student Code of Conduct. Information on this, and all university policies to which students must adhere, are available in the TWU Student Handbook (<http://www.twu.edu/student-life-office/student-handbook.asp>). Any student enrolled in a Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling program should be familiar with these policies and adhere to them. The procedures in this document serve to address student issues that are not directly specified in Student Code of Conduct/Academic Integrity policies. If a student enrolled in a Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling program is referred for a Code of Conduct issue, that student will be required to participate in the disciplinary process fully in order to successfully complete a Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling program. Any student with a pending or unresolved Code of Conduct or Academic Dishonesty incident will not be able to graduate, sit for comprehensive exams or defend a thesis/professional paper/portfolio/final examination for program/dissertation until the disciplinary process has been completed.

### **Interim Suspension and Immediate Dismissal from Any Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling Program**

The Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling Department reserves the right to immediately suspend on an interim basis any student whose behavior is deemed an immediate or imminent threat to the welfare or safety of any individual. Subsequent to an interim suspension, the below procedures must be followed to determine an appropriate outcome before the suspension may be lifted or a final dismissal may be imposed.

The Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling Department reserves the right to impose any outcome listed below, including immediate dismissal, on any student who fails to comply with or participate in the procedures prescribed below.

### **Procedures for Assessing and Addressing Professional Behavior**

A student's professional behavior in TWU classes, meetings or interactions related to those classes, during any field experience, while engaging in practica or internships and/or in other settings associated with professional preparation will be assessed in relation to the standards set forth in this policy. Initial assessment of the behavior will be made based on immediacy, risk, and history. Immediacy should be evaluated relative to when, where, and to whom the behavior was directed. Risk will be evaluated relative to the perceived potential for harm to the student, other students, and university personnel. History will be evaluated based on the documented incidents of similar

behavior over time. Based on these, the following procedures will be followed for instances in which a student's professional behavior appears to be in violation of this policy.

### Step 1: Evaluate and Address Behavior as Part of Teaching

When inappropriate student behavior occurs during course related activities it will first be evaluated for *risk* and for its *immediate* impact on instruction. If the risk is low, but it is having a detrimental influence on instructional activities, then it will be addressed in the setting where it occurred. If the risk is perceived as being high and a need for immediate attention is perceived as being warranted, then the student will be referred to TWU Behavioral Assessment Team at the earliest possible opportunity.

Second, the history of behavior will be evaluated. Faculty members will check the student files maintained by the Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling Department for previously documented problems and may also confer with other TWU personnel. If there is no history of the behavior occurring, and it is not perceived as presenting a risk, then the faculty or instructor is advised to hold an informal meeting (Step 2). If there is a documented history of the behavior occurring, and it is not perceived as presenting a risk, then the faculty or instructor is advised to schedule a Formal Meeting (Step 3).

### Step 2: Informal Meeting.

Faculty or instructor will speak to the student about unprofessional behavior and ask that the student make appropriate changes before returning to class or engaging with others in the TWU academic community. As part of this meeting, the faculty member will develop a written plan with the student for addressing the behaviors. This plan and notes about what was discussed will be submitted to student's file. If the student's behavior remains inappropriate the faculty or instructor is advised to schedule a Formal Meeting (Step 3).

### Step 3: First Formal Meeting.

Faculty or instructor will ask the student to schedule a formal meeting, to discuss the student's behavior or area of concern using the *Problem Solving Form*. The *Problem Solving Form* will identify possible solutions and remedies that the student must make and specify a time frame for these to be demonstrated by the student. This information will be placed in the student's file maintained by the Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling Department. The student's success at meeting the plan will be evaluated by the person initiating this process.

This meeting will include a witness that can be another available faculty member or a member of the Disposition committee whose role is to ensure the integrity of the meeting. Additionally, the student may bring an advocate of their choosing for moral support. This advocate may be present only as moral support for the student and may not participate in the discussions in the meeting. The student may ask to confer privately with their advocate.

Outcomes: There are two potential outcomes from a First Formal Meeting:

- *Issue is resolved within the specified time frame*, then the process ends. The end of this process will involve submitting the *Problem Solving Form* and appropriate documentation to the student's file.
- *Issue is not resolved within the specified time frame*, then further action is advised. The faculty, instructor, or staff with whom the student had an unprofessional encounter, will complete the

*Professional Behaviors Concern Form* and forward this document to the department chair. This form may also be completed by the faculty or staff member who is designated as the liaison to a professional site supervisor if the concern is expressed by a supervisor in the field.

#### Step 4: Second Formal Meeting.

The department chair will send a certified letter to the student advising the student of the policy violation and requesting a meeting to discuss the area(s) of concern. The letter will notify the student that they have 10 days to schedule the meeting. A copy of this letter, the date of the meeting, the specific behavioral concerns, and potential outcomes will be documented and placed in the student's file. This meeting should occur within 10 business days of the student's receipt of the letter requesting the meeting, but additional time may be given for good cause. Good cause is to be determined by the Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling Department. If 10 days passes from the student's receipt of the letter, and the student or person initiating the process is unwilling to schedule or attend the meeting, then the meeting will commence without their input and a decision will be made by the Second Formal Meeting Committee (see below for specifications) without the people present.

At this time, the Second Formal Meeting Committee will review the behavioral concerns with the student. In the meeting, the student will have the opportunity to explain her/his position and provide additional relevant information. The department chair or program coordinator will determine whether additional faculty, staff or school personnel are required to support or refute the observed behavior.

The Second Formal Meeting will include the student and the Second Formal Meeting Committee consisting of the following:

- The student's advisor
- The department chair or program coordinator
- A member from the FS Disposition Committee
- The person initiating the process
- An advocate that the student request to be present. This advocate may be present only as moral support for the student and may not participate in the discussions in the meeting. The student may ask to confer privately with their advocate.

The department chair will make the final decision with input from the Second Formal Meeting Committee and ensure the decision is delivered to the student within 10 business days of the meeting. Documentation of the meeting's content, including any written agreements, action plans and/or outcome determinations, will be placed in the student's file.

Outcomes: Potential outcomes of a Second Formal Meeting include, but are not limited to:

- Resolution of the problem and student being allowed to remain in the program.
- Development of a remediation plan outlining the conditions by which the student remains in the program.
- Immediate dismissal from the program.
- Referral to the Student Code of Conduct board, and/or
- Referral to the Behavior Assessment Team

The student has a right to appeal the Second Formal Meeting Committee's decision within 10 business days after notification of the decision. The student must submit the appeal online to the Dean of the College of Professional Education. The Dean will review the request and all related documents in the student's file and will meet with the student, instructor, and department chair as needed to review the appeal. The Dean will render a decision in writing and ensure its delivery to the student within 10 days of issuing the decision.

Graduate students may appeal the decision of the Dean of the College of Professional Education to the Dean of the Graduate School, and undergraduate students may appeal to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.