

Code of Ethics for Spiritual Caregivers in the State of Israel

Israel Spiritual Care Network

Spiritual Caregivers in Israel must act with honesty, decency, consideration and respect for all people in all professional and social dealings. They must aspire to “Judge every man to the side of merit”, must “Say little and do much” and “Receive every man with a pleasant countenance.”

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Formulated by: Einat Ramon (Shechter Institute, NAJC) with help from Nathan Cherny and Chani Kroizer (B'Ruach), Eli Sharon and Dvora Koren (Tishkofet), Adi Samson (Likrat Shlichut), Rachel Alon-Margalit (Israel Spiritual Care Network), Baruch Shalev (Mazorim), Mike Schultz (Rambam), Eitan Eckstein (Retorno), Hila Zemer (Shechter Rabbinical Seminary), Talia Levanon (Israel Trauma Coalition), Ariel Warner.

Counselors from the USA: Teresa Snorton (ACPE), John DeVelder (CPSP), Cecille Allman Asekoff, Zahara Davidowitz-Farkass, Naomi Kalish, David Glicksman (NAJC) and more.

Professional literature the document is based on: Gabi Shefler, Yehudit Achmon and Gabriel Weil (Editors) *Ethical issues for Professionals in Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Jerusalem, The Hebrew University Magnes Press Ltd, 1998. Primarily pages 659-757 (Compilation of ethical codes of the therapeutic professions).

All guiding principles which are heretofore mentioned in the document in the male form refer to both men and women, to students, spiritual caregivers and educators in the field, regardless of outlook or lifestyle.

Fundamental terms of the Israeli Spiritual Caregivers' Code of Ethics:

- a. “Certified Spiritual Caregiver” – One who is qualified to practice spiritual caregiving in an accredited study program (as explained in the document “Israeli Spiritual Caregiver Certification Guidelines”), has been certified by the Israel Spiritual Care Network and

supplies professional spiritual caregiver services through the auspices of a public institute, a communal or a private framework.

- b. “Caregiving Recipient” – One who uses spiritual caregiving services.
- c. “Educator” – One who has fulfilled his obligations in the “Spiritual Caregiver Educator’s” course and has been certified to head a spiritual caregiving training program and/or instruct spiritual caregivers.
- d. “The Network” – The Israel Spiritual Care Network, which has taken upon itself the responsibilities of promoting organizations that supply spiritual caregiving services. The network will further take upon itself the responsibilities of overseeing and supervising the training programs and ethics committees in the field, as do equivalent professional organizations overseas.

Part I: Values and Fundamental Principles of the Profession of Spiritual Caregiving in Israel

(Some of these are derived from the document “Israeli Spiritual Caregiver Certification Guidelines” which was accepted by majority vote by the Israel Spiritual Care Network in July 2011).

1. The fundamental assumption at the core of the profession of spiritual caregiving/support is that every individual person has the right to spiritual support and that every individual that is capable, has been found professionally eligible and has had appropriate training (as explained in the “Caregiver Certification Guidelines” document) to engage in this profession.
2. Every person certified to engage in spiritual caregiving commits, from the moment his training commences, to principles of personal and academic honesty. This includes: a. Advanced and continuous professional studies, which include: Receiving professional training from certified educators in the field and/or from other professionals that are familiar with the field, and/or steady participation in advanced studies in the field as well as reading professional literature. b. Maintaining clinical confidentiality of caregiving recipients and compliance with spiritual caregiving’s professional and ethical guidelines.
3. Every individual studying in a spiritual caregiving training program will sign a form committing to abide by the field’s code of ethics at the beginning of their engagement in the profession.
4. Due to the wide ranges of cultures, religions and sects that are unique to the Israeli populace, the Israeli Spiritual Caregiving Network will aspire to form various programs to



train professional spiritual caregivers. These programs will cover a wide spread of the different spiritual and religious outlooks in the State of Israel.

5. To the extent of its ability, The Network will encourage a wide range of different populace groups to accredit their members with spiritual caregiving according to their needs and outlooks and will encourage the training of manpower to supply appropriate spiritual caregiving.
6. The desired wide-ranging spread of spiritual caregiving and spiritual caregiving training systems throughout all facets of the Israeli populace should not harm the moral principles of the professions, based on listening to and accepting each and every individual, as they are.
7. Due to the multi-cultural contexts of spiritual caregiving, there may raise situations where a positive connection between a spiritual caregiver and a caregiving recipient may not be found due to personal reasons or differences in outlook. In such events the spiritual caregiver will refer the caregiving recipient to another spiritual caregiver, after having done all they can to bridge the gap, if such an option exists.
8. The network responsible for supervising the professional guidelines will encourage public institutions to hire and/or maintain contact with a wide range of professional spiritual caregivers that represent the wide range of outlooks, lifestyles and communal affiliations.
9. In order to institutionalize spiritual caregiving as a stand-alone profession, it has been determined that a spiritual caregiver will not agree to work for a fee in any public institution that is supervised by the Ministry of Health and/or the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services (such as hospitals, nursing/old-age homes, rehabilitation institutions) at the same time that he is employed in another capacity by the same institution. The spiritual caregiver must inform the employing institution that his employment in a public institution as a spiritual caregiver as well as his employment in a medical, therapeutic or religious capacity contradicts the spiritual caregiver's code of ethics.
10. In the case of employment by an individual or a community, whose services and conceptual identity are narrowly defined (such as a synagogue, community, school and/or private treatment) the spiritual caregiver, who holds another medically therapeutic or religious position, may treat the spiritual caregiving as another professional tool. This, under the condition that if he presents himself as a spiritual caregiver, he has received full certification in the field as defined in the "Caregiver Certification Guidelines" document that has been accepted by the Network.
11. The spiritual caregiver must diagnose the person's spiritual distresses and may accompany a person only if that person's distresses fall under the spiritual caregiver's area of specialty

and according to his training and experience. In order to prevent ambiguity in diagnosis between the roles of the spiritual caregiver and the roles of other therapeutic professionals, herein can be found the distinction between cases where a person must be referred to a mental health professional and cases where a spiritual caregiver may assist due to their unique training (in cases of doubt, a mental health professional should be involved during the decision process and perhaps even in the treatment)

- a. Herein can be found guidelines for situations where the assistance of a spiritual caregiver may be useful:
 - a) When a person experiences stress regarding their health situation, both in general and while waiting for results of medical examinations.
 - b) When a person is expecting surgery.
 - c) When a person receives “bad tidings”.
 - d) When a person must make a tough decision.
 - e) When a spiritual question arises.
 - f) When one feels the need to pray with someone, read Psalms or other prayers with another person or study texts with religious and spiritual significance with a study partner.
 - g) When a person has the urge or the need to hold a religious ceremony that will be performed by someone else (either due to religious law or personal intuition).
 - h) When a person is seeking meaning in their life, requests spiritual guidance or advice with a moral conundrum, debates regarding various frameworks in his or her life following a disease/loss of a loved one/or any other personal suffering.
 - i) When a person is in mourning.
 - j) When a person has a hard time determining his or her feelings or emotions.
 - k) When a person feels alone.
 - l) When a person fears death or is concerned for someone facing death.
 - m) When one feels the need to share religious or philosophical doubts with another person.
 - n) Any time when spiritual guidance is needed for the purposes of joy or thanksgiving.
 - o) Any situations that demands guidance or counseling regarding religious/spiritual topics, spiritual/religious values and/or referral to clerics or philosophers that match the cultural/spiritual/religious outlook of the caregiving recipient.
- b. Herein can be found guidelines for when someone must be referred to a mental health professional:
 - a) In cases of depression, including thoughts of suicide, anxieties, excessive anger, insomnia and every other event that interferes with daily proceedings.
 - b) When the caregiving recipient reports an addiction to drugs, alcohol or other addictive substances.
 - c) When dealing with challenges in the work place and social challenges adversely affect the person’s ability to function properly.
 - d) In cases where the individual’s reactions to given situations are excessive and extreme.
 - e) When the person becomes violent in reactions to mental stress.
 - f) Following reports of sexual dysfunction or an inability to maintain a steady relationship with

family members. g) Following reports of disability to separate fantasy from reality, disturbing thoughts, confusion, past trauma and the like. h) Following complaints of physical sensations that do not match the disease symptoms. i) When encountering a person who has trouble maintaining personal hygiene and taking care of him- or herself. j) Following reports of an eating disorder. k) When it is known that mental illness issues run in the caregiving recipients' family. l) Or any other situation where the caregiving recipient is in life-threatening danger.

Part II: Moral Conduct Rules With Regards to the Religious and Cultural Fields

Background for this part: The State of Israel deals with religious, ethical and cultural subtleties that are unique to Israel and are unparalleled the world over. Therefore, these moral rules provide the spiritual caregiver more detailed instructions concerning religious/cultural sensitivities which we, as spiritual caregivers in Israel, must take into account.

Fundamental Assumption: The profession of spiritual caregiving in Israel is not a "religious" profession, rather it is open to all, and is not exclusively limited to those of religious belief or a religious lifestyle, let alone leaders of various religious groups. Since the profession frequently uses content, sources and practices than are considered "religious", particular care should be provided according to the circumstances unique to each caregiving recipient. The profession is open to men and women from all aspects of the religious, conceptual and political spectrums in Israel, as long as they commit to the proper and required professional training. Prior knowledge in the field of religion, as well as prior knowledge in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences and life experiences are all of preliminary value to this professions. One should add that the profession of spiritual caregiving is, at its core, not hierarchical and its purpose is to accompany a person that is using this service for their spiritual needs. The following ethical principles derive from the above fundamental assumption:

13. A person employed as a spiritual caregiver in a public institution will not initially introduce himself as holder of a given academic or religious title, or as a holder of particular ideological or political view, but will rather make himself known to the caregiving recipient by name only and as a specialist or qualified spiritual caregiving professional. The above will also be displayed in the file presented at the hospital, nursing/old-age home or any other public institution, or on his business card as a spiritual caregiver.



14. A spiritual caregiver will reveal facets of his life history, identity, opinions and lifestyle solely according to the context of the spiritual caregiving and solely according to the needs of the caregiving recipient.
15. There exists in every public institution a religious or cultural status-quo. It is the responsibility of the spiritual caregiver to respect this status-quo and to not undermine it in all aspects of his personal and professional dealings. The spiritual caregiver must fully cooperate with all authorities of the institution that are responsible for the religious/cultural fields, as is demanded from him to do so in the fields of medicine and welfare.
15. The spiritual caregiver will not perform a religious or cultural ceremony unless requested to do so by the caregiving recipient or his/her family members, all while respecting the privacy of the caregiving recipient and his social environment.
16. Missionary work is expressively forbidden within the framework of spiritual caregiving. Therefore the spiritual caregiver will not offer to perform any activity or ceremony that holds religious or cultural significance unless there is a high probability that the caregiving recipient is interested and after confirming that the ceremony does not undermine the caregiving recipient's spiritual path and communal affiliation and that there is no part of performing the ceremony that can be considered missionary work, namely converting a person from one religion to another or from one spiritual path to another.
17. Every caregiving recipient may request from the spiritual caregiver a referral to a spiritual caregiver that more suits his religious and/or **spiritual** outlook and receive from him help in fulfilling this request.
18. The field of spiritual caregiving is often characterized by religious and cultural ambiguity, deriving from its dealing with twilight of life situations or with people that are not of clear and sound mind. Due to this ambiguity, which is a part of the professional reality, the spiritual caregiver must aspire to familiarize him- or herself with the main principles of the religions and sects in the Israeli public sphere and be able to balance between those limitations and the requests of the caregiving recipients.
19. As a part of granting spiritual caregiving to a community and members of a community, which has a defined spiritual or religious identity, the spiritual caregiver may, and sometimes must (as applicable in each community), present his or her religious or academic titles as well as their ideological outlook and grant spiritual guiding services to all members of the community as a person who is identified with these titles.

Part III: Professional Reliability, Confidentiality and Privacy as Derived from the Principle of Respect for One's Fellow Man

20. Spiritual caregivers or those in a program training to become spiritual caregivers are professional and/or students that accept the training principles of the Israel Spiritual Care Network from 5761 (2010-11). As a finished result of the professional training, the spiritual caregiver must be well versed with the definitions of spiritual caregiving and the spiritual caregiving code of ethics, his professional role and boundaries and not overstep his authority.
21. The spiritual caregiver must act with professional integrity, out of awareness for his skills and limitations and represent himself in an understated and reliable manner.
22. It is the responsibility of all spiritual caregivers to refer caregiving recipients to other professional whom the spiritual caregiver may work alongside (psychologists, social workers, doctors, nurses and other caretakers), as well as cooperate with them in order to improve the caregiving recipient's status, as is explained in detail above in Article 11.
23. The spiritual caregiver must give true, precise reports to his superiors both in the public institution he is employed as well as within the framework of the Network.
24. The spiritual caregiver must act with respect, cooperation and fairness to his professional colleagues and those of other professions. The spiritual caregiver must avoid overstepping authority, must offer and share his knowledge and professional experience with his colleagues.
25. It is expected that every spiritual caregiver apply himself to improve and develop the profession, to adequately present the training period professionally – according to the document "Israeli Spiritual Caregiver Certification Guidelines", spread the Israeli spiritual caregiver's code of ethics and continuously update himself with professional advances from both Israel and around the world.
26. The spiritual caregiver must adapt the therapeutic contract to his employers and caregiving recipients and enlighten them so all sides understand the reasonable mutual expectations the spiritual caregiver and the caregiving recipient can come to expect from each other, all out of respect and mutual agreement and understanding.
27. **Confidentiality and Documentation:** The spiritual caregiver must properly document and professionally summarize the spiritual caregiving process according to the regulations of the institution where he is employed, and report on the caregiving recipient's condition to family or professional authorities, while maintaining caution and the accepted confidentiality procedures and rules. Due to the rise of personal elements during the caregiving process, the documentation of the caregiving process must be kept classified and



inaccessible during the entire spiritual caregiving period. Following a set time period specified by each institution, the caregiving documentation will be sent separately to be shredded. Spiritual caregiving students will make sure to blur the identities of caregiving recipients about whom they have conferred with their colleagues or supervisors, according to the rules and regulations of the institution or program they are learning in. Among other things, the caregiving recipient's full name will never be mentioned in the records; rather an initial from his name will be used in consultation correspondence and all various training and teaching documents. Ten years after a person has left the field of spiritual caregiving, he must destroy all notes documenting the spiritual caregiving process and all teaching documents that refer to those individuals who they supplied spiritual caregiving to.

28. Confidentiality during Training: Spiritual caregiving educators will not reveal information, classified material or details of a trainee in a program and/or team, except in cases where demanded and prescribed by law. This, in order to prevent a clear and present danger to a person or people, in events where the educators have had lawsuits filed against them or are charged in a criminal or disciplinary trial that is related to their work in the field. In the event that revealing some of the details is needed for training and/or advisement from the educator, the educator must alter details in order to reveal their identity and to avoid impinging on the student's privacy. All files and notes documenting the instruction process will be destroyed six months after the student has handed in all his assignments as required by the certification guidelines. During the qualification process, the Israeli Spiritual Care Network's Certification Committee will receive nothing but a letter summarizing the student's training process and evaluation, and affirming that he has handed in all required assignments. A copy of the above letter will also be sent to the student himself. Five years after the educator has left the field he must destroy documentation that has personal information that concerns those that learned with him or were instructed by him.
29. A spiritual caregiver that holds a position in a public institution will not be privately employed as a spiritual caregiver or in any other capacity by caregiving recipients he has encountered due to his work in the institution.
30. The spiritual caregiver will handle all financial and economic affairs fairly and honestly.
31. While conducting research into spiritual caregiving, the spiritual caregiver must mark the names of all research partners and include the names of those currently in spiritual caregiving courses that assisted in the research – if they did indeed assist in the research. The spiritual caregiver will abide by all bibliographical and research quotation and accreditation rules and will ensure that harm will come to the studied caregiving recipients as a result of his research. While conducting research that includes interviews the spiritual

- caregiver will ensure that the caregiving recipients are aware of the research, its goals and proceedings and that they offer their cooperation fully and with complete understanding.
32. The spiritual caregiver will gladly welcome all professional feedback from his superiors, his caregiving recipients and his work colleagues.
33. The spiritual caregiver will not receive arbitration fees for initiating contact with another professional.

Part III: Relations and Boundaries between Spiritual Caregivers and Caregiving Recipients.

34. At its essence, the spiritual caregiving environment often creates a feeling of closeness and intimacy, both physical and emotional, between the spiritual caregiver and the caregiving recipient. Occasionally, a physical connection is formed between the spiritual caregiver and the caregiving recipient (such as holding hands, patting one's head, etc). As a rule, the spiritual caregiver must avoid physical connections that may lead to false expectations or misguided interpretations which result in harm to the caregiving recipient.
35. The spiritual caregiver must be aware and be able to distinguish between showing closeness and both physical and emotional contact which lead to the caregiving recipients arising out of the depths of loneliness and despair, and between abusing the close bond formed in many cases of spiritual guidance. In areas where contact is an inseparable aspect of the support given, the spiritual caregiver must make this aware ahead of time to the caregiving recipient and/or the caregiving recipient's family members and/or his own employers and define the nature of the contact while clarifying the essence of the spiritual caregiving.
36. The spiritual caregiver, and certainly the spiritual caregiving educator should avoid any sexual, erotic or romantic connection of any kind with the caregiving recipient or with a student, and should avoid removing clothing in the presence of a caregiving recipient, as well as avoid asking the caregiving recipient to remove articles of clothing (with the exception of outer garments, such as a vest or a jacket)
37. The spiritual caregiver must avoid creating a romantic and/or a sexual connection with a patient or student for at least two years from the period when the treatment or training has ended.

Part IV: Educator-Student Relations in the Workplace

38. Spiritual caregiver educators will be certified according to the principles of the Network and international educator certification principles that have been adapted to Israel as explained in detail in the "Certification Guidelines" document from July 2011, and will instruct spiritual

- caregiving students or certified spiritual caregivers in certification institutions, welfare or health institutions or privately. Due to their educational role they must make students aware of the certification guidelines and the Israeli spiritual caregivers' code of ethics. They are expected to be experienced in the field, show aptitude in the certification guidelines, the profession's moral code and spiritual caregiving's body of professional knowledge.
39. Spiritual caregiving educators will clarify to students the system of expectations and demands as well as qualification methods and dates.
 40. Spiritual caregiving educators will see themselves as committed to the development and growth of their students, and will aid them in learning their craft and executing their practical assignments to the highest possible standards.
 41. In the event that a student desires or requires further treatment that exceeds the responsibility limitations of spiritual caregiving certification, the student will be referred by the educator for suitable treatment or spiritual caregiving and (the educator) will avoid placing himself in the role of personal caretaker or spiritual caregiver (even if the educator holds suitable training).
 42. A spiritual caregiving educator will not allow students to perform or presume to perform professional services that are beyond their abilities, levels of experience and skill. In all cases of a student's practical work as a part of their certification, the educator is responsible for avoiding any and all damage to caregiving recipients.
 43. The student must set clear and specific boundaries in relations between himself and his fellow students, in order to avoid abuse of comradely relations and breaking the professional limits and boundaries between him and them.

Part V: Ethical Training in Complex Issues and Dealing with Complaints Regarding Moral Deviations Committed by the "Network's" Spiritual Caretakers.

44. Ethics Committee: In order to supervise, assist with the handling of complicated ethical situations and issue sanctions for breaking the above ethics guidelines, the Israel Spiritual Care Network will form an ethics committee, consisting of five members that represent spiritual caregiving organizations that reflect a wide range of spiritual beliefs and viewpoints. One member will be replaced each year, thus guaranteeing a continuity of members on the committee. Committee members must be recognized as professional spiritual caregivers with a reputation for proper ethical conduct and a willingness to discuss ethically complicated issues revolving around spiritual caregiving without showing bias or favoritism. The goal should be that the spiritual caregivers will represent as wide a range of opinions and outlooks that are represented in the Israeli Spiritual Care Network.

45. The ethics committee will instruct spiritual caregivers on complex ethical issues, and should be consulted for permission in cases where an overstepping of boundaries is required, or in cases where there is no clear instruction with regards to complex ethical issues.
46. Filing a Complaint: A person wishing to file a complaint about a spiritual caregiver or a spiritual caregiving educator will forward the ethics committee a written complaint describing the details of the event, the time and location the event took place, damages resulting from the event, etc.
47. Inquiry into the Complaint: When a complaint is received by the ethics committee, the spiritual caregiver or spiritual caregiving educator will be summoned for an interview where the complaint will be presented and his responses will be accepted and recorded.
48. Discussing the Complaint: Following receipt of and responses to the complaint, the morals committee will hold a hearing where it will be decided what further inquiries are required, what details the committee is missing and whether a police investigation is required.
49. Confidentiality: Until a decision has been reached regarding the spiritual caregiver or the spiritual caregiving educator, the inquiry will remain confidential. Committee members commit to not leak details to any external source, for fear of "Speaking Evil"
50. Sanctions: The ethics committee may decide on a) A warning b) A temporary suspension c) Temporary or permanent decertification d) Approaching the police to begin an investigation following a felony.
51. Confidentiality: Once a decision has been reached regarding the spiritual caregiver or the spiritual caregiving educator, he will be summoned for a hearing by the ethics committee. Public notification regarding the ethical offense and sanctions will be discussed by the Israeli Spiritual Care Network.
52. Appeal: If the complaint has been found justified, the person complained against has one month in which to appeal from the moment he receives the news, if he so desires.
53. Hearing into the Appeal: Two further "Network" members that reflect organizations and outlooks not represented in the committee will join the ethics committee.
54. The Israeli Spiritual Caregiving Code of Ethics will be updated once a year to reflect developments and ethical issues that occur in the field.
55. Ethically Exceptional Cases: The ethics committee will discuss exceptional cases where one can show flexibility in the aforementioned ethics articles. Members of the Israel Spiritual Care Network are invited to approach the Network ahead of time to inquire regarding ethical issues in order to protect themselves, their caregiving recipients, educators and the profession's reputation.