The American Art Therapy Association Ethics Committee provides this series of “best practice” papers as non-binding guidelines to help art therapists interpret and apply the *Ethical Principles for Art Therapists*.

**Ethical Decision Making**

**Preamble:** "The principles put forth in this ethics document are intended to address many situations encountered by art therapists. In general, art therapists are guided in their decision-making by core values that affirm basic human rights."

The *Ethical Principles for Art Therapists*, like all ethical codes, are intentionally broad in order to indicate minimum standards of behavior and provide guidance across diverse situations. Art therapists need to employ sound decision making in each unique circumstance (Hinz, 2011; Moon, 20015). It may be helpful to take ACTION* by engaging the following steps adapted from Pope and Vasquez (2011):

- **A: Acknowledge concern** - Identify the problem, consider all possible ethical issues, ascertain potential implications, as well as evaluate rights, responsibilities, and vulnerabilities of all parties.

- **C: Codes, values, regulations, laws** – Review *Ethical Principles for Art Therapists*, aspirational ethical values, ethical codes of other relevant professions, federal and state laws, as well as institution or agency regulations.

- **T: Talk to supervisors and consultants** – Obtain professional and legal (if necessary) consultation. Review literature to determine expected practices

- **I: Identify courses of action** – Imagine choices taking into account what is possible given required timing, circumstances and relevant codes, laws and regulations. Enumerate potential consequences of actions

- **O: Ownership of decision and take responsibility** – Select the course of action that is best for the given situation.

- **N: Notes and document incident for further reflection** – Record concern, who was consulted, course of action taken and any follow-up.

References:

*ACTION acronym created by Jordan S. Potash (Ethics Committee Chairperson 2013-2016)