

THE ETHICS OF CONDITIONAL CONFIDENTIALITY

A PRACTICE MODEL FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Mary Alice Fisher

Therapists once promised patients “Everything you tell me will remain in this room.” Today, they can keep that promise only if they are willing to break the laws that now require them to disclose information without patient consent. Most avoid such civil disobedience by placing limits on confidentiality; but ethically speaking, this ‘conditional’ confidentiality can be difficult to practice.

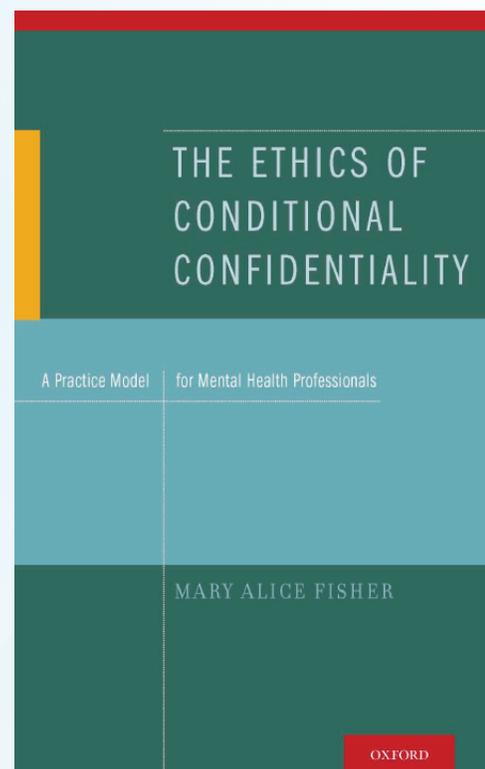
The Ethics of Conditional Confidentiality: A Practice Model for Mental Health Professionals is a guidebook designed to help therapists and other mental health professionals navigate the ethical and legal maze surrounding confidentiality. At its core is a practical Confidentiality Practice Model—a step-by-step guide for clarifying the ethical and legal issues that make the ethics of conditional confidentiality so complicated. Ethics codes represent the ‘ethical floor,’ which is the minimum standard of behavior about confidentiality. The goal in this book is to encourage reaching for the ‘ethical ceiling,’ by protecting confidentiality to the extent legally possible and not disclosing patients’ confidences just because certain laws would allow them to be disclosed. *The Ethics of Conditional Confidentiality* demystifies confidentiality for therapists, clinical supervisors, educators, ethics consultants, attorneys who represent mental health professionals, clinicians, and administrators, and is an ideal supplemental ethics text for graduate courses. It is also useful for establishing confidentiality policies in any clinical setting and training program.

Mary Alice Fisher, Ph. D., is Founding Director of The Center for Ethical Practice, Inc., Adjunct Assistant Professor in the University of Virginia Curry Programs in Clinical and School Psychology, and a clinical psychologist in private practice in Charlottesville, VA. For over 25 years Dr. Fisher has provided workshops, seminars, and consultation for mental health professionals on topics related to ethical issues in clinical practice.

“No one has written more thoughtfully, knowledgeably, and realistically about confidentiality than Mary Alice Fisher. She has rescued the ethics of confidentiality after they have been all but hopelessly confused with legal mandates, risk management, and impractical guidelines. This book is unsurpassed in helping us think through the hard questions we encounter in practice, work through conflicting values, and find creative ways to meet our responsibilities. It deserves to land on the required reading lists in all graduate programs and find its way into the libraries of all clinicians, from those just starting out to the most experienced.”

—Kenneth S. Pope, Ph.D., ABPP

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