



# INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF SCHEMA THERAPY

## ETHICS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION COMMITTEE

### GUIDELINES IN FILING A COMPLAINT WITH THE ISST

#### Introduction

Please read these Guidelines carefully before you (hereafter referred to as the **Complainant**) file a Complaint with the ISST about the conduct of an ISST member (hereafter referred to as the **Defendant**).

The Complaint will be returned to you if the guidelines are incomplete or not followed.

Complaints are responded to by *ISST's Ethics and Conflict Resolution Committee (ECRC)*. For the ECRC to operate a fair and transparent process, Complaints cannot be anonymous. The Complainant must sign their name on the Complaint Form.

The Guidelines are divided into four sections:

- I. The types of Complaints we can accept.
- II. The types of Complaints we cannot accept.
- III. How to submit a Complaint.
- IV. What happens to a Complaint once it is submitted.

#### I. Types of Complaints we can accept.

- A. A therapeutic service was provided to the Complainant by an ISST member that the Complainant considers having been rendered unethical.
- B. An ISST member's conduct that the **Complainant** considers potentially harmful or damaging to the **Complainant** or members of the public.
- C. An ISST member's conduct that the **Complainant** considers may cause reputational damage to the ISST.
- D. Unprofessional conduct on the part of an ISST member as defined by *ISST's Code of Conduct or ISST's Policy* and *Principles Regarding Dual/Multiple Relationships*.

#### II. Types of Complaints we cannot accept.

- A. Complaints about individuals who were not ISST members at the time of the event(s) or are not current members.
- B. Complaints against professional bodies and organizations.
- C. Matters of a legal nature, financial disputes, or compensation claims.
- D. Matters that a court should decide.

- E. If the **Defendant's** (the person against whom the Complaint is being made) professional body has already conferred a decision about the Complaint, their decision must stand. The Complaint cannot be presented to ECRC for reconsideration.
- E. Customer service or consumer issues.
- F. Making a professional apology.
- G. If the event took place more than two years ago.
- H. Any matter presented in the Complaint over which ISST and ECRC have no authority.

### III. How to submit the Complaint.

- A. If the Complaint falls within the category of Complaints that we can accept, please review **ISST's Code of Conduct** and **ISST's Policy and Procedures Regarding Dual/Multiple Relationships** to determine if the behavior of the ISST member is described in these documents.
- B. The **Complainant** completes and signs the Complaint Form.
  1. The signature must be recognizable, and the printed name must be noted adjacent to the signature.
  2. The ECRC will not accept anonymous Complaints.
  3. Include evidence to support the behavior described in the Complaint.
- C. Email the Complaint form and supporting documentation to the Chair of the ECRC (the name and email address of the Chair are noted on the Complaint form.)
- D. If the ECRC accepts the Complaint, the **Defendant** (ISST member against whom the Complaint has been filed) is informed.

### IV. What happens once one submits a Complaint

- A. A member of the ECRC will contact the **Complainant** to acknowledge receipt of the Complaint form.
- B. If the Complaint falls outside the accepted guidelines, the **Complainant** will be informed, and the case will be closed.
- C. If the Complaint falls within accepted guidelines, the ECRC will notify the **Complainant** and may request additional information.
- D. The ECRC will inform the **Defendant** that a Complaint has been made against them and send them a copy of the Complaint.
- E. The **Defendant** will be given 30 days to respond to the Complaint.
- F. The **Defendant** will provide a written narrative detailing their response to the Complaint and additional documentation supporting their defense.
- G. Following receipt of materials from the **Defendant**, the ECRC will begin the investigation of the Complaint by reviewing the documentation provided by both the **Complainant** and the **Defendant**.
- H. During the investigation, the ECRC may contact the Complainant or the Defendant to request additional information.
- I. In situations where English is not the primary language, all documents submitted to the ECRC that are not in English must be translated into English by an independent translator.

- I. In cases where the ECRC has recommended Mediation, both parties must be comfortable with the procedures for keeping records of the whole process.
  - 1. If Mediation is carried out in a language other than English and both parties would like the ECRC to review the mediation, the records will need to be translated into English, and both parties must agree with the choice of the independent translator.
- J. The length of time required to resolve a Complaint depends on the nature and complexity of the Complaint and the length of time the **Complainant** and **Defendant** take to respond to queries and deadlines. A Complaint's resolution will often encompass at least 3-6 months.
- K. Following completion of the investigation, the ECRC will forward a report of their outcome to ISST's EB. In cases where the ECRC determines that the Complaint has been without cause and a violation has not been committed, and ISST's EB concurs with the Committee, the case will be closed.
- L. In some cases, the ECRC and ISST's EB may determine that, while no ethical or professional violations appear to have occurred, there are concerns about the actions or conduct of the **Defendant**, and a letter of "Good Practice" is sent to the Defendant. The letter of "Good Practice" may include suggestions for additional education, supervision, or mentoring.
  - 1. In these cases, an ECRC member will correspond with the member until a satisfactory conclusion is reached and the case is closed.
- M. If during the investigation, the Complaint is found to be serious (e.g., violence, sexual offense, serious or sustained dishonesty or fraud), the ECRC may decide to refer the case to the **Defendant's** professional body for action and may also recommend that ISST's EB suspend their membership in ISST. The suspension period will allow the **Defendant** adequate time to resolve the issue, obtain legal counsel, etc. If the investigation of the **Defendant's** professional body concludes the case to be of a criminal/malpractice nature, ISST membership will be terminated.