



## Standards of Excellence for IECA Member Consultants

### Purpose of the IECA Member Competencies

IECA is an organization which has always placed high expectations and a great deal of trust in the hands of its members. Reflecting IECA's focus on excellence, this document serves as a guide for both new and experienced Independent Educational Consultants. The use of the word guide here is intentional; the Education & Training Committee does not suggest that IECA begin to police or evaluate its members. As leaders in the profession, IECA members should continually assess their own skills to be sure they are offering the highest level of service to students and their families and seek ongoing professional development towards that end.

Our profession is complex. In addition to an ever-changing body of knowledge, Independent Educational Consultants (IECs) must be empathetic individuals who have the ability to work effectively with children, their families, and with other professionals.

For new IECs, the competencies begin to define standards of excellence that an IECA member consultant strives to meet. They can guide work with a mentor, the choice of courses taken at a university, and the identification of other professional training the new IEC needs in order to meet the needs of students and their families. For experienced IECs, they can serve as a tool for self-assessment, as individuals think about areas they might identify for the ongoing professional development that separates IECA members from others.

### Development of the Competencies

The development of the competencies began with a question: What skill set does a highly qualified IEC possess? IECA is recognized as the nation's leading professional organization for those Independent Educational Consultants working in private practice, yet no widely accepted standard existed which defined those skills. IECA members serving on IECA's Standing Committees (School, College, Therapeutic, and Learning Disabilities) worked over the course of a year to seek input from all IECA members and develop the standards for each particular specialty area. The IECA Education and Training Committee facilitated this process and compiled the initial document in June 2009.

## Best Practices: College Consulting

### Assessing a Student

1. Obtain and evaluate relevant records and data such as transcripts, test scores, high school profile, and psychoeducational reports.
2. Use intake procedures that insure the IEC gets to know and understand the unique characteristics of each client.
3. Use interest inventories and assessment tools, i.e., “Do What You Are” and/or “Strong Interest Inventory,” as appropriate.
4. Consult with other professionals, i.e. teachers, school counselor, therapist, to gain a greater understanding of the student’s records and needs as indicated.
5. Understand standardized tests and measurements, in particular, the design and use of the SAT and ACT.
6. Understand the stages of adolescent development as they relate to the college process.
7. Understand the scope and sequence of the curriculum in the high schools clients attend.
8. Understand the role that finances and affordability play.

### Working with a Family

1. Remain cognizant of the fact that the child is the client and that all actions must reflect the best interest of the child.
2. Seek to empower the student to take charge of the college application process.
3. Strive to present the college application process as one that seeks the best matches for the student, and does not focus solely on “getting in.”
4. Strive always to bring clarity and objective advice to the process and to minimize the stress.
5. Use parents as a resource to get to know the child and respect the insights they provide.
6. Understand and respect parents’ and families’ experience, history, values, religion, goals, and financial parameters in order to factor them into the college application and decision-making process.
7. Be clear in explaining that the ultimate decision for college admission rests outside of the IEC’s scope of influence and that results cannot be guaranteed.
8. Clarify mutual expectations, delineating what the IEC will do as well as what the student and the family are expected to do, either in preliminary discussions and/or in the contract.
9. Help parents and students understand the scope and sequence of the college admissions process.
10. Help students and families build a realistic college list based on all relevant factors.
11. Explain that each college formulates its own admissions and financial aid processes and that there can be substantial differences from school to school.
12. Educate families and students about college ranking systems and media coverage in order to bring balance to decision-making and to put this information in perspective.
13. Help students evaluate all appropriate options, including alternatives such as a gap year, post-graduate year or deferred admission when making their final college decision.
14. Help families understand the financial aid process, need vs. merit aid, leveraging, enrollment management, factors included in the cost of attendance, and ways to assess their own affordability.
15. Discuss the process of transition from high school to college with students and parents.

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**COLLEGE  
CONSULTING**

*College Consulting, continued*

**Working with High Schools and Colleges**

1. Work as individuals and as an association to build collaborative relationships with colleges.
2. Respect the preferences of each college admission office and other administrative offices concerning the level of direct contact the administrators welcome from Independent Educational Consultants.
3. Be knowledgeable about the admission and financial aid policies, social climate, and academic programs at a broad range of colleges and universities.
4. Be familiar with and adhere to the Code of Conduct for IECA Members on College, School, and Program Tours (found on the IECA website).
5. Be familiar with the guidelines and policies of the student's high school, as well as those to which the colleges and universities abide, regarding applications, testing, admissions practices, scholarships, financial aid, and other elements of the process, i.e. NACAC Statement of Principles of Good Practice.

**Professional Ethics**

1. Be familiar with and adhere to the Ethics Guidelines stated in the IECA Principles of Good Practice.
2. Maintain respectful and professional standards while safeguarding the confidentiality of clients at all times, including in use of the IECA TalkList
3. Remain objective and avoid allowing personal biases to affect advice.
4. Do not accept offers of commissions for referrals to tutors, test preparation, and other services.
5. Although there is no legal requirement to do so, IECs should be familiar with the ethics and procedures for reporting child abuse in their legal jurisdiction.
6. Do not discriminate against clients and potential clients with respect to race, nationality, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation.
7. Refer all clients whose needs are beyond the limits of one's professional expertise to other professionals.
8. Develop and use a client contract or letter of agreement with full delineation of services, clear disclosure and disclaimers, including a release if consultation with other professionals is indicated.
9. IECs do not write students' college essays.
10. Do not use negative, derogatory, or demeaning comments or language when speaking of or to another IEC, school counselor, or college admissions officer.

**Establishing a Professional Office**

1. Establish an effective system of ongoing communication with parents and, if appropriate, colleges and programs.
2. Maintain a professional office setting.
3. Maintain thorough, accurate and confidential records that document the IEC's work.
4. Establish an efficient and professional system for gathering, maintaining and distributing information.
5. Develop a marketing plan that reflects the highest level of professional ethics.

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**COLLEGE  
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*College Consulting, continued*

**Professional Development**

1. Be aware of issues and trends in college admissions and higher education.
2. Maintain contact with, and/or membership in, other professional associations involved with higher education.
3. Maintain and share with clients accurate information for a range of colleges and universities about: accreditation status; standardized test requirements; admission plans (RD, EA, ED, REA, rolling, open); sports, sports divisions, recruitment, and NCAA regulations; academic programs; social climate; scholarships; financial aid; learning support, among other criteria.
4. Develop a process for assessing and recommending an appropriate list of colleges based on the student's profile.
5. Conduct visits to a broad range of colleges on an ongoing basis. IECA Guidelines suggest that 20% of an IEC's time should be spent visiting colleges.
6. Develop a network of specialists in other fields, e.g. psychologists, social workers, advocates, financial advisors, and financial aid experts, in order to make appropriate referrals.
7. Work to continuously expand or update knowledge in areas such as (but not limited to) learning disabilities, adolescent development, higher education legislation and policies, student life, college financing.
8. Maintain current reference materials to use as a resource in making informed recommendations.
9. Seek advice from other IECs who have had recent experience with a particular college or university.
10. Understand the limits of one's expertise and competence, and seek professional input or assistance when necessary.



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## SCHOOL CONSULTING

### Best Practices: School Consulting

#### Assessing a Student

1. Develop an understanding of the unique characteristics of each client, i.e. character, academic learning style, and multiple attributes.
2. Possess a working knowledge of psychological tests and batteries, particularly when dealing with specialized schools and programs.
3. Review a minimum of three years of academic records, all psychoeducational testing over the student's career, and all standardized testing.
4. Possess a working knowledge of standardized testing.
5. Speak with psychological and educational professionals involved with the students' current level of performance.

#### Working with a Family

1. Develop an understanding of the unique characteristics of each client, i.e., personal characteristics (values, attitudes, feelings and interests, personal strengths and weaknesses), long- and short-term goals, academic learning style, and ability.
2. Recognize and understand the client's learning style and the settings in which the child can be served. Recommendations should be made according to the child's strengths and needs.
3. Respect parents' and families' experience, history, values, goals, and resources and factor them into the placement process.
4. Help parents understand their role in the advising process.
5. Make a thorough review of relevant record data for the given individual (school transcripts, psychoeducational reports, standardized testing).
6. Meet and properly interview the children they place.
7. Consult with appropriate individuals/professionals who know the client to gather information before making school recommendations.
8. Maintain confidentiality and obtain waivers for sharing client information.
9. Provide stability, clarity, objective advice, and guidance based upon a client's needs and aspirations.
10. Be clear with the client and family that placement is not guaranteed.

#### Working with Schools and Programs

1. Have a thorough understanding of the differing philosophy, culture, and attributes inherent in each recommended school.
2. Recommend only schools that the IEC has visited, except in highly unusual situations.
3. Develop a strong familiarity with a broad range of schools.
4. Make regular visits to schools and programs. IECs should be aware of changes that have occurred at a given school since the last visit.
5. Seek advice from other IECs who have had experiences with a particular school or program, and IECs, experienced and new, should be open to sharing knowledge.
6. Develop and maintain open, respectful, collaborative relationships with admission offices.

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**SCHOOL  
CONSULTING**

*School Consulting, continued*

**Professional Ethics**

1. Be familiar with and adhere to the IECA Principles of Good Practice
2. Maintain respectful and professional standards and adhere to the IECA TalkList guidelines while safeguarding the confidentiality of clients when using the IECA TalkList.
3. Remain objective when assessing options and formulating recommendations.
4. Make evaluations with proper diagnostics and assessment of facts.
5. Advise on the best alternatives for the child, regardless of parental desires or pressure. IECs should seek to help parents understand why actions are recommended. IECs should understand that what a family may want might, in fact, not be what is in the child's best interest.
6. Provide the client with a document listing services and accompanying fees, and have a contract with full delineation of services, disclosures, and disclaimers.
7. Do not discriminate against clients and potential clients with respect to race, nationality, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation.
8. Always be aware that the child is the client and all actions must reflect the best needs of the child.
9. Report suspected child abuse. IECs should be familiar with their obligations and the procedures for reporting in their legal jurisdiction.
10. Refer all clients whose circumstances are beyond the limits of their professional expertise to another IEC who does possess the requisite experience and focus of practice.
11. Be alert to, and do not accept, the favors and even direct offers of commissions for referrals.

**Establishing a Professional Office**

1. Establish an efficient and professional system for gathering, maintaining, and distributing information.
2. Establish an effective system of ongoing communication with parents and programs.
3. Maintain thorough, accurate, and confidential records that document their work.
4. Arrange for a backup support/point of contact with another qualified IEC when unavailable for more than 72 hours.
5. Maintain a professional office setting.

**Professional Development**

1. Participate regularly in professional development opportunities offered by IECA, such as, but not limited to, the Summer Training Institute, the mentoring program, professional conferences and school tours. This is especially important for new IECs.
2. Conduct site visits on an ongoing basis to a broad range of schools. As a guideline, the CEP designation requires 100 school and program visits over five years.
3. Possess an understanding of the developmental stages of children, adolescents and young adults.
4. Understand common educational philosophies, techniques, and practices.
5. Develop a structured method for assessing schools and programs.
6. Develop a network of professionals qualified to assist in all areas of generalized and specialized support (evaluators, tutors, therapists).
7. Posses a knowledge and understanding of special education laws dealing with "free and appropriate education" and be prepared to refer to an advocate when necessary.
8. Maintain current reference material to promote understanding and accurate use of terminology.



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## Standards of Excellence for IECA Members

### LEARNING DISABILITIES CONSULTING

## Best Practices: Learning Disabilities Consulting

### Assessing a Student

1. Gain an introductory overview of what the student is looking for in a college or program, and what the student and family hope to gain from working with an IEC.
2. Use intake procedures that ensure the IEC develops an in-depth understanding of the unique characteristics of each student, i.e. unique abilities, academic learning style, learning differences, personal characteristics, values, attitudes, feelings, interests, personal strengths and weaknesses, work ethic, aspirations, long-term and short-term goals.
3. Obtain and evaluate copies of relevant educational records and data for the student (school transcripts, high school profile, psychoeducational/neuropsychological reports, IEP, 504 Plan, standardized test results).
4. Consult and collaborate with parents and appropriate professionals (tutors, therapists, etc.) to gain a greater understanding of the student's specific learning disability and its impact on academic/social placement needs after obtaining a signed release from the parent or legal guardian and student (dependent upon age).
5. Take a thorough educational history by interviewing parents/guardians and students.
6. Consult with the student to gauge his/her self-knowledge of his/her particular learning profile, disability, strengths, and competency with self-advocacy.
7. Understand and be empathetic to the impact of the student's learning differences on self-determination, self-esteem, and overall self-perspectives.
8. Understand how the student's strengths, challenges, and learning differences impact the academic record, GPA, standardized testing scores, essay writing, and subsequent learning support needs.

### Working with a Family

1. Respect the language a family chooses to use, whether identity-first (e.g., "autistic student") or person-first ("student with autism"), along with the student's preferred pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.).
2. Help parents understand the IEC's role in the advising process.
3. Understand that the K-12 system demands that parents of students with disabilities play an active role in all academic decision-making. Therefore, help parents understand how they can assist the IEC in the advising process while empowering the student to take charge of the process.
4. Be cognizant that the student is the client, and all actions must be in the best interest of the client. Make this perspective clear to the family.
5. Respect parents' and families' experience, history, values, goals, cultural background and resources, and factor these into the advising process.
6. Bring stability, clarity, objective advice, and guidance to the process for both students and parents.
7. Clarify mutual expectations, delineating what the IEC will do and what the student and family are expected to do, either in preliminary discussions or in the contract for services.
8. Inform families of their financial obligation in the written contract or letter of agreement.
9. Help the student and parents understand the scope and sequence of the advising/selection process.
10. Consider providing a written overview of the consulting curriculum so that the student and parents understand the advising process and outcomes to be attained each step of that process.
11. De-emphasize the common question, "Who has the best LD program?" Instead, emphasize that IECs strive to present a range of colleges and/or programs that would be the best overall fit for the student's learning style and needed level of support.

## Standards of Excellence for IECA Members

### LEARNING DISABILITIES CONSULTING

#### *Learning Disabilities Consulting, continued*

12. Emphasize that the ultimate decision for college/program admission rests with the institution, is outside the IEC's scope of influence, and that the results cannot be guaranteed.
13. Help students build a balanced college list.
14. Assist students and families with assessing whether they are completing the steps while in high school to be ready to be successful in college. Additionally, help students and families consider all appropriate educational options, including tutoring, counseling, executive function coaching, summer programs, gap year, post-secondary learning alternative programs, transition programs and specialized schools/colleges exclusively for students with learning disabilities.
15. Be cognizant that the college/program advising process is the same for all students, those with and without disabilities. Maintain relevant knowledge and share with parents and students all pertinent aspects of college selection, including but not limited to: accreditation status, standardized testing requirements, admission requirements, admission plans (RD, EA, ED, rolling, and open), campus climate, size, diversity of student body, sports, fine and performing arts, academic programs, social opportunities, learning supports, and financial aid packages.
16. Help parents understand financial aid opportunities and complexities for college students with learning differences, specifically the impact of reduced course loads on financial aid packages or refer the family to an appropriate financial expert.
17. Explain that some college learning support programs involve additional fees.
18. Prepare students and families for issues surrounding the transition from high school to college, i.e., self-advocacy skills, when, where, and how to disclose a disability, working effectively with the college disability support office, rights and responsibilities as a student with a disability entering college.
19. Help students and families understand how the education process for students with disabilities in college is different from K-12, including but not limited to the fact that there are no Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in college.
20. Help families distinguish between IDEA and ADA in secondary and post-secondary settings.
21. Work with students and families to connect with and evaluate college disability support services offices/learning centers on college campuses as part of the college research process.

#### **Working with Colleges and Programs**

1. Possess a thorough understanding of the philosophy, culture, and attributes inherent in each college/program recommended to the student and family.
2. Except in highly unusual situations, only recommend colleges/programs you have visited OR have researched or learned about via colleagues and other professionals.
3. Know and adhere to IECA's requirements for the number of yearly visits to colleges and LD programs.
4. Collaborate with and seek advice from other IECs who have experience with a particular college/program when necessary.
5. Maintain a strong familiarity with a broad range of colleges/programs and the learning supports they offer.
6. Make regular visits to the colleges/programs and their disability support services offices/learning centers.
7. Be cognizant of the changes that may have occurred at the college/program or its disability support services office since the last visit, and whether one's knowledge is current enough to make a recommendation.
8. Maintain an open, respectful, collaborative relationship with the admission office and disability support/learning center staff.

## Standards of Excellence for IECA Members

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### LEARNING DISABILITIES CONSULTING

#### *Learning Disabilities Consulting, continued*

9. When visiting college disability support services offices/learning centers, make sure to educate the staff on the role of an IEC, if necessary, and delineate the limits of that role during a client's matriculation process.
10. Use only positive comments when speaking of another college/program or disability support office with either the admissions or support staff.
11. Know and adhere to the IECA College/School Tour Guidelines.

#### **Professional Ethics**

1. Know and adhere to the ethical guidelines stated in the IECA Principles of Good Practice.
2. Maintain respectful and professional standards while safeguarding the confidentiality of a student's name and sensitive disability information when communicating with colleagues on and off the IECA TalkList.
3. Recognize that some conditions which present as a learning disability may not be a learning disability at all, but rather a different issue such as mental health or medical condition, intellectual disability, or a diagnosis on the autism spectrum; seek advice from a trained expert where necessary, remaining respectful and sensitive to parents who may be in denial or misinformed of their student's diagnosis.
4. Refer all students whose needs are well beyond your scope of professional expertise to other professionals.
5. Establish an effective system for keeping records of ongoing communication with students and parents.
6. Develop and use written contracts or letters of agreement with full delineation of services, clear disclosures and disclaimers, including permission forms to consult with other professionals where indicated.
7. Remain objective when assessing options and formulating recommendations.
8. Make recommendations based upon appropriate assessment, diagnostics, and assessment of facts.
9. Advise on the best options for the student, regardless of parental desires or pressure.
10. Provide students and families with a clear rationale behind each recommendation.
11. Do not ever accept favors or direct offers of commission for referrals.
12. Emphasize that the final decision of where to attend college remains with the family and especially with the student.

#### **Establishing a Professional Office**

1. Establish a professional work environment for in-person and virtual client meetings.
2. Maintain thorough, accurate, and confidential records.
3. Safeguard all psychoeducational records (disability information) within the office setting.
4. Develop a secure mechanism for the retention and ultimate disposal of students' files and disability information.

#### **Professional Development**

1. Work to continuously expand and update one's fund of knowledge of educational options for students with learning disabilities.
2. In addition to IECA conferences, seminars, and institutes, seek training from organizations that focus specifically on students with learning disabilities, including but not limited to: LDA, IDA, AHEAD, CHADD, and Landmark College. Have an understanding of the complexities and definition of a learning disability, learning disability characteristics, and how the disability may manifest itself in the academic and social setting.

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**LEARNING  
DISABILITIES  
CONSULTING**

*Learning Disabilities Consulting, continued*

3. Understand that it is not uncommon for learning disabilities to coexist with other disabilities, such as ADHD, Cognitive Disorders not otherwise specified, depression, anxiety, or Autism Spectrum Disorder. Work to increase knowledge of disabilities that closely mirror or mask LD characteristics.
4. Remember that many students with specific learning disabilities are gifted in other areas. Look for colleges/programs that can support these students while playing to their strengths.
5. Seek understanding of the types of learning strategies, compensatory techniques, and academic accommodations commonly utilized by colleges for students with learning disabilities, how these vary from institution to institution, and which students would benefit from them.
6. Have an understanding of the developmental stages in children and adolescents and how having an LD can have an impact on the child at each stage.
7. Learn how to effectively evaluate colleges/programs on the types of learning support provided and the manner in which they are delivered.
8. Understand the legal framework from which colleges and universities provide access to students with disabilities and how this framework may differ from K-12 education.
9. Understand the administration and interpretation of neuropsychological/psychoeducational evaluations in the diagnosis of learning disabilities and in identifying appropriate learning support needs. (Note: assessments involving IQ testing can only be administered by a trained professional, typically a Ph.D. level licensed psychologist in most states.)
10. Have knowledge of several qualified psychoeducational evaluators.
11. Understand the limitations and appropriate uses of common assessment instruments, such as but not limited to the WISC, WAIS, WJ-III, WIAT, SATA, Nelson Denny, and WRAT.
12. Explore colleges'/programs' documentation of disability criteria (psychoeducational report or other required data) necessary for eligibility for colleges'/programs' disability support.
13. Gain a basic overview of psychoeducation assessments, from theory to understanding to practice, and know how to recognize a "bad" or insufficient report that may hamper a student's access to support.
14. Have knowledge of state and federal laws pertaining to students with LD.
15. Learn how to navigate high stakes testing accommodations eligibility (SSAT/ ISEE for independent schools and SAT/ACT for colleges) in order to best assist the student.
16. Understand the role of assistive technology, i.e., text-to-speech software, in helping some students with learning disabilities succeed in college.
17. Whenever possible, follow up with students when they are in college, to learn about their experiences with disability and academic support at their specific institutions.

## Best Practices: Therapeutic Consulting

The following are guidelines for best practices in therapeutic educational consulting. They are meant to be aspirational, that is, goals and ideals for the therapeutic IEC to strive for rather than strict expectations of professional behavior in all situations. Professional practice in independent educational consulting, as in many other professions, depends on a community of informed professionals who apply their skills flexibly, meeting the unique needs of each client while remaining mindful of general best practices principles. Thus, Independent Educational Consultants who do therapeutic consulting should find the following guidelines a helpful resource as they work to serve their clients with knowledge, empathy, professionalism, and respect.

### Working with the Student

1. Gather information relevant to the unique characteristics of each student.
  - a. These characteristics may include: student values, attitudes, interests, goals, learning style, levels of achievement, aptitude, skills, cultural background, physical health, behavioral manifestations, family relationships, substance abuse history, and psychiatric diagnoses.
2. Utilize a variety of data sources to gather student-specific information.
  - a. These data sources may include, as appropriate: parent/guardian interview; student interview; review of educational records; review of clinical records; conferences with the referring professional (if any) and other professionals who have knowledge of the student (e.g. guidance counselor, teacher, tutor, psychotherapist, psychiatrist, etc.).
    - 1) All third party conferences are arranged only with the proper signed authorization of the appropriate party (parent/guardian in the case of a minor student, the student him/herself in the case of a legal adult).
  - b. It is understood that it may not be practical, appropriate, or useful to access all of these data sources for a particular student, and that the decision whether or not to access a particular source is a professional one that is generally made by the Independent Educational Consultant in consultation with parents/guardians and the referring professional.
3. Provide, as appropriate, information and emotional support relevant to the advisement/placement process to the student.
4. Understand the issues associated with legal majority and legal minority as these relate to the advisement and placement of students.
5. Act in the best interests of the student.

### Working with the Family

1. Inform parents/guardians of their important role in the advisement/placement process, including the fact that (in the case of a minor student) it is the parents/guardians (i.e. not the Independent Educational Consultant) who make the final decision regarding the placement, treatment and education of their minor child.
2. Provide parents/guardians, or the student in the case of an adult, with information relevant to the advisement/placement process, especially information that will enable parents/guardians, or the student in the case of an adult, to make an informed, thoughtful decision regarding placement.
  - a. Such information may include: the range of options for the student (including alternatives, if any, to boarding/residential programs); costs; services offered by recommended programs; resources for learning about professional transporters, if indicated and requested; estimated duration of recommended programs; sources of



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#### *Therapeutic Consulting, continued*

additional information on recommended programs; an explanation of why the IEC has included each program on the list of options.

3. Provide emotional support to parents/guardians as they proceed through the advisement/placement process and, if indicated, refer parents/guardians to appropriate mental health professionals for additional support.
4. Learn about and respect the family's unique history, experiences, values, goals and resources.
5. Inform and include, as appropriate, all legally responsible custodial parents in the advisement/placement process.

#### **Working with Schools and Programs**

1. Visit and otherwise obtain knowledge of a variety of potentially appropriate educational and therapeutic settings and resources, especially boarding and residential programs for students with mental health and related needs.
  - a. The knowledge obtained about programs should include some or all of the following: educational, therapeutic and/or residential models and techniques utilized at the program; background and experience of administrative/supervisory staff; background, training and experience, including licensure status, of professional staff; physical resources, including buildings, grounds, libraries, technology, etc.; program size; admissions criteria and student/client profile; average and/or minimum length of stay; tuition cost; policies regarding communication with Independent Educational Consultants.
2. When possible, limit recommendations to programs that he/she has personally site visited.
  - a. If the needs of the student and/or family require that the IEC consider for recommendation a program he/she has not personally site visited, then the IEC should learn more about the program via independent research, the IECA TalkList, and otherwise consulting with colleagues who are familiar with the program under consideration.
3. For each program under consideration, learn, as appropriate, about the program's licensure and certification status, and any recent history of legal/regulatory complaints and/or lawsuits against the program or its leadership team.
  - a. Inform parents/guardians, and student (if an adult) of any known licensure or certification restrictions or censures, and legal/regulatory complaints or lawsuits, especially if these are outstanding or within the past two years.

#### **Professional Ethics**

1. Be familiar with and adhere to the ethics guidelines stated in the IECA Principles of Good Practice (at [www.iecaonline.com](http://www.iecaonline.com)) concerning competence, relationships with schools and programs, relationships with students and families, relationships with other consultants, potential conflicts of interest, and advertising and public statements.
2. Maintain respectful and professional standards in using the IECA TalkList and safeguard the confidentiality of the client.
3. Advise on the best alternatives for an individual and the pertinent rationale, even when there are parental desires or pressures which may not be in the client's best interest.
4. Provide information on the price range of potential recommendations prior to contracting for services.
5. Develop and use written permission forms and contracts or agreements with full delineation of services, disclosures, and disclaimers.
6. Refer a client to another, more qualified professional when the needs of the client are well beyond the IEC's scope of expertise.

### **Establishing a Professional Environment**

1. Maintain a professional work environment.
2. Establish an effective and secure system of communication and documentation with client families and programs, and of retention and ultimate disposal of client files.
3. Arrange backup support with another qualified IEC to cover planned or unexpected times of significant inaccessibility.

### **Professional Development**

1. Conduct school and program visits on an ongoing basis and to a broad range of options appropriate to one's area(s) of interest; use a structured method for gathering information and assessing programs; and consider the CEP minimum guideline of 100 visits in five years.
2. Develop a network of professional resources, including mental health practitioners, advocates, attorneys, educators, and psycho-educational or neuropsychological evaluators.
3. Remain broadly knowledgeable and current in areas pertinent to therapeutic educational consulting, including: human development; abnormal psychology and psychiatry; models of psychotherapy; substance abuse/addiction treatment; residential treatment; education and special education.
4. Understand the significance, implications, and limitations of measures commonly used in the educational and psychological evaluation of children, adolescents, and young adults with mental health and related problems.
5. Utilize and benefit from professional development opportunities provided by IECA and other organizations (e.g. NATSAP, SBSA, etc.). Such opportunities include local, regional, and national conferences, and, for IECA in particular, the Summer Training Institute, the mentoring program, webinars, and publications such as *Insights*.