

RAISING THE BAR:

Inside the New EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards

Consultation has always been at the heart of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy. It is where clinicians move beyond manuals and training and begin to integrate EMDR into the complexity of real clinical work. Consultation is where the therapist's confidence grows, questions sharpen and professional identity takes shape. Consultants are not only educators, motivators and evaluators; they are stewards of clinical quality and professional development in the field.

Yet while consultation has long been central to EMDR practice, expectations

for what consultation should look like—especially at the advanced levels have often been learned informally rather than articulated clearly.

Most EMDR consultants did not learn how to consult from a guidebook. They learned through their experiences of doing, observing, adapting and discovering, often through trial and error. As the EMDR community grows, so does the need for shared language and clearer expectations around consulting.

This article will describe the updating of the *EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards*, the general

process, and how they embody our emphasis on a developmental approach (being better tomorrow than we are today) and the pillars who identify our community: pursuing excellence, building community, opening pathways and expanding understandings.

EMDRIA™ developed the updated *Approved Consultant™ Standards* with intentional inclusion of the EMDR community creating a practical framework that reflects both the responsibility and the relational nature of consultation. Rather than redefining consultation, these standards name and structure what skilled consultants are already doing. The standards clarify the purpose and scope of EMDR consultation outlining expectations for both consultants and consultee. They emphasize reflective and deliberative practice, ethical responsibility and trauma-informed relationships that foster safety, growth and professional identity.

How the Standards Were Updated

Updates to the *EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards* are part of a multi-year collaborative approach grounded in the EMDR Community input through evidence-based surveys, focus groups and a review of relevant literature. They received input from consultants, consultants in training (CIT), EMDRIA™ staff and the Board of Directors to create standards that are more than just theoretical. They reflect real-world practice within ethical considerations and with strong educational principles. The goal of these updates is about strengthening the foundation that supports EMDR consultation.

From 2022-2025, a series of surveys were sent out to consultants and CITs that helped identify common consultant practices, challenges and strengths within consultation. These surveys highlighted the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are most valued in effective consultants. They provided a clearer picture as to how EMDR consultation is being delivered in the field.

Additionally, more than 100 consultants and CITs participated in listening sessions with EMDRIA™ staff. These focus groups provided rich insights bringing nuances to survey data in terms of what works in consultation, where consultants and CITs face challenges and what supports a consultant's professional growth. These contributions helped ensure the standards reflect not just trends but lived experiences.

A comprehensive review of literature was also conducted to examine various models of consultation, inclusive, developmental and competency-based supervision, as well as adult learning theories used in mental health. This review helped ensure that the standards support

consultation as a meaningful learning process. One that is engaging, relevant and responsive to the diverse needs of consultees, their clients and their different practice settings.



The dynamic approach of the shifting roles of consultants ensures that consultation is responsive, client-centered, and consultee-centered as well as tailored to foster both professional growth and high-quality clinical care.

Goal of the Update

The goal of this update was to promote greater consistency in the consultation experience, and better support consultants working across diverse clinical settings and contexts. They describe the roles of an EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ as an educator, motivator and evaluator. They clarify important distinctions between consultation and supervision and provide a shared framework to guide the ongoing development, implementation and refinement of EMDR consultation practices across the community.

Clinical and Instructional Focus

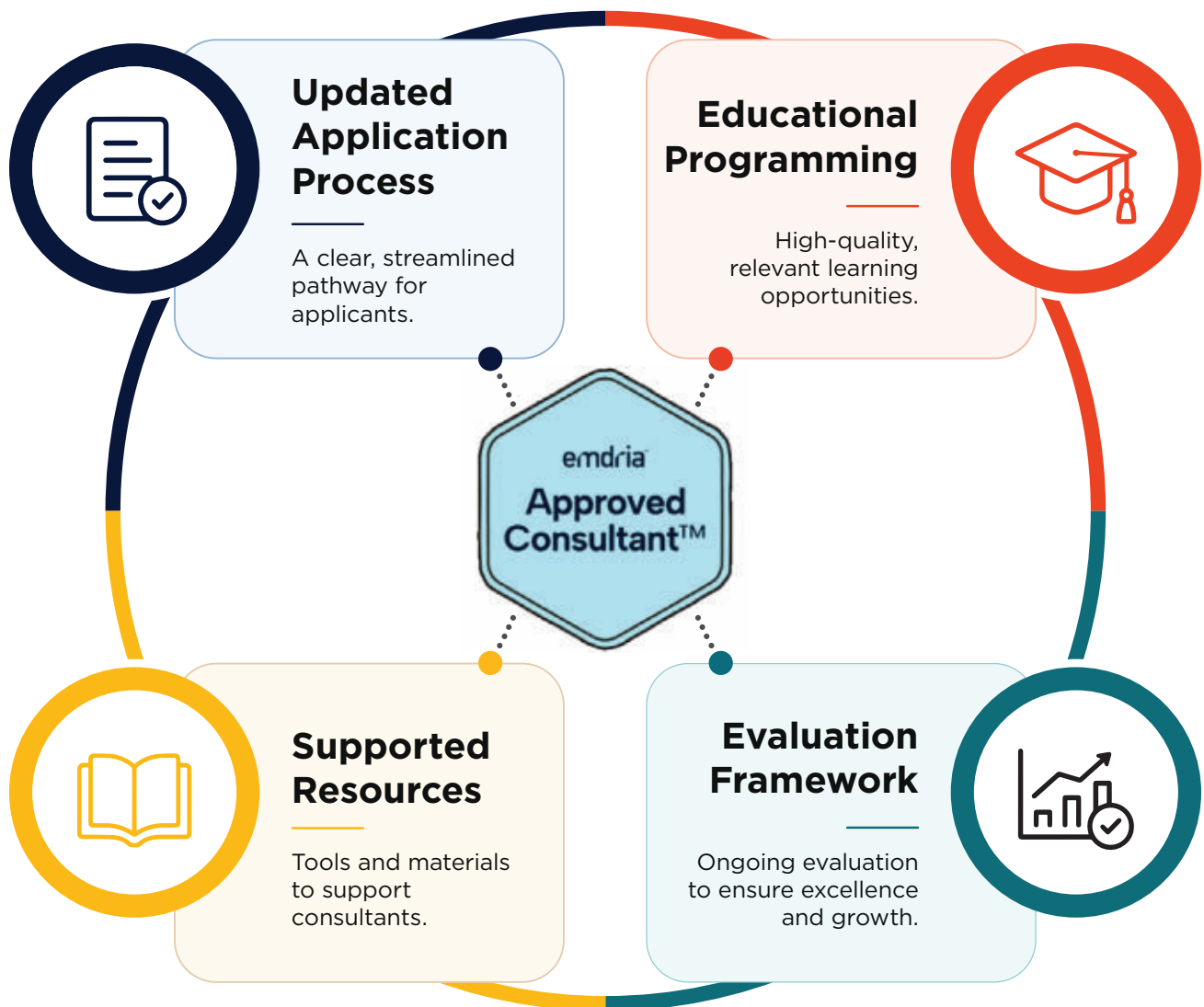
As EMDR therapists develop their professional journey, they choose to focus on different paths. One path is more clinical and focuses on

deepening direct client work with different populations and settings. In this clinical focus, therapists move toward certification, refining therapeutic knowledge and skills, focusing on hands-on experience, case conceptualization and mastery of EMDR treatment to provide the highest level of clinical care.

After becoming certified, some EMDR therapists may decide to focus on an instructional path by working toward the EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ credential. This path involves expanding their roles beyond individual client work to teaching, consulting and supporting other clinicians in their growth and development.

The focus of this instructional path is fostering leadership in the EMDR community, helping shape professional standards and advancing the practice of EMDR through teaching and consultation. Both paths are complementary and essential to the growth and sustainability of EMDR therapy.

EMDRIA Approved Consultants™ play a vital role in supporting the ongoing development and effectiveness of EMDR therapists. Consultants provide guidance, mentorship and oversight to fellow therapists. They help refine their skills, navigate complex cases, and adhere to ethical and professional standards. Their role encompasses a range of responsibilities, from offering individual or group consultation to contributing to professional education and training programs. By



bridging clinical practice and education, consultants ensure that therapists are well-equipped to deliver safe, effective and trauma-informed care, while also fostering the growth and integrity of the broader EMDR community. (*EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards*, 2026).

Key Updates to the Standards

EMDR consultation is a distinct professional practice that has both facilitative and evaluative components in a collaborative relationship

(Falender, C.A., & Shafranske, E.P., 2004). The goal of EMDR consultation is to help clinicians enhance their professional competencies and ensure their practice aligns with established best practices.

EMDR consultation is essential for ensuring the effectiveness and integrity of EMDR therapy. Through consultation, EMDR therapists receive support and feedback from experienced consultants to enhance knowledge, skills and attitudes.

There are four key updates to the *EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards* which include:

- ① Updated application process
- ② Educational programming
- ③ Evaluation framework
- ④ Supported resources.

Updated Application Process

EMDRIA™ has revised the initial application requirements to better reflect the competencies expected of EMDRIA Approved Consultants.™ These updates are designed to

streamline the process, clarify expectations and promote a more meaningful and structured pathway from CIT to consultant.

Educational Programming

Outside of the Consultant Day events, additional educational programming in the form of interactive courses have been created to deepen consultant clinical expertise and strengthen their capacity in the roles of educators, motivators and evaluators in the EMDR consultation process. The first two courses “Foundations in EMDR Consultation” and “Core Competencies in EMDR Consultation” are available through EMDRIA’s™ OnDemand for consultants and CITs.

These self-paced, online courses provide a framework for developing consultant’s knowledge and skills by fostering reflective practice and enhancing the ability to assess and support consultee’s growth. More educational programming and courses will be added to continue to support the consultation process.

Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework for CITs focuses on observable evidence and uses supportive feedback to support consultee’s growth and readiness at different developmental stages.

EMDRIA™ has created an online form (the *CIT Verification, Evaluation and Recommendation (VER) Form*) to replace the traditional letter and recommendation from the EMDRIA Approved Consultant.™ The purpose of the VER form is to promote greater consistency, transparency and accountability in the evaluation of EMDRIA Approved Consultants in Training.™ While narrative letters often varied in detail and emphasis, this structured form provides a standardized way

to verify hours of consultation and assess competencies across a CIT’s knowledge, skills and attitudes attributed with consultation. This form ensures that recommendations are based on observable behaviors and clearly defined criteria based on the *EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards* rather than subjective impressions.

The VER form is specifically for CITs to become EMDRIA Approved Consultants.™ It facilitates constructive feedback and developmental guidance. It may be used as a summative or evaluative tool in the consultation process. When used as a summative tool, it helps to guide the deliberate practice of competencies as part of the consultation process and feedback loop (described further). As a required, online summative tool, the VER form documents progress, summarizes improvement and evaluates readiness for the EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ credential.

Supported Resources

As part of implementing the revised consultant standards, EMDRIA™ has developed a comprehensive set of resources designed to support consultants and consultees throughout their work. Drawn from community input, these materials translate the *EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards* into practical guidance around key expectations, competencies, and guidelines.

The variety of resources found in the EMDRIA™ Library www.emdria.org/library and in the Consultant Toolkit help provide baseline understandings and expectations to clarify the scope of the consultation process and reinforce consistent professional practice. Much like the developmental process in consultation, these resources will also continue to grow and develop to meet the ongoing needs of consultants and consultees.

What the New Standards Do Provide a Shared Language

The collaborative approach in developing the *EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards* led to establishing clear definitions and competencies for the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective consultants. These shared language and definitions help to reduce misunderstandings, misconceptions, and to stabilize misaligned expectations.

Emphasize a Developmental Approach

Central to the *EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards* is a developmental approach to consultation. One that unfolds over time and responds to each consultee’s growth through experience, reflection, feedback and deliberate practice. Consultation is not a one-and-done event. Rather, effective consultants engage in continuous, two-way learning alongside their consultees, recognizing that professional development is an evolving process throughout an entire career.

This developmental lens supports the ongoing integration of learning, self-awareness and ethical responsibility by meeting each consultee where they are and nurturing their professional growth.

Define the Roles of a Consultant

The *EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards* also define the roles of consultants. Consultants encourage and guide consultees in how to think (i.e., clinical decision-making) rather than specifically detailing what they need to do in each situation.

EMDRIA Approved Consultants™ play a critical role in supporting the professional development of clinicians while promoting ethical, effective and trauma-informed practice. Their work encompasses three interconnected roles—**Educator, Motivator,**

and Evaluator—each contributing to the growth, competence and confidence of consultees providing EMDR therapy. Together, these roles ensure that consultation is supportive, addresses each therapist’s unique needs and promotes focused and deliberate practice to developing competencies and fostering excellence in EMDR practice.

In an **Educator** role, the consultant uses adult learning theories and interactive learning practices (i.e., Socratic questioning, metaphors, modeling, role-play, simulations) to support clinical decision-making as opposed to focusing solely on errors. As an Educator, a consultant provides information and resources to support the CIT’s breadth and depth of knowledge and its application.

In the role of a **Motivator**, consultants inspire and encourage consultees to trust their clinical abilities. Motivators normalize challenges and setbacks as part of the learning process as well as recognize and affirm progress and strengths. By fostering a safe and supportive consultation environment, the consultant as Motivator supports the continued confidence and professional identity of the CIT.

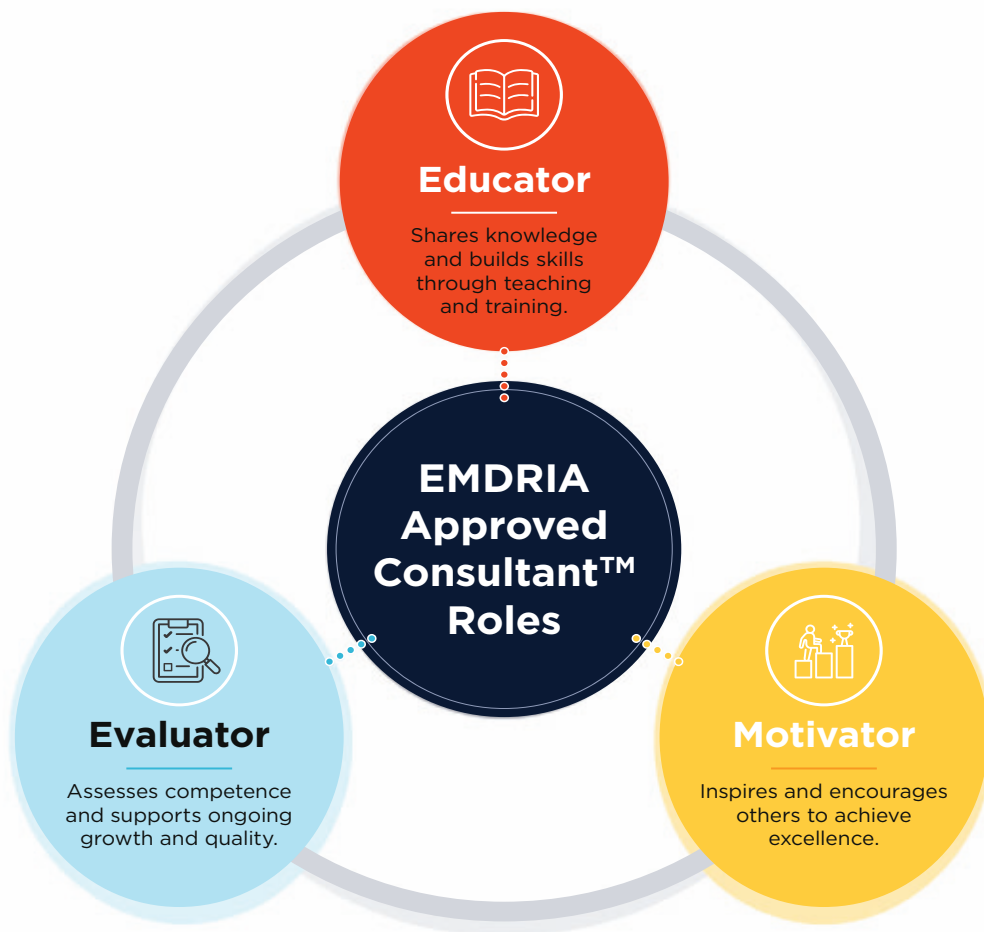
The **Evaluator** role supports accountability and assesses readiness and competence of the CIT for the EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ credential and identify areas needed for further training or information. In this role, evaluators:

- assess CIT’s case presentations for the skillful and appropriate use of EMDR and other therapeutic interventions (as applicable),
- review treatment plans and case conceptualizations
- and provide constructive feedback, highlighting strengths and areas for growth.

Consultants move fluidly through these roles rather than typically holding one role at a time, often wearing these three roles at the same time in response to the unique needs of each consultee, the specific case discussed and where the consultee is on their own professional journey.

For example, during a consultation session, a CIT presents a case in

which they paused reprocessing after the client became highly emotional and cried intensely. The consultant first responds as an Educator, using Socratic questioning to help the CIT reflect on how the Adaptive Information Processing (AIP) model conceptualizes affect during desensitization and how dual awareness may have been supported. The consultant then shifts into the role of Motivator, normalizing the CIT’s anxiety and acknowledging that many developing clinicians experience uncertainty when clients become highly activated during processing. Finally, the consultant moves into the role of Evaluator by assessing the CIT’s clinical reasoning, reviewing their readiness assessment and treatment



planning, and identifying specific areas for continued growth and focused practice. Throughout the conversation, the consultant fluidly moves among these roles in response to the CIT's developmental needs and the clinical material being discussed.

The dynamic approach of the shifting roles of consultants ensures that consultation is responsive, client-centered, and consultee-centered as well as tailored to foster both professional growth and high-quality clinical care.

Clarify Expectations and Responsibilities

The updated *EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards* clarify expectations and responsibilities for consultants and consultees at every consultation point (e.g., Foundational (Basic Training), Certification, CIT), toward the development of a supportive learning environment where clinicians and CITs can reflect and grow.

Clarifying the expectations and responsibilities for consultants and consultees in various types of consultation settings helps reduce 'guessing games' and support clearer communication. The standards provide a framework for specific feedback, documentation and evaluation.

Since the consultation picture differs across developmental stages in the consultee's professional journey, the expectations and responsibilities for both the consultee and consultant flex across the various roles and clinician's readiness.

During foundational consultation (EMDR basic training consultation), consultants focus on providing support for integrating and applying core EMDR skills and procedures. During this stage, consultants primarily function in the roles of Educator and Motivator, serving as guides and stabilizers, establishing safety, developing

confidence and integrating EMDR as a foundational clinical framework.

In consultation leading to EMDRIA Certified Therapist™ status, the focus shifts toward deepening clinical decision-making, AIP-informed case conceptualization, treatment planning and the ethical application and adaptations of EMDR therapy across diverse client presentations. At this stage, consultants increasingly balance the roles of educator, motivator and evaluator to support the clinician's growing competence and flexibility within the EMDR model.

Finally, during consultant-in-training consultation (consultation of consultation), consultants fluidly balance the roles of Educator, Motivator and Evaluator to support the CIT's development as a future consultant. This includes strengthening consultation skills, adult learning strategies, reflective practice, evaluative abilities and the development of a professional consultant's identity and leadership role within the EMDR community.

For example, an EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ may reflect on how their consultation approach changes across developmental stages. During foundational consultation (EMDR basic training consultation), they may focus on creating safety, normalizing anxiety, and helping therapists remember foundational procedures through modeling, repetition and simple Socratic questioning. As consultees move toward certification, the consultant may shift toward deeper discussions of AIP-informed case conceptualization, treatment planning and clinical flexibility, encouraging reflective practice and collaborative problem-solving rather than relying solely on protocol recall.

Later, in consultation of consultation with a CIT, the consultant may intentionally model adult learning strategies by inviting the CIT to

analyze their own consultation process, reflect on feedback style and consider how different consultees learn best. The consultant may use role-play, guided reflection, case-based dialogue and Socratic dialogue to help the CIT move beyond "telling" and toward facilitating learning, autonomy and professional identity development in others.

As clinicians progress through different stages of their professional journey, the focus of consultation naturally evolves, from building foundational confidence and procedural understanding, to deepening clinical judgment and case conceptualization and eventually to developing the ability to teach, mentor and evaluate others. This developmental progression is part of what makes the role of an EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ both meaningful and fulfilling.

Consultants have the opportunity not only to support the growth of EMDR therapists across stages of learning, but also to contribute to the continued strength, integrity and future of the EMDR community through reflective, collaborative and transformative consultation practices.

What Effective EMDRIA Approved Consultants™ Know and Do: Core Competencies

The updated *EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards* establish a set of core competencies that integrate knowledge, skills, attitudes and reflective capacities that enable consultants to provide effective, ethical and culturally responsive consultation to address diverse consultee needs. Since the competencies reflect a developmental approach, it is possible that a consultee may demonstrate higher proficiency in some areas while continuing to grow in others.

Competencies that surround and are foundational to all other

consultant competencies are Therapeutic/Consultation Alliance as well as Cultural Humility, Ethics and Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access (IDEA). These specific competencies are general and yet also support the adaptation of EMDR to specific populations as well as clinicians and CIT's situations.

Therapeutic/Consultation Alliance

The consultation alliance parallels the therapeutic alliance in that both are grounded in trust, collaboration and a shared commitment to growth and effective outcomes. Just as the therapeutic relationship supports a client's healing through safety, attunement and clear goals, the consultation relationship supports the clinician's development through mutual respect, open dialogue and intentional guidance. In both contexts, the quality of the relationship influences the depth of engagement, the integration of feedback and the overall effectiveness of the work.

Cultural Humility, Ethics and Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access (IDEA)

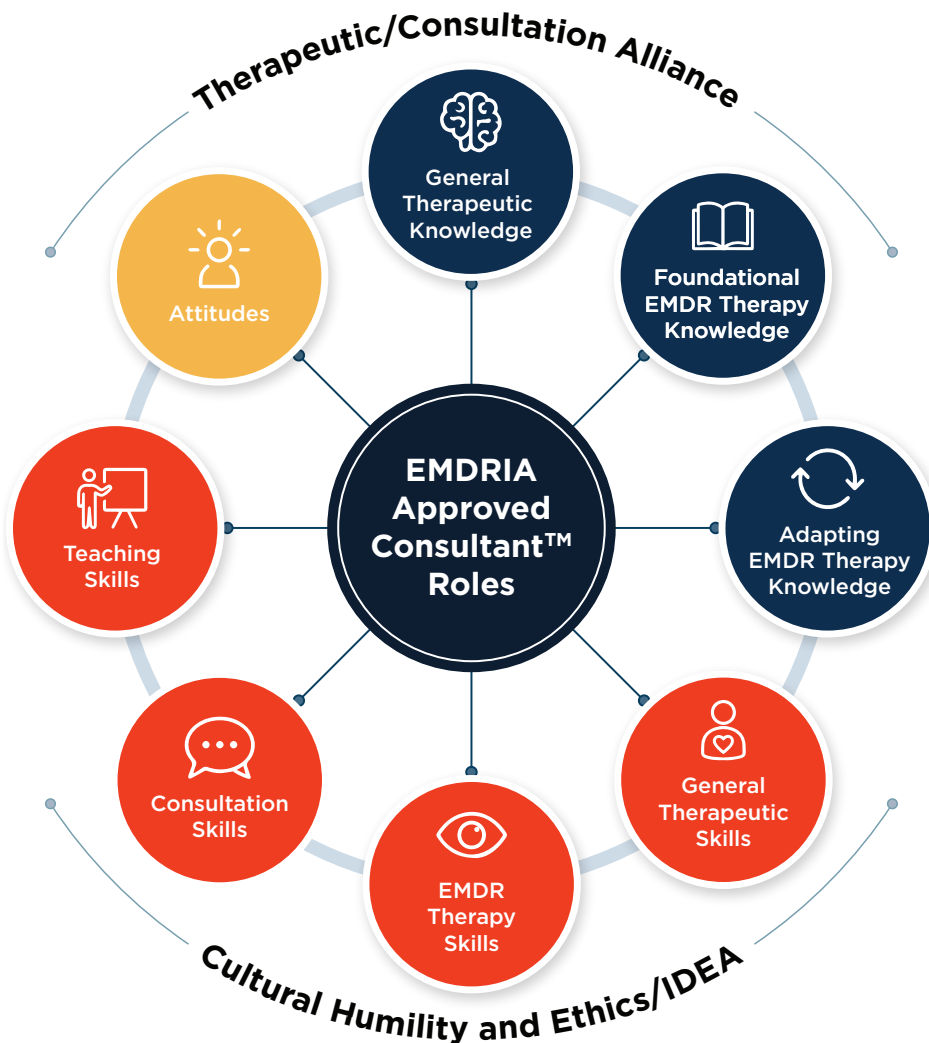
Cultural humility and ethics are essential in the EMDR consultation process. As one of EMDRIA's foundational pillars, these also surround and are foundational to the consultant standards. Consultants model the same sensitivity clinicians are called to bring to their clients. Humility means acknowledging that learning is ongoing and that no one person holds all the answers. When power, difference and context are actively named and addressed (instead of avoided) these conversations deepen trust rather than derail consultation. This mindset

not only strengthens the consultation relationship but also supports ethical, culturally responsive EMDR practice that better supports and serves diverse clients and consultees. These key elements aren't add-ons; they are foundational to support effective consultation.

For example, during a certification consultation session, a consultee presents a case involving a client from a cultural background different from their own. The consultee expresses uncertainty about whether they should ask the client how experiences of discrimination and cultural identity may relate to the client's symptoms and treatment goals.

Rather than immediately telling the consultee what to do, the consultant first focuses on strengthening the consultation alliance by creating a respectful, collaborative space for reflection and curiosity.

The consultant then invites the consultee to explore their own assumptions, comfort level, and concerns through Socratic dialogue: "What makes this conversation feel difficult to approach?" and "How might discussing these experiences support your AIP-informed case conceptualization?" Through the discussion, the consultant models cultural humility by acknowledging that these conversations require ongoing learning, openness



and responsiveness to each client's context rather than relying on rigid or formulaic responses.

At the same time, the consultant maintains an ethical and evaluative role by helping the consultee consider how cultural factors, systemic stressors and the therapeutic relationship may influence readiness, safety and treatment planning. In this way, the consultant integrates relationship, reflection, ethics and cultural responsiveness into the consultation process rather than treating them as separate or secondary skills.

Knowledge: Understanding and Knowledge (“Consultants help clinicians think through cases, not just fix them.”).

Effective EMDR consultation is grounded in a strong knowledge in three areas: general therapeutic knowledge, foundational EMDR therapy knowledge and ways to adapt EMDR therapy to different populations and settings.

Consultants bring a therapeutic understanding of mental health diagnoses, trauma-informed principles and dissociation to help clinicians with accurate case conceptualization and treatment options. Consultants also have knowledge to recognize when specialized intervention or referral is needed. Grounded in the AIP model, consultants understand EMDR therapy as a comprehensive clinical framework and support clinicians with cultural humility in applying the Three-Pronged Approach and Eight Phases with fidelity and flexibility. Drawing on current research and experience with complex and diverse client presentations, consultants guide thoughtful adaptation and integration of EMDR therapy without compromising the model's integrity. They support consultees to identify and correct common missteps.

For example, during a certification consultation session, a consultee presents a client with a complex trauma history who becomes emotionally flooded during desensitization and frequently shifts into distraction and talks about other topics and family members issues. The consultant helps the clinician step back and reconsider the case through an AIP-informed lens, exploring whether the client has sufficient preparation, stabilization and dual awareness for reprocessing at this stage. Together (consultant and



Ethical EMDR consultation integrates a combination of therapeutic, clinical, consultation and teaching skills to support developmentally attuned practice.

consultee), review attachment history, current stressors and cultural context, discuss how protective responses may be influencing treatment pacing and brainstorm possible interventions to support this client.

Consultation promotes discussion of ways to adapt EMDR therapy while maintaining fidelity to the model, such as shortening or extending sets of bilateral stimulation, strengthening resourcing strategies and using more structured interweaves to support present orientation. Throughout the discussion, the consultant models how EMDR can be applied flexibly without abandoning its foundational principles. The process helps the consultee identify common missteps, such as moving too quickly or taking too much time to begin trauma processing. In doing so, the consultant integrates general

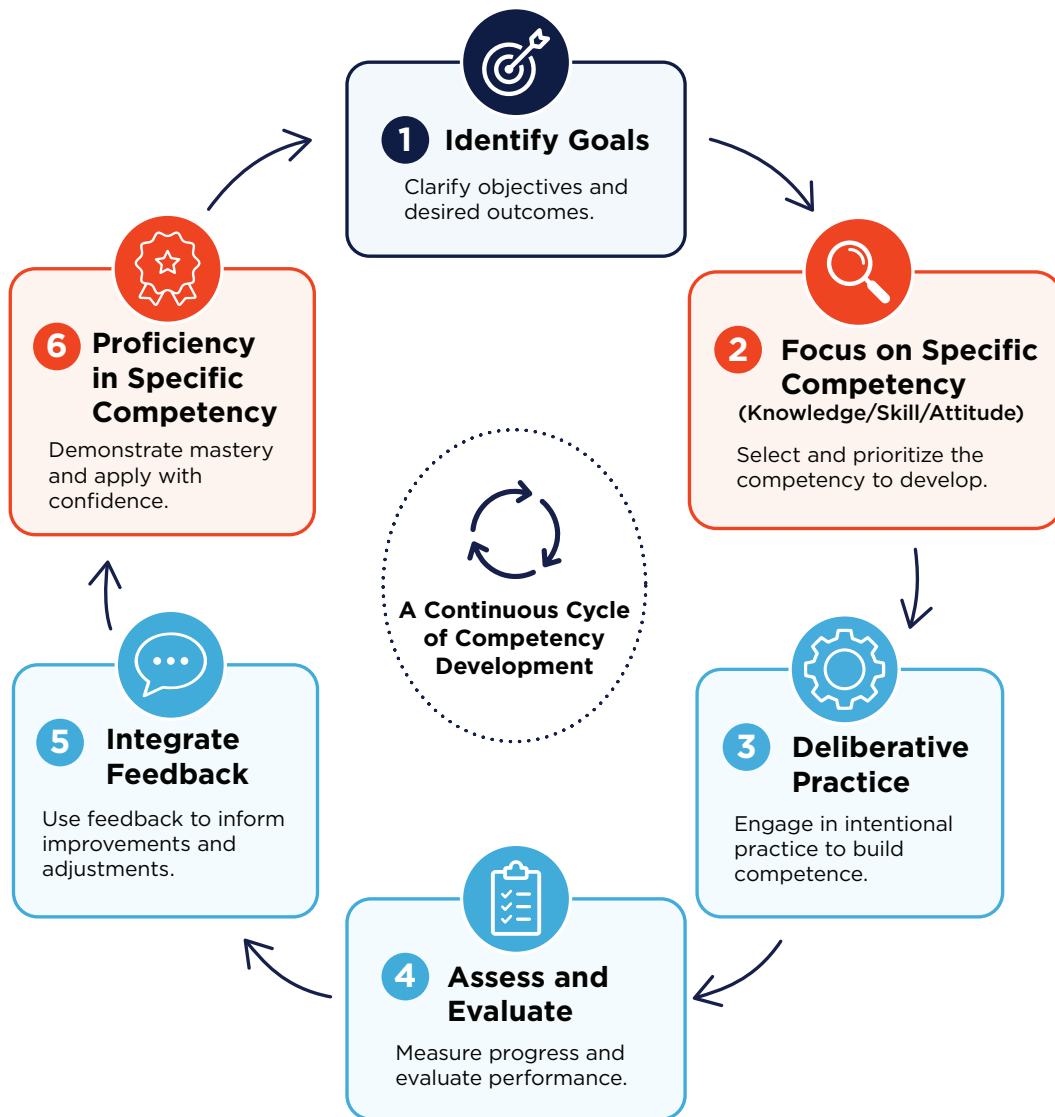
therapeutic knowledge, foundational EMDR understanding, and thoughtful adaptation to support safe, ethical and responsive clinical practice.

Skills: Actions, Behaviors, and Abilities (“Practice Shapes Competency”)

Along with a strong knowledge base, the application of consultation is found in observable skills. Ethical EMDR consultation integrates a combination of therapeutic, clinical, consultation and teaching skills to support developmentally attuned practice. Consultants support accurate and flexible application of EMDR therapy by helping consultees integrate their therapeutic knowledge of all aspects of the EMDR protocol, AIP model and Three-Pronged Approach with clinical judgment. Skilled consultants maintain clear professional boundaries, adhere to ethical and EMDRIA™ standards and provide developmentally responsive support across individual and group consultation contexts. Through inclusive, trauma-informed teaching practices, consultants foster reflective learning, encourage skill development and evaluate EMDR competence that supports two-way learning for both the consultee and consultant.

For example, during a group consultation session, a consultee presents a case in which they felt uncertain about whether to continue reprocessing after a client reports some nightmares. Rather than immediately correcting or directing the clinician, the consultant first invites reflection by asking how the consultee conceptualizes the nightmares within the AIP model and what interventions can support dual awareness in the moment to moment of the session. The consultant then uses the discussion with the group members to review relevant EMDR principles, normalize the complexity of these moments, and guides the

Deliberate practice involves an intentional effort to strengthen learning goals through repetition, focused attention and reflection.



“Better tomorrow than we are today” reflects developmental growth, not perfection

group in exploring multiple clinically appropriate responses.

As consultation develops, the consultant balances teaching and evaluative skills by modeling respectful feedback, maintaining a supportive learning environment and identifying both strengths and areas of growth in the consultee’s clinical reasoning. The consultant also encourages the group to consider how cultural

context, therapist anxiety, and the therapeutic relationship may influence decision-making during reprocessing. Throughout the discussion, the consultant supports reflective learning while maintaining fidelity to EMDR principles and framework, demonstrating how consultation skills extend beyond teaching protocol steps to fostering thoughtful, ethical

and developmentally responsive EMDR practice.

Attitudes: Sense of Self and Others (“Competence isn’t just technical—it’s relational”)

Intrapersonal and interpersonal attitudes and dispositions form the relational foundation of effective EMDR consultation, shaping not only how consultants relate to themselves

but to their consultees as well. Grounded in self-awareness, consultants recognize their limits, manage personal reactions and biases and remain attentive to cultural context. They model supportive dispositions affirming a respectful and empathetic engagement and professionalism. Effective consultants demonstrate a willingness to learn by staying updated on standards of care, available resources and current EMDR research. They are collaborative and seek active feedback from peers to model ongoing professional development. Together, these enduring attitudes support reflective practice and continual growth over time.

For example, during a consultation session, a consultee shares feeling ashamed after a difficult reprocessing session in which they felt triggered by the client's responses between sets of bilateral stimulation. Rather than responding with criticism or immediately focusing on protocol correction, the consultant first acknowledges the consultee's feelings, normalizes challenging moments and discusses ways to cope with the therapist's triggers during session. The consultant reflects on their early experiences as a developing EMDR clinician and invites collaborative reflection on what may have helped when the client's reactions or trauma feels close to the therapist experience. Throughout the conversation, the consultant models humility, empathy, professionalism and openness to learning while maintaining fidelity to EMDR principles and supporting the consultee's continued growth and confidence.

How the Standards Support Real Consultation Practice

The updated *EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards* are more than just for credentialing purposes and accounting of hours. These standards

approach consultation as a developmental process that includes providing appropriate, supportive feedback so that a consultee may participate in focused practice to grow their knowledge, skills and/or attitudes over the course of their professional career.

The consultation practice should begin with a collaborative process between the consultee and consultant in identifying and setting clear, measurable goals that incorporate cultural humility and IDEA as their foundation. The focus of these learning goals should specifically be tied to EMDR knowledge, skills and/or attitudes of competencies and should reflect the developmental needs of the consultee.

Knowledge and experience alone are not enough. Consultees should apply what they know and learned with deliberative practice, an intentional effort to strengthen goal areas through repetition, focused attention, practice and reflection.

Deliberate practice, the consultee's self-assessment and the evaluation and support of the consultant provide awareness and feedback for the professional growth of the consultee.

Transforming consultant feedback into a concrete plan for practice is part of a feedback loop (see graphic on the previous page). Consultants support CITs in clarifying, integrating and applying feedback to strengthen proficiency in their identified learning goals and continue developing toward greater competence over time. At the same time, CITs actively engage in reflective practice, deliberate application of feedback and ongoing dialogue about their developmental needs and progress. This collaborative process is regularly reviewed throughout the consultation relationship and modified as needed to respond to the unique strengths, challenges and developmental needs of each consultee.

Inviting Growth

The *EMDRIA Approved Consultant™ Standards* are an invitation for consultees and consultants alike to reflect, engage and grow.

As stewards of the EMDR community, these revised standards do not ask consultants to become something different. Rather, they provide shared language, emphasize a developmental framework, define roles for consultants, clarify expectations and responsibilities, and describe core competences of practice (knowledge, skills and attitudes) for the effective, ethical and reflective consultation. Grounded in collaboration, cultural humility and lifelong learning, the standards recognize consultation as more than a credentialing requirement. EMDR consultation is a meaningful professional relationship that shapes clinicians, strengthens the integrity of EMDR practice and supports the continued growth of the EMDR community. ●

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