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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report refers to the principles which should form the basis of e-guidance. The goal of establishing ethical principles for the design and use of ICT in career guidance has been to promote the effective provision of career resources and the effective delivery of career services. The intention of ethics is also to protect the welfare of clients by identifying potentially harmful computer applications as well as identifying services making inappropriate use of ICT. Guidance practitioner competences are essential to the effectiveness of ICT-based career resources and services. Achieving an appropriate level of practitioner competency with ICT also helps to avoid potential ethical problems resulting from guidance practitioners' actions or failure to act.

This report made a comparison between guidance services offered traditionally (face-to-face) and the use of ICT tools in e-guidance. Were identified possible risks that may occur by providing e-guidance using ICT tools, namely: inadequate guidance support for individuals using e-guidance resources, problems with distance guidance, and the validity of career assessments and information available on the Internet.

There are some recommendation for ethics in e-guidance:

- Web sites that provide career assessments and information should include links to qualified and credentialed practitioners who can provide guidance when needed.
- Guidance professionals use informed consent to indicate to clients what persons are collecting and have access to the client's personal information, what security issues exist with an online format, and for how long records will be stored.
- Guidance professionals educate their clients concerning the challenges and problematic situations that may occur during distant guidance.
- Guidance professionals screen clients for suitability with respect to the specific distance services intended to be used.
- If possible guidance practitioners should limit distance guidance to clients from cultural backgrounds that are familiar, or do appropriate preparation when offering services to clients from cultures that are different from one's own.
- Guidance practitioners should assess their own level of preparedness to work with clients from a different locale.
- Evidence of the quality of the assessment, including reliability and validity, need to be included in the professional manual and training materials for the measure.
- The intended purpose, the target audience, and the potential use of the information should be clearly identified.

This report presents a model for delivering distance guidance in an ethically responsible manner (A Four-Step Model for Promoting Effective Use of e-Guidance Resources). This model provides a sequence of helping strategies that include (1) understanding, (2) recommending, (3) orienting, and (4) follow-up

## INTRODUCTION

Lifelong guidance refers to a range of activities<sup>1</sup> that enables citizens of any age and at any point in their lives (lifelong) to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make meaningful educational,

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of such activities include information and advice giving, counselling, competence assessment, mentoring, advocacy, teaching decision-making and career management skills. In order to avoid ambiguity, since a variety of terms are used in Member States to describe services engaged in these activities, including educational, vocational or career guidance, guidance and counselling, occupational guidance/counselling services, etc., the term 'guidance' is used

training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used (lifewide). Guidance is provided in a range of settings: education, training, employment, community, and private.

Guidance is intended to assist clients in making informed and careful decisions about occupations, education, training, and employment over a lifetime. Career services and career resources are key components of guidance provision. The delivery of services and resources to clients can be face-to-face in career centers and schools or at a distance via the telephone or via the Internet.

- *Clients* include employed and unemployed young people and adults, who may or may not be involved in education and training.
- *Services* include self-help, brief staff-assisted, and individual case-managed services, as well as services delivered at a distance, where staff members assist clients in making informed and careful decisions.
- *Resources* include assessments and information that are designed to help clients clarify what they know about themselves, their career options, and their approach to decision making.
- *Career centers* provide a location where staff members from one or more organizations deliver and services and resources to assist clients in making a successful transition to employment or additional education and training. Career centers are often found in government agencies, as well as colleges and universities.
- *Schools* include a wide variety of educational institutions, such as secondary schools, vocational/technical schools, colleges, community colleges, further education colleges, polytechnic institutions, and universities, who provide services and resources to assist their students in making a successful transition to employment or additional education and training.
- *Non-formal and informal settings* include guidance provided by volunteers or professionals from other fields (e.g. youth and community workers). It may also include guidance professionals working through these non-formal guidance agencies or formal guidance professionals working in non-formal settings (e.g. workplaces).

The provision of e-guidance is becoming increasingly common and includes both services and resources. Successful e-guidance complements more traditional face-to-face guidance. These two approaches can be used separately or in combination depending on the needs of the client as shown in Figure 1.

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throughout this text to identify any or all of these forms of provision and Member States should interpret the term as referring to the appropriate provision in their own countries. The definition of guidance is that adopted in the “Council Resolution on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices for Guidance throughout Life” (May, 2004).

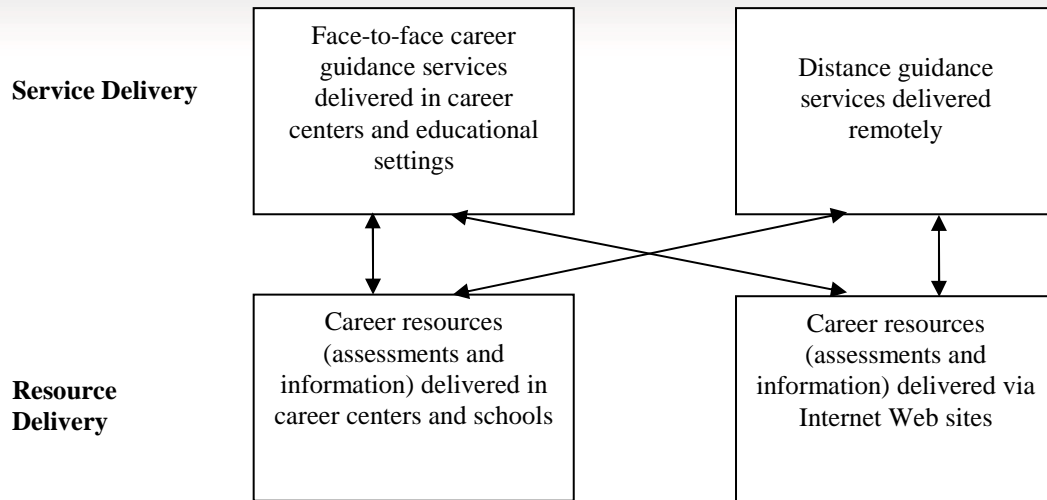


Figure 1. Integrating Face-to-Face and Distance Resources and Services in e-Guidance

### SERVICE DELIVERY AT A DISTANCE

Service delivery at a distance is a key element of e-Guidance and includes client use of Internet Web sites with support from a career guidance practitioner or practitioner interaction without use of a Web site. Practitioners can interact with clients via e-mail, chat, telephone, or videoconferencing. Distance interventions range from practitioners offering brief answers to simple questions to the provision of several sessions of guidance. A variety of service-delivery levels can be facilitated at a distance, including supported self-help, brief assistance, or intensive assistance. Practitioners can respond to questions arising from clients' use of self-help resources on a Web site. Brief assistance can be provided to clients who need help in locating and using resources on the Web site. Intensive assistance can be provided by scheduled individual guidance appointments (Sampson, 2008).

Clients' use of distance services and resources can be both a necessity and a convenience. Distance delivery can be a necessity for (a) individuals with disabilities who have mobility problems, (b) individuals in remote geographic areas without reasonable access to career resources and services, (c) individuals who need access to guidance practitioners in other geographic locations with specialized expertise, and (d) individuals who have been reluctant to seek assistance with a career choice and view the anonymity of the Internet a safe place to start obtaining resources and services. Web sites are a convenience for individuals who want to access resources and receive services outside of normal business hours or who want to access resources and receive services at their place of residence or work (Sampson, 2008; Sampson & Bloom, 2001).

While service delivery at a distance has the potential to provide effective assistance to individuals making career choices, several ethical issues can negatively impact the client. These ethical issues include: The remainder of this paper identifies these ethical issues and makes recommendations on strategies intended to prevent these issues from compromising the effectiveness of e-guidance. Specific ethical problems include, inadequate guidance support for individuals using e-guidance resources, problems with distance guidance, and the validity of career assessments and information available on the Internet. The final section of the paper presents a model for delivering distance guidance in an ethically responsible manner.

## INADEQUATE GUIDANCE SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS USING E-GUIDANCE RESOURCES

While some individuals can make good use of e-guidance resources on a Web site, others cannot make effective use of assessments and information with out assistance from a guidance practitioner. Most Web sites provide no recommendations indicating the circumstances when self-help is inappropriate and a guidance intervention is needed. Individuals may use Web-based self-help resources, experience difficulty, and inappropriately conclude that they cannot be helped, when in fact a guidance intervention might have been effective (Sampson, 1999). Prince, Chartrand, and Silver (1999) noted that there is an ethical responsibility for developers of Web sites to indicate when there is a potential need for individuals to seek assistance from a counselor and how to secure help. The following factors can indicate that an individual may need assistance from a guidance practitioner in order to benefit from using a Web-site.

### READING DISABILITIES

Haring-Hidore (1984) observed that the reading and persistence requirements associated with CACG systems may make system use particularly difficult for students with reading disabilities.

### LIMITED VERBAL ABILITY

Chapman and Katz (1982) found that individuals with lower verbal ability had more difficulty in using occupational information in career choice. Individuals with lower levels of intellectual development made less effective use of a computer-assisted career guidance system (Roselle & Hummel, 1988).

### LIMITED KNOWLEDGE, CONFIDENCE, AND MOTIVATION

Dungy (1984) found that individuals with less self and occupation knowledge, less confidence, an unwillingness to assume responsibility for decision making, and an unwillingness to use resources, was less successful in using a computer-assisted career guidance system.

### NEGATIVE CAREER THOUGHTS

Negative career thoughts about self, occupations, and the decision making makes it more difficult to make career choices. Individuals with negative career thoughts are more likely to be in a state of indecision, as well as having less vocational identity, choice certainty, and knowledge about occupations and training. Negative career thoughts also make it more difficult for individuals to think clearly about themselves, their options, and the process of decision making (Sampson, Peterson, Reardon, Lenz, & Saunders, 1996).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Web sites that provide career assessments and information should include links to qualified and credentialed practitioners who can provide guidance when needed. These Web sites should also indicate the circumstances when self-help is inappropriate and when assistance is likely needed from a guidance practitioner.

If there is any evidence that the client does not understand the results, as evidenced by e-mail or telephone interchanges, the practitioner must refer the client to a qualified career practitioner in one's geographical area.

## PROBLEMS WITH DISTANCE GUIDANCE

While many potential benefits can result from the use of distance guidance, several potential ethical issues can result in serious problems. These potential ethical problems include the quality of assessments available on the Internet,

### INFORMED CONSENT

When using distance services, clients need to be fully informed about the nature of the services they are receiving, including what the service entails and how it is delivered. Privacy, confidentiality, legal and ethical questions, grievances, termination and other appropriate questions should be addressed in the service delivery process. An informed consent statement that is endorsed by the client is one option for helping clients understand the services they are receiving (Ravis, 2007).

#### RECOMMENDATION

Guidance professionals use informed consent to indicate to clients what persons are collecting and have access to the client's personal information, what security issues exist with an online format, and for how long records will be stored.

### EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

A variety of emergency situations can result in harm to clients or others. A critical emergency situation can occur when a client discloses that they are contemplating harming themselves, including committing suicide. Another critical situation can arise when a client discloses that they are planning to harm another person (Ravis, 2007). Both of these situations require prompt and decisive action by the counselor.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Guidance professionals educate their clients concerning the challenges and problematic situations that may occur during distant guidance. Guidance professionals help the clients to anticipate preventive measures as well as strategies to deal with emerging problems.

Guidance professionals familiarize themselves with available local resources for support in emergency situations in working with clients with possibilities of harm to self or of harm to others.

### CLIENT SUITABILITY FOR THE NATURE OF DISTANCE GUIDANCE

Some clients have characteristics and circumstances that make distance guidance an inappropriate option for receiving services. These include, highly anxious, severely depressed or disturbed (Malone, 2007b; Ravis, 2007). Some clients may not have the computer skills required to successfully access distance services. These include e.g. skills to express one self in writing or to use asynchronous or synchronous communication.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Guidance professionals screen clients for suitability with respect to the specific distance services intended to be used. The technical competences necessary for the client to make successful use of distance guidance also need to be assessed by the guidance professional.

The guidance professionals have to assure that the client who is requesting service can profit from it in this mode. A judgment should be made whether or not the client appears to be able to process information through an Internet medium.

#### LIMITED PRACTITIONER AWARENESS OF MULTICULTURAL ISSUES

If practitioners have limited awareness of various multicultural issues, they may be unprepared to provide guidance services to clients in distant communities that differ from the groups they typically serve (Anthony & Jamieson, 2005; Malone, 2007b; Ravis, 2007)

#### RECOMMENDATION

If possible guidance practitioners should limit distance guidance to clients from cultural backgrounds that are familiar, or do appropriate preparation when offering services to clients from cultures that are different from one's own.

#### LIMITED CLIENT ACCESS TO THE INTERNET

Some clients may not have access to the Internet-based resources and services they need due to their limited financial resources (Malone, 2007b; Sampson, 1991; Sampson & Bloom, 2001).

#### RECOMMENDATION

The guidance practitioners should assist their clients in locating facilities with low cost or with free public access to the Internet.

#### LIMITED PRACTITIONER AWARENESS OF LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAY IMPACT THE CLIENT

Practitioners providing distance guidance services may be unaware of circumstances in a remote location that can have an important impact on the client being served, such as a practitioner's unawareness of a recent economic crisis in a distant community that seriously restricts employment options for the client they are serving (Sampson & Bloom, 2001; Bysshe & Parsons, 1999; Watts & Dent 2007).

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Guidance practitioners should assess their own level of preparedness to work with clients from a different locale.

Guidance practitioners should do appropriate preparation when offering services to clients from different locations that can have impact on the guidance process. .

#### LACK OF CLARITY ABOUT PRACTITIONER CREDENTIALS

Some practitioners provide little or no information on their Web sites describing their credentials (such as education, training, supervised experiences, licenses, certificates, or registration) that make it

difficult for clients to make informed judgments about the appropriateness of the practitioner to address their needs (Sampson & Bloom, 2001). Practitioners without the specific competencies unique to delivering distance guidance may knowingly or unknowingly provide inadequate service to clients (Ravis, 2007).

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#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Guidance professionals provide clients with information about their credentials and qualifications they, as well as any other professional who has access to client information.

### VALIDITY OF CAREER ASSESSMENTS AND INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON WEB SITES

Career assessments and information are often key elements of distance guidance. Unfortunately, career assessments and information available on the Web vary widely in the evidence provided to support the validity of the resource. In most cases there is little or no information on how the resource was developed, the extent to which bias towards various groups has been limited, and While there is some recommendations to practitioners on how to use the resource in various settings with various populations, this information is inconsistent. To an uninformed public, the attractive presentation of assessments and information can cover up the fact that the resource may be inherently invalid and potentially harmful.

### VALIDITY OF CAREER ASSESSMENT

Numerous career assessments are available on the Internet. Some of these resources are available at no cost, while other assessments are provided on a fee per use basis. Lumsden (2007) noted that problems exist related to quality and confidentiality. Many assessments provide little to no evidence of the reliability and validity of the measure. The results and any interpretation of the results are compromised if the assessment is not consistently measuring what it is intended to measure. This can lead clients to make inappropriate conclusions about themselves and their career options.

Oliver and Zack (1999) examined the quality of 24 no-cost career assessment web sites. “While easy to use, the sites, provided only a moderate degree of test interpretation and fit into a schema of career planning only to a limited extent... few sites provided much information about the developers of the site, no site asserted that its assessment instrument was validated for self use...” (p. 323). Given the typically easy access that clients have to the Internet, the lack of evidence on the validity of self-help assessments is particularly problematic. The quality of interpretations provided for self-help tests is crucial when no practitioner is available (Oliver & Chartrand, 2000). This lack of evidence on validity makes it difficult for practitioners or the public to determine whether a test is measuring what it is advertised to measure (Sampson & Lumsden, 2000).

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#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The assessments must have been validated for self-help use if no guidance support is provided, or that appropriate guidance intervention is provided before and after completion of the assessment resource if the resource has not been validated for self-help use.

Evidence of the quality of the assessment, including reliability and validity, need to be included in the professional manual and training materials for the measure.

Assessments originally developed in paper-and-pencil format must have been tested in computer delivery mode to assure that their properties are the same in this mode of delivery as in print form. Or the client must be informed that they have not yet been tested in this same mode of delivery.

## VALIDITY OF CAREER INFORMATION

Potential problems exist with the validity of career information available on the Internet. Errors may occur in the collection or processing of the original data. For example, occupational information in text format may be valid, but the coding process that links occupational information with self-assessment variables could be invalid, resulting in an inappropriate list of occupations for the user to consider. Also, bias on the part of the information developer may have influenced the presentation of the data, e.g. organizations wishing to portray an occupation or institution in the most positive manner possible (Gati, 1994).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The intended purpose, the target audience, and the potential use of the information should be clearly identified in the introduction to the material.

The date of publication of the career information should be clearly indicated as well as how the validity and impartiality of the information is guaranteed.

Evidence should be provided that the information provided is accurate and free from distortion caused by self-serving bias, sex stereotyping, or dated resources. The vocabulary of the information should be appropriate to the target group of users.

## A MODEL FOR PROVIDING APPROPRIATE SUPPORT FOR CLIENTS USING E-GUIDANCE

As stated previously, providing clients with assessments and information via the Internet without the practitioner support they need to make effective use of these resources is a serious ethical issue. Some clients with a low readiness for career decision making are unlikely to make effective use of assessments or information on a Web site without assistance from a guidance practitioner. In order to maximize ethical delivery of e-guidance, the design of Web-based career resources needs to anticipate points at which practitioner assistance would be appropriate. Similarly, the design of distance guidance needs to include models of practice that are likely to help clients with varying needs make effective use of Web-based career resources. This section continues with a discussion of the level of service that is appropriate for clients' readiness to make career choices and concludes with a description of a four-step model for promoting effective use of e-guidance resources.

## CHOOSING A LEVEL OF SERVICE APPROPRIATE FOR CLIENTS' READINESS FOR DECISION MAKING

Clients vary greatly in the type and amount of support they need to make informed and careful career choices. The type of help provided depends on the nature of the decision that clients are making, such as an occupational, educational, training, or employment choice. The amount of help clients need depends on their readiness for decision making. Readiness for career decision making involves the capability of clients to solve career problems considering the complexity of their life circumstances. Capability refers to internal factors (such as motivation, capacity to think clearly, confidence in decision making, willingness to accept responsibility for choosing) that make it more, or less, difficult for a client to make career choices. Complexity refers to external factors (such as the family, society, the economy, and organizations) that make it more, or less, difficult to make career decisions (Sampson, 2008; Sampson, Reardon, Peterson, & Lenz, 2004).

Clients with a high level of decision-making capability and a low level of life complexity typically have a higher level of readiness and experience fewer challenges in making choices. Clients having a low level of decision-making capability and a high level of life complexity typically have a lower level of readiness and experience more difficulty in making choices. The level of assistance provided by a

practitioner should match the decision-making readiness level of the client. In the differentiated service-delivery model (Sampson, 2008; Sampson, Reardon, Peterson, & Lenz, 2004), clients with high readiness for career choice receive self-help services, clients with moderate readiness receive brief staff-assisted services, and clients with low readiness receive individual case-managed services. All three levels of service can be provided face-to-face or at a distance.

#### A FOUR-STEP MODEL FOR PROMOTING EFFECTIVE USE OF E-GUIDANCE RESOURCES

A variety of assessment and information resources can be delivered via e-guidance. These resources are designed to help clients clarify what they understand about themselves, their options, and the way in which they make decisions. The insights and learning gained from the use of these career resources is an important element in helping clients make informed and careful choices about occupations, education, training, and employment. Assessments include tests, instruments, and questionnaires. Sources of information include books, pamphlets, brochures, files, computer applications, and multimedia. These sources of information supplement other options for gaining insight and learning, such as input from significant others, information interviews, shadowing, paid work experience, education, training, volunteer work, work-study programs, and leisure activities. Web sites provide clients with remote access to assessments and information, although some clients do not have access to, or choose not to use, the Internet. Face-to-face access to career resources is available at career centers and schools.

Practitioners can deliver career services via e-mail, chat, telephone, or videoconferencing to clients who may be underserved with face-to-face services or who may prefer the convenience of remote assistance. The services that practitioners provide at a distance vary in intensity and duration, from answering simple questions about a Web site, to helping clients find and use resources on a Web site, to the provision of guidance.

The following four-step model can be used to help clients make the most effective use of career assessment and information resources (Sampson, 2008). This model provides a sequence of helping strategies that include (1) understanding, (2) recommending, (3) orienting, and (4) follow-up as shown in Table 1 below and then described in more detail.

1. *Understanding* – The guidance practitioner clarifies the clients’ career assessment and information needs by:
  - Clarifying the client’s readiness for decision making.
  - Clarifying what he or she needs to know to make a career choice (such as self-knowledge related to values, interests, and skills and knowledge of potentially appropriate occupations and related educational, training, and employment opportunities).
  - Clarifying what he or she needs to do to make a career choice (such as identifying a preliminary sequence of decision making tasks appropriate for his or her needs).
2. *Recommending* – The guidance practitioner suggests e-guidance resources (career assessments and information) that are appropriate for the needs of the client by:
  - Determining the career assessments and information that are likely to help the client achieve his or her goals.
  - Determining the amount and nature of practitioner support from a guidance practitioner that the client will need to make effective use of career assessments and information.
  - *Selecting* and *sequencing* career specific assessment and information resources that are most likely to meet the needs of the client, while *pacing* the use of these resources at a rate that is appropriate for his or her readiness for career decision making.

- *Selecting* resources is best achieved as a collaborative process where the client is aware of his or needs and understands the potential that specific resources have for meeting those needs, such as how completing a self-assessment can be used in identifying occupations for exploration.
  - *Sequencing* resources is needed when what is learned from using one resource is necessary to benefit from using a second resource, such as reviewing occupational information and instructions for conducting an information interview before completing the interview.
  - In terms of *pacing*, clients with low readiness for decision making can easily be overwhelmed with a large number of tasks of any type. Having a learning disability, limited cognitive ability, poor literacy, restricted language proficiency, and mental health difficulties also make it more likely that a client will be overwhelmed with learning tasks associated with using assessments and information. As a client who is overwhelmed becomes aware that he or she is not learning effectively, there is an increased chance of anticipated failure and subsequent disengagement in the guidance process. It is better to start slowly by having a client use only a few resources and then check to see that he or she is learning successfully and then increasing, maintaining, or decreasing the pace of resource use as appropriate. As a client's experiences success in learning their confidence builds and then it is possible to proceed more quickly in using e-guidance resources.
  - Having a client actively participate in choices about the selection of career resources and services can increase client's ownership in the learning process and improve the likelihood of successfully using assessment and information resources. Appropriately involving the client in this process communicates an important message that he or she is capable of making a good decision.
  - Examining potential multicultural factors that might influence the use of career resources (such as the belief that informal verbal information from peers and significant others is more valid than formal published information).
3. *Orienting* – The guidance practitioner prepares the client to effectively use career assessments and information by:
- Relating the use of recommended career assessments and information to what the client needs to know and do to make a career choice.
  - Helping clients to understand the potential benefits, limitations, and functioning of career assessments and information in relation to their goals.
  - Promoting clients' understanding of how to make effective use of assessments and information.
  - Modeling information-seeking behavior by showing client how to locate and use assessments or information.
4. *Follow-up* – The guidance practitioner checks to see that clients have appropriately used the career resources and information that were recommended to achieve their goals and that they have a plan of action for the future by:
- Reviewing the client's experience in using career assessments and information, as well as identifying any problems that need resolving.
  - Reinforcing the client's information-seeking behavior.
  - Reviewing the client's progress toward meeting his or her goals. If goals are still unmet, recommend the use of additional career resources and services.

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