**ADDENDUM NO. 1**

**Code of Professional Ethics of the Israel Defense Forces Mental Health Officer**

**Introduction**

This code of ethics applies to Mental Health Officers (MHOs), who are designated officers within the framework of the mental healthcare system of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) holding one of the following professions: psychiatrist, psychologist, or social worker.

This code is an addition to the professional codes of ethics in the fields of medicine, psychology, and social work, as well as the values of the Medical Corps and the essential spirit of the IDF.

The MHO’s duties include prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, which are carried out at the individual or system level.

**Prevention**: Activities to strengthen mental resilience and reduce the risk of mental crises among individuals and within the group.

**Diagnosis:** Assessment of the subject's mental state, personal functioning, and functioning within his or her designated role.

**Treatment:** Initiating processes of change within the individual through personal therapy or through processes available in the system.

At the core of all the MHO’s actions is a balance between two commitments. One is to promote patients’ mental well-being and strengthen their ability to function, while viewing them as adults responsible for the choices in their own lives. The second is to support the military's ability to carry out its missions.

Mental wellbeing, in this document, refers to a spectrum of mental states. At one end is normative coping with the inherent challenges of military service, even when encountering some difficulties. At the other end is mental disorder, defined on the basis of internationally accepted diagnostic metrics. Supporting soldiers’ mental well-being promotes their military units’ ability to carry out their missions.

**Professional identity**

The professional identity of the MHO has three components:

1. Professionalism
2. The distinctiveness of each profession
3. The context of activity within in a military organization in a democratic state.

The professional values of the MHO are derived from these components.

**Professional Values of the MHO**

**General**

Every action is undertaken on the basis of:

* Systematic knowledge that is as complete and up-to-date as possible
* Systematic skills, which are as sophisticated and up-to-date as possible
* Recognition of the existence of a variety of methods and specializations, and appropriate selection from among them
* Understanding the action sufficiently to develop a rationale for the preference of one action over its alternatives
* Broad understanding of all aspects of the action within the framework of the MHO’s particular profession (social work, psychology, psychiatry) and within the framework of the military unit and military organization.

**Responsibility**

* Responsibility to uphold the professional quality of work in relation to the person seeking assistance, and in relation to the military mental healthcare system within the medical corps
* Intelligent use of the powers of reason and decision-making
* To the greatest extent possible, acting on the basis of specialization in a particular type of problem, according to the situation

**Integrity**

* Maintaining professional standards in the face of pressures from outside the scope of the profession
* Not abusing professional relationships or patient information for non-professional purposes

**Providing Care**

* Providing care to each individual in the best way possible, within the framework of the attributes of the professional role and the available resources
* Providing respectful and inclusive treatment for all those in need

**Variety of Therapeutic Approaches**

* Striving to adapt the types of treatment to the characteristics of the individual
* Expanding and diversifying the therapeutic tools available to the therapist

**Comprehensive Approach Towards the Individual**

* Providing assistance for integrating into military service, from the perspective of the various components of the psycho-social life of the individual seeking assistance

**Loyalty to the Individual and to the System**

* Striving to achieve the optimal compatibility between the mental health and coping skills of the person seeking assistance and the nature of that individual’s military service
* When there is a gap between an individual’s mental skills and military role, striving to achieve an optimal solution by providing support to strengthen the individual

**Activity within a State Organization of a Democratic Nation**

**The Value of Human Life**

* Readiness to embark on human life-saving missions anywhere, anytime

**Human Dignity:**

Every action of an MHO must express:

* Respect for each individual as a "complete world" with inherent worth, not as means to an end in the hands of the commanders or military unit
* Respect for any person who seeks professional help
* Respect for aspects of the personal identity of the person seeking assistance, without judgment
* Respect for the individual’s freedom to conduct his or her life according to their personal judgement, within the limits of the necessity of circumstances in the IDF

**Equality**

Any professional action by a superintendent in diagnosis, treatment or prevention, and in a personal, unit-level, or system-wide context, is done:

* On the basis of a professional assessment of the action in the context of all its aspects
* On the basis of choosing the most appropriate professional approach possible
* In accordance with the professional criteria of the approach applied fairly and without any irrelevant distinctions

**Official Actions**

Every action of an MHO conducted as part of official duties is done while taking into account and distinguishing between two categories of issues to consider:

1. Those based on professional standards, including professional guidance of the military corps’ mental healthcare system, values of the medical corps, the IDF's values and norms in accordance with its purpose and “spirit,” IDF policy, orders, procedures, laws and case law
2. Considerations based on the MHO’s personal perceptions

The basis of every action of an MHO in the performance of official duties must give preference to the first category of considerations over the second category of considerations when it is necessary to decide between them. Every possible effort should be made to also take into account the second category in situations where this is a conflict between the two.

**Factors and Rules of Conduct**

**Therapeutic Norms**

* The MHO will assume a basic position of acceptance and empathy, along with the ability to set boundaries and to maintain the capacity to contain aggression and alleviate frustrating situations.
* The MHO will recognize the limits his or her personal ability within the context of certain aspects of the profession and the system.
* MHOs must receive training and instruction and offer training and instruction, in accordance with their professional level.
* MHOs shall ensure the proper quality of record-keeping, in accordance with professional guidelines.
* MHOs will transfer information between therapists in order to maintain therapeutic continuity, in accordance with professional guidelines.

**Maintaining the Privacy of the Individual**

* MHOs will ensure the privacy of the individual seeking assistance.
* Prior to the transfer of any information, the MHO will discuss the content of any information to be transferred with the person seeking assistance.
* The MHO shall provide information only to the relevant parties subject to military orders, and to the extent necessary for the purpose of preventing or reducing danger, while clarifying the meanings of this information.

**Strengthening Commanders’ Skills**

MHOs will continuously contribute to strengthening the skills of commanders in the field to better deal with the individual, through the enrichment of knowledge and abilities, at the individual and system-wide level.

**Dealing with Risk of Suicide**

* MHOs will work to reduce the degree of risk of suicide by making therapy available, creating a supportive atmosphere, and recruiting supportive agents.
* MHOs will convey an inclusive message that emphasizes taking personal and moral responsibility for one’s actions.

**Activity in Times of War**

In times of war, MHOs will strengthen the abilities of soldiers and military units to cope by providing individual and systemic assistance, while striving to maintain functional continuity in a military environment.

**Coincident Relationships with People Seeking Assistance**

Understanding that in the military it is not always possible to avoid coincident relationships (such as meetings with patients outside the treatment room, in a different role), MHOs will emphasize sensitivity and vigilance regarding the impact of coincident relationships on all professional activities.

**Professional Autonomy**

* Every MHO has professional autonomy.
* There may be situations in which an MHO is ordered by a commander of a higher rank to carry out routine activities in a manner in which the professional rules of the MHO’s work cannot be met (for example, prison sentences, individual commissions, pre-service training).
* In such situations, the MHO shall inform the responsible commander that, in accordance with the rules of professional ethics, the MHO is functioning in this activity in the role of staff officer and not as an MHO. A mental health examination should be conducted if the situation makes this necessary.

**Research**

In clinical research on the subject of mental health, the MHO in charge of the study will adhere to the requirements of the Declaration of Helsinki. This requires ensuring adequate protection of the dignity of the participants in the study, providing an appropriate explanation to the participants prior to the study, and obtaining their informed consent to participate. The MHO shall strive to prevent any negative consequences for soldiers that may result from their refusal to participate in the study. The study must not affect the appropriate treatment of soldiers. The supervisor in charge of the study bears overall responsibility, on behalf of the IDF, for the treatment of soldiers in the event of negative results of the study on any soldiers.