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Stephen Collins

1

Based on the Stephen Collins case involving the release of the taped therapy sessions in which he admits to inappropriate conduct with three (3) minors, the release of the alleged tape confessions does not violate the American Psychological Association's Code of Ethics. According to the American Psychological Association's Code of Ethics specifically on California State Law, there are exceptions permitted by the law in which the confidentiality rule can be overridden. To be specific, the 'exceptional' law states that where there is reasonable evidence of suspicion of child abuse or elder adult abuse, where there is a reasonable suspicion that you may present a danger of violence to others; and where there is reasonable evidence that you may harm yourself unless protective measures are taken, then that can serve as an exception to releasing the information (Ethics, 2017). Thus, in this case, the release of tape confessions and therapy sessions is justifiable. The California law requires the psychologists to act the role of reporters once they are in a position to identify reasonable suspicions of maltreatment.

The release of the alleged tape sessions is not against the law. The primary reason why there is no likelihood of a lawsuit against the therapist and the media outlet concerning the release of the tape therapy sessions, is because, the main aim objective of 'health professionals' (psychologists) is to work towards safeguarding the lives of the client and those that may be impacted by the condition of the client. Thus, it can be argued that the crucial intent of the reporting Stephen Collins' case is to protect children who may be vulnerable to his behaviors. Equally the release of therapy sessions is important as it offers the opportunity to protect potential victims, as it will serve as a facilitator for bringing about change in the community which in long run may lessen the risk of abuse in the society.

2

Forensic psychologists can be theorized to be professionals encompassed in both sides of the justice system and also in clinical and experimental aspects of psychology. Based on these two broad areas, it can be ascertained that there are a wide variety of roles and responsibilities of forensic psychologists. According to the American Psychology Association, forensic psychologists can perform the role of evaluators; threat assessment and child custody evaluations, expert witness; competency evaluations of criminal defendants and of the elderly, counseling services to victims of crime, trial consultants; death notification procedures, screening and selection of law enforcement applicants, intervention and treatment programs for juvenile and adult offenders (Ethics, 2017).

Based on Stephen Collins' case, if his trial goes through, the forensic psychologists will have to play the role of an expert witness. As an expert witness, they will have to testify in court regarding a specialized knowledge that they possess concerning Stephen Collins. In most case,

forensic psychologists are required by the judicial system to testify concerning matters of mental health, general theory in psychological law (Saks & Koehler, 2005). However, in this case, they will serve as general expert witnesses where they will be obliged to testify about wider psychological doctrines in which they have specialized expertise.

The role of an expert witness is important in this case because with their professional expertise they will expound on some opinions especially on the severity of the allegations in the court and also they will offer detailed scientific knowledge on the psychological attributes of the case. Just like any other witness in the court. As an expert witness, the forensic psychologists' duties must be truthful in respects to the particulars of the case. Additionally, they must be honest as to their opinion when presenting either written reports or oral evidence.

3

8

There are various regulations that can be adopted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) rules to accommodate changes in how patient therapy sessions can be recorded in order to balance protecting the public with protecting patient privacy. Based on this case, SAMHSA can adopt a regulation that allows clients to manage the therapy recordings, for instance, the patient may consent to permit exposé of their stored material to benefactors through health information exchanges, conferring to the regulations of their specific state (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1997). The U.S law requires under U.S. Code § 290dd-2 - Confidentiality of records, requires, "Records of the identity, diagnosis, prognosis, or treatment of any patient which are maintained in connection with the performance of any program or activity relating to substance abuse education, prevention, training, rehabilitation, or research, which is conducted, regulated, or directly or indirectly assisted by any department or agency of the United States shall, be confidential and be disclosed only for the purposes and under the circumstances expressly authorized under the law," (Insitute, 1992).

By ensuring the confidentiality of the practice of recording patient therapy sessions, a balance can be achieved, whereby both the patient and the agency conducting the therapy are obliged to disclose information only under the permitted exceptions. In this case, the matter in which the records about the alleged tape recordings were disseminated was unethical, however, since there is an imminent threat on posed by the patient, the recordings may be used to initiate or substantiate any criminal charges against the patient or conduct any further investigations.

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