

4 Client Contact Standard

This standard conveys the value and respect held by PACFA towards the specific knowledge, skill and approach of counselling, psychotherapy and Indigenous Healing Practices, and their distinct contribution when working with clients.

This standard provides a definition of terms relating to client contact as it relates to PACFA registrants and for those applying for PACFA Clinical registration, and outlines the renewal requirement for the reporting of client contact hours.

The definition provided identifies and distinguishes client contact from other professional activities, and as distinct from client contact within a training program. See our [Training Standards](#).

Only those hours of client contact as defined below can be logged as client contact for PACFA registration purposes.

Does this standard apply to me?

This standard applies to applicants for Clinical registration and all registered counsellors, psychotherapists and Indigenous Healing Practitioners.

Definition of terms relating to client contact

Practitioner

A generic term to describe a counsellor, psychotherapist, or Indigenous Healing Practitioner.

Client

The term 'client' refers to a person or people who access the services of a practitioner, and may be a child, a young person, an adult, a couple, a family, or a group.

Therapeutic relationship

The therapeutic relationship between a practitioner and a client is a relationship of trust that is client-centred, egalitarian, collaborative, dynamic, and interactional. ([PACFA Code of Ethics #3](#)).

Therapy

[Therapy is a generic term](#) to describe evidence-informed counselling, psychotherapy, or Indigenous Healing approaches that occur within a contracted therapeutic relationship to which the client's consent has been obtained ([PACFA Code of Ethics #3](#)).

For some contexts, such as crisis line counselling, client consent may be implied. Irrespective of explicit or implied consent, the client must understand that they are in a therapeutic relationship and process, for it to be considered as client contact.

Therapy may be delivered in a range of formats, including face to face, telephone, and online.

Client contact *(post-training for PACFA's registration purposes)*

Client contact involves the provision of therapy within a therapeutic relationship for which client consent has been obtained.

PACFA'S definition of client contact is met when both the client and practitioner understand the nature and function of the relationship and service as being primarily therapy in practice, irrespective of the practitioner's job title.

Psychoeducation and manualised treatments may be counted as client contact only when there is evident a reflexive therapeutic process that is dynamic and customised to client need.

What is not considered client contact?

The following is not an exhaustive list of activities that are excluded:

Client contact hours do not include non-client contact activities such as session planning, session noting, or report writing.

Psychoeducation or pre-structured educational processes without therapeutic intent cannot be counted as client contact.

If the **primary** service of the client involvement is therapy, and within this service there are non-therapy activities (e.g., case management, advocacy, or behaviour management, etc.), these non-therapy activities cannot be counted as client contact hours.

If the **primary** service the client is receiving from the practitioner is an alternative form of service delivery (e.g., case management, coaching, support work, etc.), the client interactions do not count as client contact even though the practitioner may be utilising therapy skills.

When you apply for registration

You will be required to commit to accurately logging those hours that meet PACFA's definition of client contact as outlined in this standard.

While you hold registration

Registrants are required to maintain an up-to-date log of their hours of client contact, logging those hours that meet PACFA's definition of client contact.

Keeping this log will guide you in determining the number of clinical supervision hours that you need to accrue in the 12-month period from July to June each membership year.

If you are a Certified Practising registrant, the accurate logging of your client contact hours is necessary to accrue the required minimum of 750 client hours for an [upgrade to Clinical registration](#).

At renewal of registration

When you apply to renew your registration each year you are required to enter into the PACFA Member Portal the total number of client contact hours accrued during that 12-month prior period.

You are also required to keep evidence of your annual client contact hours that have been verified by your supervisor(s). It is recommended that the [PACFA Annual Verification Form](#) be used. This form does not need to be submitted at the time of renewal, but is to be kept in your professional portfolio for audit purposes.

Audit of hours of client contact

An audit of client contact and the corresponding clinical supervision undertaken will be conducted on a rolling 3 yearly basis with all registrants being audited once every 3 years.

You will be notified in writing if you are selected for audit and will be required to submit your client contact and supervision evidence for 1 or more of the years in the previous 3-year period.

Review

This registration standard will be reviewed at least every 3 years.

Next review date: March 2026

This standard is effective from March 2023.