

# **Suggested Standards of Training and Ethical Practice for Shamanic Practitioners.**

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# **Suggested Training Guidelines for Shamanic Practitioners**

## **Essential prerequisites:**

A person who wishes to become a shamanic practitioner should be a mature, stable adult of both compassion and intelligence who recognizes that the world surrounding him or her is alive with spirit. Any candidate for this work must be able to clearly discern ordinary from non-ordinary realities and have a commitment to being embodied. Additionally, the individual must have the desire to alleviate suffering/pain as well as a willingness to both participate in and take responsibility for their own on-going growth and healing. It is also necessary that the person discipline their ability to journey beyond this reality into the realms of the helpful and healing spirits. This ability needs to be strong enough that the journey process need no longer be supervised by an instructor. This method of connection allows the shaman to be in relationship with the helpful and healing spirits on whom healing depends.

## **Required Training/Elements of Curriculum:**

Once able to connect deeply with compassionate, tutelary spirits the shamanic practitioner's training takes two interwoven tracks. Key healing methods are learned from established shamans and then this knowledge is enhanced by both practice and experiential study with their helping spirits.

## **The training received from another shaman(s) needs to be thorough and include the following minimum requirements:**

1. Working in all spiritual realms(NOR) This includes realms beyond what is recognized as Middle World (ie. Upper Worlds and Lower Worlds), as well as the essential skill of safely working in the Middle World.
2. The ability to perform shamanic diagnosis/divination
3. Training in guardian spirit retrieval
4. Training in shamanic extraction methods
5. Training in shamanic soul retrieval methods
6. Experiences of spiritual dismemberment and rememberment
7. Voluntary spirit possession/embodiment by tutelary spirits for purposes of performing healing work
8. Training in depossession healing (removal of harmful entities)
9. Training in psychopomp work (the work of alleviating the suffering of the dying and deceased)
10. Training in working with the people whose spirits you are attending and healing. This work is especially necessary and should include treating a person with respect and reverence, how to create a safe space, keeping clear personal/ professional boundaries, good communication skills including the use of non-judgemental language, and honoring a patient's present reality.
11. Developing treatment follow-up plans/strategies (These strategies may include methods of helping a patient negotiate the impediments or discrepancies their personality may hold. This is often necessary as our culture engenders conflict between spirit and physical realities which manifest themselves as mind/body/spirit/emotional splits in the patient.
12. Creating and closing of sacred space
13. Guidance for effective interdisciplinary coordination
14. In addition to these above skills, the shamanic practitioner engages in developing and participating in reverent relationships with the spirits of Nature, their tutelary spirits and protectors. The shamanic practitioner must also understand the value of being in harmony within themselves.

## **Training received from the shamanic practitioner's tutelary spirits may include:**

1. Developing mastery over the ego
2. Developing discipline to implicitly follow, the direction/guidance of the tutelary spirits

3. On-going support for dealing with their own issues
4. Personal rituals for merging with healing spirits
5. Personal rituals for honoring the healing spirits
6. Development of individual strategies for patients' presenting issues
7. Development of useful renewal resources(to prevent burn-out)
8. Guidance for treatment progress and coordination with other practitioners
9. Supervision of all aspects of practitioner's work

## **Quality Assurance for Shamanic Practitioners**

As with shamans in indigenous cultures, the shamanic practitioner is not, nor can they be, certified as a shamanic healer. The reasoning for this is that the helping spirits determine both the ability and the effectiveness of the shamanic practitioner's work. While the shamanic practitioner may have obtained certificates of training in shamanic methodologies, this has limited bearing on their skill or effectiveness as a healer. The shamanic practitioner's ability to generate a healing response in a patient is dependent on the practitioner's relationship with the spirits that actually perform the healing work. As such, no licensure or certification can be imposed on this discipline as a measure of quality assurance.

Just as each practicing allopathic physician has a different level of effectiveness, shamanic practitioners exhibit a range of ability as well. One may examine a shamanic practitioner's training and experience including the availability of peer supervision. In addition, a shamanic practitioner may have other medical, psychological, or other training which can assist their effectiveness. This additional training can also provide a measure of reassurance for hospitals or health care facilities that are interested in supporting integrative/complementary practices. However, to determine the true quality of a shamanic practitioner's work, we must rely on reputation and referral which, is the primary way indigenous cultures have, for centuries, determined the effectiveness of a shaman.

## **Code of Ethics for Shamanic Practitioners.**

### **I. General Responsibilities of Shamanic Practitioners**

Shamanic Practitioner's primary accountability is to their Spirit Teachers in the Unseen World in both their professional and personal life. There can be no compartmentalization in a Shamanic Practitioner's life. This maintains the highest standards of the profession. Shamanic Practitioners also value professional competence, objectivity and integrity. They consistently examine, use, and attempt to expand the knowledge upon which their practice is based, working to ensure that their services are used appropriately and accepting responsibility for the consequences of their work.

- a) Shamanic Practitioners bear a heavy responsibility because their recommendations and professional actions may alter the lives of others. The Shamanic Practitioner's primary responsibility is to follow the consult of their Spirit Teachers on behalf of the patient. When the interest of the individual patient conflicts with the welfare of his/her family or of the community at large, the Shamanic Practitioner weighs the consequences of any action and arrives at a judgment based on all considerations in consultation with their Spirit Teachers.
- b) As participants in collaborative association with other colleagues, Shamanic Practitioners are responsible for remaining alert to and attempting to moderate institutional pressures and /or policies that conflict with the standards of their profession.

- c) As teachers, Shamanic Practitioners are responsible for careful preparation so that their instruction and communications maintain high standards for scholarship and objectivity.
- d) Shamanic Practitioners practice only within their sphere of competence. They accurately represent their abilities, education, training, and experience. They avail themselves to opportunities for continuing professional education and training to maintain and enhance their competence. When indicated, they seek consultation from colleagues or other appropriate professionals.
- e) Shamanic Practitioners do not exploit their professional relationships sexually, financially, or for any other personal advantage. They maintain this standard of conduct toward all who may be professionally associate with them, such as patients, colleagues, supervisors, apprentices, employees, students, and research participants.
- f) Shamanic Practitioners maintain a regular discipline of connection with their Spirit Teachers and any other appropriate professional to monitor and resolve any situation that would lead to any inadequate provision of service. It is expected that a shamanic practitioner engages in developing and participating in reverent relationships with the spirits of Nature, their tutelary spirits and protectors. The shamanic practitioner must also understand the value of being in harmony within themselves.

## **II. Responsibilities to Patients**

The Shamanic Practitioner's primary responsibility is to maintain clear contact with their Spirit Teachers on behalf of their patient. Shamanic Practitioners respect the integrity, protect the welfare, and maximize the self-determination of the patients with whom they work.

- a) Shamanic Practitioners inform their patients of the extent and nature of services available to them as well as the limits, rights, opportunities, obligations and possible consequences associated with the service which might affect the patient's decision to enter into or continue the relationship.
- b) Shamanic Practitioners enter and/or continue professional relationships based on their ability to meet the needs of patients appropriately. The Shamanic Practitioner terminates service to patients, and professional relationships with them, when such service and relationships are no longer required, no longer serve the patient's best interests, or as advised by their Spirit Teachers. The Shamanic Practitioner who anticipates the interruption or termination of service to patients gives reasonable notification and provides for transfer, referral or continuation of service in relation to the patient's needs and preferences. Shamanic Practitioners do not withdraw services precipitously except under extraordinary circumstances, giving careful consideration to all factors in the situation and taking care to minimize possible adverse effects.
- c) Shamanic Practitioners use care to prevent the intrusion of their own personal needs into relationships with patients. They recognize that the private and personal nature of the spiritual/therapeutic relationship may unrealistically intensify patient's feelings toward them, thus increasing their obligation to maintain professional objectivity. Therefore, specifically the Shamanic Practitioner does not engage or condone sexual activities with patients.
- d) The Shamanic Practitioner takes care to ensure an appropriate setting which includes spiritual clearing in their practice to protect both the patient and the Shamanic Practitioner from actual or imputed mental /physical / or spiritual harm. If the Shamanic Practitioner judges that there is a threat to safety, reasonable steps are taken to prevent the patient from causing harm to self or others.

e) When the Shamanic Practitioner must act on behalf of a patient, the action should always safeguard the interests and concerns of that patient. When another person has been authorized to act on behalf of a patient, the Shamanic Practitioner should deal with that person with the patient's best interests in mind.

### **III. Relationships with Colleagues**

Shamanic Practitioners act with integrity in their relationships with colleagues and members of other professions. They know and take into account the traditions, practices, and areas of competence of other professionals and cooperate with them fully for the welfare of patients.

a) The Shamanic Practitioner represents accurately the views, qualifications, and findings of colleagues and, when expressing a challenge on these matters, does so in a manner that does not compromise the best interests of patients.

b) Shamanic Practitioners know that a patient's health and safety may depend on receiving appropriate service from members of other professional disciplines. They are responsible for maintaining knowledge of, and appropriately utilizing the expertise of such professionals on the patient's behalf.

c) In referring patient's to allied professionals, Shamanic Practitioners ensure that those to whom they refer patients are recognized members of their own disciplines and are competent to carry out the professional services required.

d) If a Shamanic Practitioner's services are sought by an individual who is already receiving similar services from another professional, consideration for the patient's welfare shall be paramount. It requires the Shamanic Practitioner to proceed with great caution, carefully considering both the existing professional relationship and the spiritual/ therapeutic issues involved. Consultation with the Shamanic Practitioner's Spirit Teachers is essential.

e) As supervisors, advisors to apprentices, or employers, Shamanic Practitioners accept their responsibility to provide competent professional guidance to colleagues, employees and students. They foster a working environment and conditions that ensure fairness, privacy, and protection from physical, mental, and spiritual harm. They evaluate fairly, and with consideration the performance, skill, and intention to follow Spirit Teachers of those under their supervision, and share evaluations with supervisees. They do not abuse the power inherent in their position.

f) Shamanic Practitioners take appropriate measures to discourage, prevent, expose and correct unethical or incompetent behavior by colleagues, but take equally appropriate steps to assist and defend colleagues unjustly charged with such conduct. They do not encourage the unsupervised practice of shamanic practitioners who fail to meet accepted standards of training and experience. See proposed Standards enclosed.

### **IV. Remuneration**

Fees set by Shamanic Practitioners are in accord with professional standards that protect the patient and the profession.

a) In establishing rates for professional services, Shamanic Practitioners take into account both the ability of the patient to pay and the value of the services rendered.

b) Shamanic Practitioners do not participate in illegal fee-splitting arrangements, nor do they give or accept kickbacks for referrals. However, it is not unethical for Shamanic Practitioners to utilize referral services for which a fee is charged, nor to participate in contractual arrangements under which they agree to discount fees.

c) Shamanic Practitioners employed by an agency, clinic, or collaborate center, and also engaged in private practice conform to agency regulations regarding their dual roles.

## **V. Confidentiality**

The safeguarding of the patient's right to privacy is a basic responsibility of the Shamanic Practitioner. Shamanic Practitioners have a primary obligation to maintain the confidentiality of material that has been transmitted to them in any of their professional roles, including the identity of the patient.

a) Shamanic Practitioners reveal confidential information to others only with the informed consent of the patient, except in those circumstances in which not to do so would violate the law and would result in clear and imminent danger to the patient or to others. Unless specifically contraindicated by such situations, patients should be informed in advance of any limitations of confidentiality, and informed and written consent should be obtained from the patient before confidential information is revealed. Such consent includes telling the patient about the purposes for which information is obtained and how it may be used.

b) When confidential information is used for the purposes of professional education, research, consultation, etc. every effort will be made to conceal the true identity of the patient. Such presentations will be limited to material necessary for the professional purpose, and this material will be shared only with other responsible individuals.

c) Special care needs to be taken regarding confidentiality when the client is a vulnerable adult or minor child. In disclosing information to parents, guardians, the court, or others, the Shamanic Practitioner acts to protect the best interest of the primary patient.

d) In keeping patient records, Shamanic Practitioners remain aware of the limits of confidentiality and of the conditions under which they may be required to reveal recorded information. Accordingly, they maintain records adequate to ensure proper assessment and treatment, but take precautions to minimize exposure of the patient to any harm that might result from improper disclosure. Patients are permitted to examine their records if they request access. Shamanic Practitioners make provisions for maintaining confidentiality in the storage and disposal of these records, whether written or on audio or visual recordings.

## **VI. Societal and Legal Standards**

Shamanic Practitioners show sensible regard for the social codes and ethical expectations in their communities, recognizing that violations of accepted societal, ethical, and legal standards on their part may compromise the fulfillment of their professional responsibilities or reduce public trust in the profession.

a) Shamanic Practitioners do not, in any of their capacities, practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, age, religion, socioeconomic status, or national origin.

b) Shamanic Practitioners practice their profession in compliance with legal standards. They do not participate in arrangements undermining the law. However, when they believe laws affecting patients or their practice are in conflict with the principles and standards of the

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profession or as advised in a careful process with their Spirit Teachers, Shamanic Practitioners make known the conflict and work toward change that will benefit the public interest.

c) Shamanic Practitioners recognize a responsibility to participate in activities contributing toward improved social conditions within their community.

## **VII. Public Statements**

Public statements, announcements of services, and promotional activities of Shamanic Practitioners serve the purpose of providing sufficient information to aid consumers in making informed judgments and choices. Shamanic Practitioners state accurately, objectively, and without misrepresentation their professional qualifications, affiliations, and functions as well as those of the institutions or organizations with which they or their statements may be associated. They should correct the misrepresentations of others with respect to these matters.

a) In accounting availability for professional services, a Shamanic Practitioner may use any information so long as it describes her or his credentials and the services provided accurately and without misrepresentation. Information usually found helpful by the patient includes his or her name; highest relevant academic degree from an accredited institution or training program; specialized post-graduate training; date, type, and level of certificate of completion; address and telephone number; office hours; type of services provided; appropriate fee information; foreign language spoken; and policy with regard to third-party payments.

b) Brochures, catalogs, advertising in print or electronic media bearing a Shamanic Practitioner's name announcing any services offered shall describe the services accurately but shall not falsely or deceptively claim or imply superior personal or professional competence. Nor shall these materials imply a promise of a cure.

c) The Shamanic Practitioner is responsible for assuring that the content of all advertising communicated to the public on his or her behalf, whether by audio-visual or any other means, is in conformance with the ethical standards of the profession.

d) Shamanic Practitioners do not provide their expertise in the healing aspects of their profession without the consent of the patient for whom they would engage in his or her healing practice.

e) Shamanic Practitioners do not offer to perform any services beyond the scope permitted by law or beyond the scope of their competence. They do not engage in any form of advertising which is false, fraudulent, deceptive or misleading. The Shamanic Practitioner vigilantly guards against exploiting the patient relationship for commercial gain.

f) Shamanic Practitioners respect the rights and reputation of any professional organization with which they are affiliated. They shall not falsely imply sponsorship or certification by such an organization. When making public statements, the Shamanic Practitioner will make clear which are personal opinions and which are authorized statements on behalf of the organization.

## Spirit Passages

**Evelyn C. Rysdyk**, author of *Modern Shamanic Living*, and **C. Allie Knowlton, MSW, DCSW** have dedicated their lives to the ancient, Earth-centered, visionary ways of the shaman. Though face-to-face contact with individual patients, groups and conference participants, Evelyn and Allie express their commitment to help individuals increase their personal power, feel their intrinsic sacredness and expand their connections to All That Is.

Included in *Traveling Between the Worlds*, a book of interviews with 24 of the most influential teachers and writers of shamanism, Evelyn and Allie are internationally recognized presenters teaching workshops on ecospirituality, the shamanic journey process and advanced shamanic methods across the United States and Canada since 1991.

Evelyn and Allie have trained with Michael Harner, Ph.D. and Sandra Ingerman, LMFT, LPCC and are graduates of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies Second East Coast Three-Year Program as well as Sandra's Medicine for the Earth and shamanic teacher training alliance. They have also been very fortunate to study with many indigenous shamans including Fredy "Puma" Quispe Singona of Peru, AiChurek from Tuva, Bholi N. Banstola of Nepal, and the renowned, Ulchi shaman, Grandfather Mikhail "Misha" Duvan, to name just a few.

As founding members of True North, a unique, integrated medical center in Falmouth, Maine-- they are fortunate to collaborate with physicians, nurses, a psychiatrist, a naturopath and several complementary health practitioners to provide a new model of health care that includes the Spirit.

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