Ethical Issues Associated with Information and Communication Technology in Guidance

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Organization of the Presentation

• Introduction
• Social Equity Issues
• Resource Issues
• Service Issues
• Professional Standards
• Conclusion
Introduction

• Evolution of ICT in guidance
  – Batch processing of career assessments by mainframe computers and minicomputers
  – Local delivery of career assessments, information, and instruction on personal computers
  – Distance delivery of career assessments, information, and instruction on the Internet, along with distance service delivery and social media via the Internet

• Evolution of ethical issues – stability & change
Social Equity Issues

• The Internet allows counseling and guidance to transcend geographic and physical barriers

• Increased Internet access from cheaper computers and mobile devices (smart phones & tablets)

• However, access is still not universal
  – With a global population in 2011 of almost 7 billion, this still means that 4,620,000,000 people in the world do not have ready access to the Internet

• Even in the most economically advanced countries there are still individuals with little to no access to the Internet – Public access points are inadequate
Social Equity Issues

• Equity of access to career interventions is a social justice issue
• Equity of access to the Internet is also a social justice issue
• The costs of computer hardware and access fees puts the Internet further out of reach of persons with limited financial resources
Resource Issues

• Quality of Assessments and Information Delivered on the Internet
• Availability of User Support when Needed
Quality of Assessments & Information

- Highly variable quality of assessments online with little evidence of validity
- Variable quality of test interpretations
- Career information has similar problems of variability and validity evidence
  - Some data inaccurate, biased, out-of-date
  - Some good data is poorly presented
- Individuals may be getting better access to inferior guidance resources
Quality of Assessments & Information

• Economics of publishing a factor
  – High costs of developing and distributing paper products created a disincentive for producing low quality resources
  – Lower costs for electronic publishing make it more economically viable to produce and distribute poor quality information
  – (Many responsible publishers remain who produce high quality resources)
Availability of User Support

- Successful use of resources dependent on readiness for career decision making
- Individuals with lower readiness need more assistance to make effective use of career resources
- Individuals with higher readiness need little or no support from a practitioner to use career resources
Availability of User Support

- Resources in the past were provided by a practitioner
- Resources now widely available on the Internet
- Many users unprepared for independent use of resources
- Web sites do not generally indicate circumstances where help is needed
Service Issues

- Confidentiality and User Privacy
- Distance Service Delivery
- Social Media
Confidentiality and User Privacy

• The expanded access to information increases the chances for violations of confidentiality
• Data security measures not uniformly followed by practitioners
• A Lack of auditory and visual privacy is also a problem, especially at public access Internet sites
Distance Service Delivery

• The Internet improves access due to problems of disability or geography

• Potential problems:
  – Inappropriate clients (mental health/literacy)
  – Unavailability of local emergency contacts
  – Limited awareness of local conditions
  – Limited awareness of diverse cultures
  – Confusion regarding practitioner credentials
Social Media

• Used to deliver and market services
• Potential problems:
  – Maintaining professional boundaries between practitioners and the individuals they serve
  – Reaching a mutual understanding with the client on the purpose and use of social media in service delivery
Professional Standards

- Ethical Standards
- Credentialing Standards
- Accreditation Standards
Ethical Standards

- Ethical codes created to educate professionals, as well as protecting the public
- Three approaches in developing ethical codes
  1. Incorporating elements of ICT use into relevant sections of a general code
  2. Creating specialized codes
  3. Including ethical issues related to guidance as one component of standards for the design and delivery of computer-based career resources
Ethical Standards

• Codes are being kept up-to-date, such as distance services and social media

• Changes in the way that individuals gain access to resources and services have not made issues that were originally identified thirty years ago any less relevant today
Credentialing Standards

- Credentialing standards were created, in part, as a conceptual basis for voluntary professional certification.

- These standards function similar to ethical codes with ICT elements added to general credentialing standards or the creation of specialized standards.
Accreditation Standards

• Accreditation standards are intended to ensure that students graduating from preparation programs have the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively practice.

• Accreditation standards are more general than ethical or credentialing standards regarding ICT in service delivery.
Conclusion

• Professional associations are working to keep standards up-to-date
• However, research is needed to guide the development of future standards and training resources
• The success of ICT in guidance depends on our ability to shape fast changing technology in organizations and professions that change more slowly
For more information

www.career.fsu.edu/techcenter