



NATIONAL BOARD FOR
CERTIFIED COUNSELORS®

Comparative Analysis of AI Guidelines in Professional Counseling:

Evaluation of Emerging Standards in AI-Assisted Mental Health Care

The National Board for Certified Counselors has undertaken a comparative analysis of Artificial Intelligence (AI) guidelines across major counseling organizations. The evaluation revealed several key similarities and important distinctions in their approaches to AI integration in counseling practice. The five major counseling organizations that have issued AI guidance include:

National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC)

[Ethical Principles for Artificial Intelligence in Counseling](#)

American Counseling Association (ACA)

[Recommendations For Practicing Counselors and Their Use Of AI](#)

[Artificial Intelligence, Assessment, & Diagnosis](#)

[Further Recommendations Regarding The Future Of AI In Counseling](#)

American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA)

[AMHCA Code of Ethics Addendum: Addressing Artificial Intelligence: 2023](#)

The Association for Addiction Professionals (NAADAC)

[The National Certification Commission for Addiction Professionals Code of Ethics](#)

American Association of State Counseling Boards (AASCB)

[Supporting the Safe and Ethical Use of AI in Mental Health Counseling](#)

Key Similarities Among Counseling Organizations

	NBCC	ACA	AMHCA	NAADAC	AASCB
Primacy of Human Relationship and Professional Judgment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All organizations emphasize that the therapeutic relationship must remain central and uncompromised by AI integration • Consistent agreement that AI tools should enhance rather than replace professional clinical judgment • Consistent emphasis on counselor accountability for client outcomes • Shared emphasis on maintaining the interpersonal nature of counseling • Universal recognition that AI serves a supportive rather than primary role in treatment • Common focus on preserving the essential human elements of therapeutic interaction 				
Client Protection and Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive requirements for informed consent regarding AI use in treatment • Detailed provisions for protecting client privacy and confidentiality • Shared emphasis on client autonomy in deciding whether to participate in AI-assisted services • Common focus on transparent communication about AI capabilities and limitations • Universal requirement to prioritize client welfare over technological efficiency • Shared commitment to protecting vulnerable populations from AI-related risks 				
Data Security and Privacy Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigorous requirements for HIPAA compliance in AI applications • Shared emphasis on secure data storage and transmission • Common standards for data encryption and protection • Universal guidelines for controlling access to AI-processed client information • Consistent requirements for secure deletion of client data when no longer needed • Shared protocols for handling data breaches or security incidents 				
Professional Competency Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive understanding of AI capabilities and limitations required before implementation • Ongoing professional development requirements regarding AI technologies • Shared emphasis on understanding ethical implications of AI use • Common requirement for demonstrated proficiency in AI-assisted tools • Universal focus on maintaining clinical expertise independent of AI assistance • Shared commitment to staying current with AI developments and best practices 				
Ethical Decision-Making Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent emphasis on applying established ethical principles to AI integration • Shared requirement for regular evaluation of AI effectiveness • Common focus on balancing innovation with client protection • Universal guidelines for handling ethical dilemmas involving AI • Shared emphasis on documentation of AI-related decisions • Consistent approach to risk assessment and management 				

Quality Assurance and Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular evaluation of AI tool effectiveness required by all organizations • Shared emphasis on monitoring client outcomes in AI-assisted treatment • Common requirements for documentation of AI use and impact • Universal focus on quality control in AI-assisted services • Shared protocols for reporting AI-related concerns or incidents • Consistent requirements for ongoing assessment of AI integration
Cultural Competency and Bias Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal recognition of potential AI bias and discrimination • Shared commitment to ensuring AI tools are culturally responsive • Common requirements for assessing AI tools for cultural sensitivity • Consistent emphasis on serving diverse populations effectively • Shared focus on preventing algorithmic bias in clinical applications • Universal guidelines for culturally appropriate AI implementation
Professional Boundaries and Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear delineation of counselor responsibilities when using AI tools • Shared emphasis on maintaining professional boundaries • Common guidelines for appropriate scope of AI use • Universal focus on counselor accountability • Shared protocols for supervision and consultation regarding AI • Consistent standards for professional conduct in AI-assisted practice
Research and Evidence-Based Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared commitment to evidence-based implementation of AI tools • Common emphasis on contributing to AI research in counseling • Universal focus on evaluating AI effectiveness • Shared requirement for staying informed about AI research • Consistent approach to integrating research findings into practice • Common guidelines for participating in AI-related research
Client Education and Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal emphasis on educating clients about AI use in treatment • Shared focus on empowering clients to make informed decisions • Common guidelines for discussing AI limitations and capabilities • Consistent approach to addressing client concerns about AI • Shared commitment to maintaining client autonomy • Universal requirements for ongoing client communication about AI use

Notable Differences Among Counseling Organizations in AI Guidance

	NBCC	ACA	AMHCA	NAADAC	AASCB
Scope and Specificity	Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides comprehensive, step-by-step implementation guidelines Includes specific procedural requirements for AI integration Offers detailed protocols for different clinical scenarios Maintains strict alignment with existing ethical frameworks Establishes clear boundaries for AI tool utilization 	Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centers core ethical principles and theoretical foundations Focuses on adaptable guidelines that can evolve with technology Encourages professional judgment in AI application Promotes innovative approaches to AI integration Emphasizes the importance of research-based decision making 	Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concentrates specifically on technology-supported counseling Emphasizes practical implementation in clinical settings Provides targeted guidance for specific technology applications Focuses on immediate clinical concerns and solutions Maintains a narrower scope of technological consideration 	Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies traditional ethical principles to new technology Takes a more generalized approach to AI integration Emphasizes flexibility in application Focuses on fundamental counseling principles Maintains broader interpretative guidelines 	Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centers on public protection and regulatory compliance Establishes minimum standards for AI use in licensed practice Provides specific guidelines for scope of practice boundaries Focuses on risk management and liability considerations Emphasizes state-specific regulatory requirements
Implementation Strategy	Systematic Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides detailed implementation timelines Includes specific compliance checkpoints Offers structured assessment tools Establishes clear accountability measures Maintains comprehensive documentation requirements 	Research-Based <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes evidence-based implementation Promotes pilot testing and evaluation Encourages continuous assessment and adaptation Focuses on outcome measurement Supports innovative implementation methods 	Client-Centered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritizes client autonomy in technology adoption Emphasizes informed consent processes Focuses on practical application in clinical settings Maintains emphasis on safety and effectiveness Promotes transparent communication about technology use 	Principle-Based <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapts existing frameworks to new technology Emphasizes professional judgment Maintains focus on core ethical principles Promotes flexible implementation approaches Emphasizes practitioner discretion 	Compliance-Focused <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires documented compliance with state regulations Establishes clear boundaries for AI use in clinical practice Mandates specific documentation requirements Creates standardized reporting procedures Emphasizes liability protection and risk management

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Professional Development	Structured Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires specific AI competency benchmarks Maintains detailed supervision requirements Establishes clear training pathways Includes assessment of technological competence Requires ongoing professional development 	Research-Oriented Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes understanding of empirical evidence Promotes research participation Focuses on evidence-based practice Encourages innovative approaches Supports continuous learning 	Practical Skill Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on immediate clinical application Emphasizes safety and risk management Promotes practical technology skills Maintains focus on client protection Emphasizes hands-on experience 	Cultural Competency Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes cultural awareness in technology use Promotes bias recognition and mitigation Focuses on diverse population needs Maintains emphasis on inclusive practice Supports culturally sensitive implementation 	Licensure-Oriented Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes minimum AI competency requirements for licensure Defines continuing education requirements for AI use Specifies supervision requirements for AI-assisted practice Requires demonstration of AI competency for license renewal Mandates regular updates on AI-related skills and knowledge
Research and Innovation	Assessment-Focused Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes testing and validation studies Focuses on practical application research Maintains emphasis on measurement accuracy Promotes standardized assessment approaches Supports evidence-based tool development 	Comprehensive Research Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes extensive research initiatives Encourages innovation in AI applications Supports experimental approaches Emphasizes outcome measurement Promotes collaborative research efforts 	Applied Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on clinical effectiveness studies Emphasizes practical outcomes Promotes real-world application research Maintains focus on safety studies Supports practice-based evidence 	Evaluation-Centered Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes assessment of existing tools Focuses on outcome evaluation Promotes practical effectiveness research Maintains emphasis on quality measurement Supports continuous improvement studies 	Evidence-Based Standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires validation of AI tools used in licensed practice Emphasizes protection of public interest in AI adoption Establishes criteria for acceptable AI applications Focuses on regulatory compliance in research applications Maintains emphasis on client protection in innovation