ROLE OF THE FORENSIC COUNSELOR

NAME:

INSTITUTION:

DATE:

Role of the forensic counselor

Forensic psychology entails the application of scientific know-how to legal issues and matters in a legal system (Davies & Beech, 2012). In most instances, forensic psychologists clarify issues to do with human behavior to the courts. The duties and responsibilities of forensic psychologists tend to differ from those of clinical psychologists in a significant way (Davies & Beech, 2012). This paper will analyze the differences between forensic assessment and counseling and clinical assessment and counseling, the ethical implications of the differences and how these differences inform the roles of a forensic counselor and clinical counselor.

The differences between forensic assessment and counseling and clinical assessment and counseling are as follows**;** First and foremost, there exists a difference on who requests for assessment and counseling (Hugaboom, 2013). In forensic, assessment or counseling is conducted only when requested by an attorney or there is a court order issued on the same. On the flipside, clinical assessment or counseling is done anytime so long as a client seeks the services of a clinical psychologist (Hugaboom, 2013).

The purpose of forensic assessment is to establish a particular set of facts in question in a lawsuit for instance in a criminal matter whereas in clinical assessment; it is to help the client specifically get through a problem, for example, a mental health disorder (Hugaboom, 2013). In essence, forensic assessment is more concerned with using the results to advise the court rather than helping the client.

The question of confidentiality creates a clear distinction between the two. Confidentiality is a fundamental element in psychology and is embedded in the code of ethics for clinical psychologists. However, in forensic assessment, the rule of confidentiality is not followed to letter unless in cases of privilege (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006). A forensic assessment gathers information used by the expert witness to give testimony in a court of law on questions of fact or law. Therefore, in this instance, the confidentiality right is waived.

The role of the psychologists differs when they are conducting assessment and counseling as can be seen from the nature of questions that asked in the course of evaluation (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006). Clinical assessments seek to provide an accurate diagnosis play a significant role in identifying the suitable treatment for a patient. Nonetheless, in forensic assessments diagnosis is limited to questions that find out the competency of a person to stand a trial for their criminal responsibilities (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006).

Lastly, in conducting forensic assessments, psychologists rely on third parties to source for information. In contrast, clinical assessments entirely depend on the examinee for information. Forensic information can therefore be shared and used to make decisions without the knowledge of an individual (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006).

**Ethical implications of the differences**

The issue of confidentiality is one that brings forth ethical effects out of the gaps identified above. It happens whenever a long-term clinical psychologist who has established rapport with his clients becomes a forensic psychologist and is then required by law to give expert testimony over the same customers (Hugaboom, 2013). This situation is deemed contentious, and some scholars argue it be a breach of professional ethics.

Moreover, the non- requirement of informed consent in forensic assessments raises ethical concerns on the significance of an individual's autonomy. The debate as to whether this respects human dignity by using one’s information to make decisions without their knowledge continues (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006).

The role of a forensic correctional counselor is to provide counseling to inmates and juvenile offenders through educational programs with the aim of rehabilitation and reintegration into society (Voorhis & Salisbury, 2016). Clinical counselors provide psychological counseling to clients grappling with depression and other related disorders (Voorhis & Salisbury, 2016). The above - mentioned differences inform the similarities of these two counselors in a sense that; both tend to focus on the welfare of the individual to ensure real rehabilitation and recuperation. Their differences are informed by the fact that forensic correctional counselors work in the legal system while clinical counselors who perform general duties.

In conclusion, it is apparent that the main differences lie in the roles that the psychologists perform and the purpose for each duty. It is, however, notable that some similarities exist. For instance, in the case of forensic correctional counseling and clinical counseling where the aim is to improve the welfare of the individual.

References

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