

# College of Psychologists

O F B R I T I S H C O L U M B I A

Ethical Standards of Psychologists (1985)

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Standards for Providers  
of Psychological Services (November 1978)

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## Ethical Standards & Standards for Providers

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## Ethical Standards & Standards for Providers

### Ethical Standards of Psychologists (1985)

#### Preamble

Psychologists respect the dignity and worth of the individual and strive for the preservation and protection of fundamental human rights. They are committed to increasing knowledge of human behaviour and of people's understanding of themselves and others and to the utilization of such knowledge for the promotion of human welfare. While pursuing these objectives, they make every effort to protect the welfare of those who seek their services and of the research participants who may be the object of study. They use their skills only for purposes consistent with these values and do not knowingly permit their misuse by others. While demanding for themselves freedom of inquiry and communication, psychologists accept the responsibility this freedom requires: competence, objectivity in the application of skills, and concern for the best interests of clients, colleagues, students, research participants, and society at large. In the pursuit of these ideals, psychologists subscribe to principles in the following areas:

1. Responsibility,
2. Competence,
3. Moral and Legal Standards,
4. Public Statements,
5. Confidentiality,
6. Welfare of the Consumer,
7. Professional Relationships,
8. Assessment Techniques,
9. Research with Human Participants, and
10. Care and Use of Animals.

Acceptance of Membership in the College of Psychologists of British Columbia commits the member to adherence to these principles.

Psychologists cooperate with the Professional Standards Committee of the College of Psychologists of British Columbia by responding to inquiries promptly and completely.

#### Principle 1: Responsibility

In providing services, psychologists maintain the highest standards of their profession. They accept responsibility for the consequences of their acts and make every effort to ensure that their services are used appropriately.

- 1.a As scientists, psychologists accept responsibility for the selection of their research topics and the methods used in investigation, analysis, and reporting. They plan their research to minimize the possibility that their findings will be misleading. They provide thorough discussion of the limitations of their data, especially where their work touches on social policy or might be construed to the detriment of persons in specific age, sex, ethnic, socioeconomic, or other social groups. In publishing reports of their work, they never suppress data which do not confirm their hypotheses, and they acknowledge the existence of alternative hypotheses and explanations for their findings. Psychologists take credit only for work they have actually done.
- 1.b Psychologists clarify in advance with all appropriate persons and agencies the expectations for sharing and utilizing research data. They avoid relationships that may limit their objectivity or create a conflict of interest. Interference with the milieu in which data are collected is kept to a minimum.
- 1.c Psychologists have the responsibility to attempt to prevent distortion, misuse, or suppression of psychological findings by the institution or agency of which they are employees.
- 1.d As members of governmental or other organizational bodies, psychologists remain accountable as individuals to the highest standards of their profession.
- 1.e As teachers, psychologists recognize that their primary obligation is to help others acquire knowledge and skill. They maintain high standards of scholarship by presenting psychological information objectively, fully and accurately.
- 1.f As practitioners, psychologists know that they bear a heavy social responsibility because their recommendations and professional actions may alter the lives of others. They are alert to personal, social, organizational, financial or political situations and pressures that might lead to misuse of their influence.
- 1.g Psychologists provide adequate and timely evaluations to employees, trainees, students and others whose work they supervise.

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### Principle 2: Competence

The maintenance of high standards of competence is a responsibility shared by all psychologists in the interest of the public and the profession as a whole. Psychologists recognize the boundaries of their competence and the limitations of their techniques. They only provide services and only use techniques for which they are qualified. In those areas in which recognized standards do not yet exist, psychologists take whatever precautions are necessary to protect the welfare of their clients. They maintain knowledge of current scientific and professional information related to the services they render.

- 2.a Psychologists accurately represent their competence, education, training and experience. They claim as evidence of educational qualifications only those degrees obtained from institutions acceptable under the Psychologists Act, Bylaws and rules of the College of Psychologists of British Columbia.
- 2.b As teachers, psychologists perform their duties on the basis of careful preparation so that their instruction is accurate, current and scholarly.
- 2.c Psychologists recognize the need for continuing education and are open to new procedures and changes in expectations and values over time.
- 2.d Psychologists recognize differences among people, such as those that may be associated with age, sex, socio-economic, and ethnic backgrounds. When necessary, they obtain training, experience, or counsel to assure competent service or research relating to such persons.
- 2.e Psychologists responsible for decisions involving individuals or policies based on test results have an understanding of psychological or educational measurement, validation problems and test research.
- 2.f Psychologists recognize that personal problems and conflicts may interfere with professional effectiveness. Accordingly, they refrain from undertaking any activity in which their personal problems are likely to lead to inadequate performance or harm to a client, colleague student or research participant. If engaged in such activity when they become aware of their personal problems, they seek competent professional assistance to determine whether they should suspend, terminate, or limit the scope of their professional and/or scientific activities.

### Principle 3: Moral and Legal Standards

Psychologists' moral and ethical standards of behaviour are a personal matter to the same degree as they are for any other citizen, except as these may compromise the fulfilment of their professional responsibilities or reduce the public trust in psychology and psychologists. Regarding their own behaviour, psychologists are sensitive to prevailing community standards and to the possible impact that conformity to or deviation from these standards may have upon the quality of their performance as psychologists. Psychologists are also aware of the possible impact of their public behaviour upon the ability of colleagues to perform their professional duties.

- 3.a As teachers, psychologists are aware of the fact that their personal values may affect the selection and presentation of instructional materials. When dealing with topics that may give offense, they recognize and respect the diverse attitudes that students may have toward such material.
- 3.b As employees or employers, psychologists do not engage in or condone practices that are inhumane or that result in illegal or unjustifiable actions. Such practices include but are not limited to those based on considerations of race, handicap, age, gender, sexual preference, or religion in hiring, promotion, or training.
- 3.c In their professional roles, psychologists avoid any action that will violate or diminish the legal and civil rights of clients or of others who may be affected by their actions.
- 3.d As practitioners and researchers, psychologists act in accord with College standards and guidelines related to practice and to the conduct of research with human beings and animals. In the ordinary course of events psychologists adhere to relevant governmental laws and institutional regulations. When federal, state, provincial, organizational, or institutional laws, regulations, or practices are in conflict with College standards and guidelines, psychologists, make known their commitment to College standards and guidelines and, wherever possible, work toward a resolution of the conflict. Both practitioners and researchers are concerned with the development of such legal and quasi-legal regulations as best serve the public interest, and they work toward changing existing regulations that are not beneficial to the public interest.

### Principle 4: Public Statements

Public statements, announcements of services, advertising, and promotional activities of psychologists serve the purpose of helping the public make informed judgments and choices. Psychologists represent accurately and objectively their professional qualifications, affiliations, and functions, as well as those of the institutions or organizations with which they or the statements may be associated. In public statements providing psychological information or professional opinions, or providing information about the availability of psychological products, publications, and services, psychologists base their statements on scientifically acceptable psychological findings and techniques with full recognition of the limits and uncertainties of such evidence.

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- 4.a When announcing or advertising professional services, psychologists may list the following information to describe the provider and services provided: name; highest relevant academic degree earned from a regionally accredited institution; date type and level of certification or licensure; diplomate status; C.P.B.C. membership; address; telephone number; office hours; a brief listing of the type of psychological services offered; an appropriate presentation of fee information; foreign languages spoken; and policy with regard to third party payments. Additional relevant or important consumer information may be included if not prohibited by other sections of these Ethical Principles.
- 4.b In announcing or advertising the availability of psychological products, publications or services, psychologists do not present their affiliation with any organization in a manner that falsely implies sponsorship or certification by that organization. In particular and for example, psychologists do not state C.P.B.C. membership status in a way to suggest that such status implies specialized professional competence or qualifications. Public statements include, but are not limited to, communication by means of periodical, book, list, directory, television, radio, or motion picture. They do not contain: (i) a false, fraudulent, misleading, deceptive, or unfair statement; (ii) a misinterpretation of fact or a statement likely to mislead or deceive because in context it makes only a partial disclosure of relevant facts; (iii) a testimonial from a client regarding the quality of a psychologist's services or products; (iv) a statement intended or likely to create false or unjustified expectations of favourable results; (v) a statement implying unusual, unique, or one-of-a-kind abilities; (vi) a statement intended or likely to appeal to a client's fears, anxieties, or emotions concerning the possible results of failure to obtain the offered services; (vii) a statement concerning the comparative desirability of offered services. Psychologists do not seek out or otherwise approach a possible client offering professional services in person, by phone, or through the mail.
- 4.c Psychologists do not compensate or give anything of value to a representative of the press, radio, television, or other communication medium in anticipation of or in return for professional publicity in a news item. A paid advertisement must be identified as such, unless it is apparent from the context that it is a paid advertisement. If communicated to the public by use of radio or television, an advertisement is prerecorded and approved for broadcast by the psychologist, and a recording of the actual transmission is retained by the psychologist.
- 4.d Announcements or advertisements of "personal growth groups", clinics, and agencies give a clear statement of purpose and a clear description of the experiences to be provided. The education, training, and experience of the staff members are appropriately specified.
- 4.e Psychologists associated with the development or promotion of psychological devices, books, or other products offered for commercial sale make reasonable efforts to ensure that announcements and advertisements are presented in a professional, scientifically acceptable, and factually informative manner.
- 4.f Psychologists do not participate for personal gain in commercial announcements or advertisements endorsing and/or recommending to the public the purchase or use of proprietary or single-source products or services when that participation is based upon their identification as psychologists.
- 4.g Psychologists present the science of psychology and offer their services, products, and publications fairly and accurately, avoiding misrepresentation through sensationalism, exaggeration, or superficiality. Psychologists are guided by the primary obligation to aid the public in developing informed judgments, opinions, and choices.
- 4.h As teachers, psychologists ensure that statements in catalogues and course outlines are accurate and not misleading, particularly in terms of subject matter to be covered, bases for evaluating progress, and the nature of course experiences. Announcements, brochures, or advertisements describing workshops, seminars, or other educational programs accurately describe the audience for which the program is intended as well as eligibility requirements, educational objectives, and nature of the materials to be covered. These announcements also accurately represent the education, training, and experience of the psychologists presenting the programs and any fees involved.
- 4.i Public announcements or advertisements soliciting research participants in which clinical services or other professional services are offered as an inducement make clear the nature of the services as well as the costs and other obligations to be accepted by participants in the research.
- 4.j A psychologist accepts the obligation to correct others who represent the psychologist's professional qualifications, or associations with products or services, in a manner incompatible with these guidelines.
- 4.k Individual diagnostic and therapeutic services are provided only in the context of a professional psychological relationship. When personal advice is given by means of public lectures or demonstrations, newspaper or magazine articles, radio or television programs, mail, or similar media, the psychologist utilizes the most current relevant data and exercises the highest level of professional judgment.
- 4.l Products that are described or presented by means of public lectures or demonstrations, newspaper or magazine articles, radio or television programs, or similar media meet the same recognized standards as exist for products used in the context of a professional relationship.

### Principle 5: Confidentiality

Psychologists have a primary obligation to respect the confidentiality of information obtained from persons in the course of

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their work as psychologists. They reveal such information to others only with the consent of the person or the person's legal representative, except in those unusual circumstances in which not to do so would result in clear danger to the person or to others. Where appropriate psychologists inform their clients of the legal limits of confidentiality.

- 5.a Information obtained in clinical or consulting relationships, or evaluative data concerning children, students, employees, and others is discussed only for professional purposes and only with persons clearly concerned with the case. Written and oral reports present only data pertinent to the purposes of the evaluation, and every effort is made to avoid undue invasion of privacy.
- 5.b Psychologists who present personal information obtained during the course of professional work in writings, lectures, or other public forums, either obtain adequate prior consent to do so or adequately disguise all identifying information.
- 5.c Psychologists make provisions for maintaining confidentiality in the storage and disposal of records.
- 5.d When working with minors or other persons who are unable to give voluntary, informed consent, psychologists take special care to protect the best interests of these persons in accordance with relevant federal and provincial legislation.

### Principle 6: Welfare of the Consumer

Psychologists respect the integrity and protect the welfare of the people and groups with whom they work. When conflicts of interest arise between clients and psychologists' employing institutions, psychologists clarify the nature and direction of their loyalties and responsibilities and keep all parties informed of their commitments. Psychologists fully inform consumers as to the purpose and nature of an evaluative, treatment, educational, or training procedure, and they freely acknowledge that clients, students, or participants in research have freedom of choice with regard to participation.

- 6.a Psychologists are continually cognizant of their own needs and of their potentially influential position with relation to persons such as clients, students, and subordinates. They avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of such persons. Psychologists make every effort to avoid dual relationships that could impair their professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation. Examples of such dual relationships include, but are not limited to, research with and/or treatment of employees, students, persons under supervision, close friends, or relatives. Sexual intimacies with clients are unethical.
- 6.b When acting as a supervisor, trainer, researcher, or employer, psychologists accord informed choice, due process, and protection from physical and mental harm in their relationships.
- 6.c When a psychologist agrees to provide services to a client at the request of a third party, the psychologist assumes the responsibility of clarifying the nature of the relationships to all parties concerned.
- 6.d Where the demands of an organization require psychologists to violate these Ethical Principles, psychologists clarify the nature of the conflict between the demands and these principles. They inform all parties of psychologists' ethical responsibilities and take appropriate action.
- 6.e Psychologists make advance financial arrangements that safeguard the best interests of and are clearly understood by their clients. Psychologists are responsible for assisting clients in finding needed services in those instances where payment of the usual fee would be a hardship. They neither give nor receive any remuneration for referring clients for professional services. They contribute a portion of their services to work for which they receive little or no financial return.
- 6.f Psychologists terminate a clinical or consulting relationship when it is reasonably clear that the consumer is not benefiting from it. Psychologists who find that their services are being used by employers in a way that is not beneficial to the participants or to employees who may be affected or to significant others, have the responsibility to make their observations known to the responsible persons and to propose modification or termination of the engagement. They offer to help the consumer locate alternative sources of assistance.

### Principle 7: Professional Relationships

Psychologists act with due regard for the needs, special competencies, and obligations of their colleagues in psychology and other professions. They respect the prerogatives and obligations of the institutions or organizations with which these other colleagues are associated.

- 7.a Psychologists understand the areas of competence of related professions. They make full use of all the professional, technical, and administrative resources that serve the best interests of consumers. The absence of formal relationships with other professional workers does not relieve psychologists of the responsibility of securing for their clients the best possible professional services, nor does it relieve them of the obligation to exercise foresight, diligence, and tact in obtaining the complementary or alternative assistance needed by clients.
- 7.b Psychologists know and take into account the traditions and practices of other professional groups with whom they work and cooperate fully with such groups. If such a person is receiving similar services from another professional, psychologists do not offer their own services directly to such a person. If a psychologist is contacted by a person who is

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already receiving similar services from another professional, the psychologist carefully considers that professional relationship and proceeds with caution and sensitivity to the therapeutic issues as well as the client's welfare. The psychologist discusses these issues with the client so as to minimize the risk of confusion and conflict.

- 7.c Psychologists who employ or supervise other professionals or professionals in training accept the obligation to facilitate the further professional development of these individuals. They provide appropriate working conditions, timely evaluations, constructive consultation, and experience opportunities.
- 7.d Psychologists do not exploit their professional relationships with clients, persons under supervision, students, employees, or research participants sexually or otherwise. Psychologists do not condone or engage in sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as deliberate or repeated comments, gestures, or physical contacts of a sexual nature that are unwanted by the recipient.
- 7.e In conducting research in institutions or organizations, psychologists secure appropriate authorization to conduct such research. They are aware of their obligations to future research workers and ensure that host institutions receive adequate information about the research and proper acknowledgement of their contributions.
- 7.f Publication credit is assigned to those who have contributed to a publication in proportion to their professional contributions. Major contributions of a professional character made by several persons to a common project are recognized by joint authorship, with the individual who made the principal contribution listed first. Minor contributions of a professional character and extensive clerical or similar nonprofessional assistance may be acknowledged in footnotes or in an introductory statement. Acknowledgement through specific citations is made for unpublished as well as published material that has directly influenced the research or writing. Psychologists who compile and edit material of others for publication publish the material in the name of the originating group, if appropriate, with their own name appearing as chairperson or editor. All contributors are to be acknowledged and named.
- 7.g When psychologists know of an ethical violation by another psychologist, and it seems appropriate, they formally attempt to resolve the issue by bringing the behaviour to the attention of the psychologist. If the misconduct is of a minor nature and/or appears to be due to lack of sensitivity, knowledge, or experience, such an informal solution is usually appropriate. Such informal corrective efforts are made with sensitivity to any rights to confidentiality involved. If the violation does not seem amenable to an informal solution, or is of a more serious nature, psychologists bring it to the attention of the appropriate provincial committee on professional ethics.

### Principle 8: Assessment Techniques

In the development, publication, and utilization of psychological assessment techniques, psychologists make every effort to promote the welfare and best interests of the client. They guard against the misuse of assessment results. They respect the client's right to know the results, the interpretations made, and the bases for their conclusions and recommendations.

Psychologists make every effort to maintain the security of tests and other assessment techniques within limits of legal mandates. They strive to ensure the appropriate use of assessment techniques by others.

- 8.a In using assessment techniques, psychologists respect the right of clients to have full explanations of the nature and purpose of the techniques in language the clients can understand, unless an explicit exception to this right has been agreed upon in advance. When the explanations are to be provided by others, psychologists establish procedures for ensuring the adequacy of these explanations.
- 8.b Psychologists responsible for the development and standardization of psychological tests and other assessment techniques utilize established scientific procedures and observe the relevant APA standards on test use and construction: when a test is published or otherwise made available for operational use, it is accompanied by a manual (or other published or readily available information) that fully describes the development of the test, the rationale, and evidence of validity and reliability. The test manual explicitly states the purposes and applications for which the test is recommended and identifies special qualifications required to administer the test and to interpret it properly. Test manuals provide complete information regarding the characteristics of the normative population.
- 8.c In reporting assessment results, psychologists indicate any reservations that exist regarding validity or reliability because of the circumstances of the assessment or the inappropriateness of the norms for the person tested. Psychologists strive to ensure that the results of assessments and their interpretations are not misused by others.
- 8.d Psychologists recognize that assessment results may become obsolete. They make every effort to avoid and prevent the misuse of obsolete measures.
- 8.e Psychologists offering scoring and interpretation services are able to produce appropriate evidence for the validity of the programs and procedures used in arriving at interpretations. The public offering of an automated interpretation service is considered a professional-to-professional consultation. Psychologists make every effort to avoid misuse of assessment reports.
- 8.f Psychologists do not encourage or promote the use of psychological assessment techniques by inappropriately trained or otherwise unqualified persons through teaching, sponsorship, or supervision.

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### Principle 9: Research with Human Participants

The decision to undertake research rests upon a considered judgment by the individual psychologist about how best to contribute to psychological science and human welfare. Having made the decision to conduct research, the psychologist considers alternative methods of conducting the research. On the basis of this consideration, the psychologist carries out the investigation with respect and concern for the dignity and welfare of the people who participate and with cognizance of federal and provincial regulations and professional standards governing the conduct of research with human participants.

- 9.a In planning a study, the investigator has the responsibility to make a careful evaluation of its ethical acceptability. To the extent that the weighing of scientific and human values suggests a compromise of any principle, the investigator incurs a correspondingly serious obligation to seek ethical advice and to observe stringent safeguards to protect the rights of human participants.
- 9.b Considering whether a participant in a planned study will be a "subject at risk" or a "subject at minimal risk", according to recognized standards, is of primary ethical concern to the investigator.
- 9.c The investigator always retains the responsibility for ensuring ethical practice in research. The investigator is also responsible for the ethical treatment of research participants by collaborators, assistants, students, and employees all of whom, however, incur similar obligations.
- 9.d Except in minimal-risk research, the investigator establishes a clear and fair agreement with research participants prior to their participation that clarifies the obligations and responsibilities of each. The investigator has the obligation to honour all promises and commitments included in that agreement. The investigator informs the participants of all aspects of the research that might reasonably be expected to influence willingness to participate and explains all other aspects of the research about which the participants inquire. Failure to make full disclosure prior to obtaining informed consent is only acceptable when the methodological requirements of a study make the use of concealment or deception necessary and requires additional safeguards to protect the welfare and dignity of the research participants. Research with children or with participants who have impairments that would limit understanding and/or communication requires special safeguarding procedures.
- 9.e Methodological requirements of a study may make the use of concealment or deception necessary. Before conducting such a study, the investigator has a special responsibility to: (i) determine whether the use of such techniques is justified by the study's prospective scientific, educational, or applied value; (ii) determine whether alternative procedures are available that do not use concealment or deception; and (iii) ensure that the participants are provided with sufficient explanation as soon as possible.
- 9.f The investigator respects the individual's freedom to decline to participate in or to withdraw from the research at any time. The obligation to protect this freedom requires careful thought and consideration when the investigator is in a position of authority or influence over the participant. Such positions of authority include, but are not limited to, situations in which research participation is required as part of employment or in which the participant is a student, client or employee of the investigator.
- 9.g The investigator protects the participant from physical and mental discomfort, harm, and danger that may arise from research procedures. If risks of such consequences exist, the investigator informs the participant of the fact prior to conducting the research. Research procedures likely to cause serious or lasting harm to a participant are not used unless the failure to use these procedures might expose the participant to risk or greater harm, or unless the research has great potential benefit and fully informed and voluntary consent is obtained from each participant. The participant should be informed of procedures for contacting the investigator within a reasonable time period following participation should stress, potential harm, or related questions or concerns arise.
- 9.h After the data are collected, the investigator provides the participant with information about the nature of the study and attempts to remove any misconceptions that may have arisen. Where scientific or humane values justify delaying or withholding this information, the investigator incurs a special responsibility to monitor the research and to ensure that there are no damaging consequences for the participant.
- 9.i Where research procedures result in undesirable consequences for the individual participant, the investigator has the responsibility to detect and remove or correct these consequences, including long-term effects.
- 9.j Information obtained about a research participant during the course of an investigation is confidential unless otherwise agreed upon in advance. When the possibility exists that others may obtain access to such information this possibility, together with the plans for protecting confidentiality, is explained to the participant as part of the procedure for obtaining informed consent.

### Principle 10: Care and use of Animals

Psychologists have an obligation to advance knowledge and promote welfare through the competent conduct of research, the accurate communication of findings, and the effective instruction of students. Their values and goals as scientists, however, sometimes come into conflict with their values related to the treatment of living organisms. Dilemmas posed by the conflict



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cannot be resolved by rigid rules and regulations, but require a careful weighing of values and alternatives. In many cases the decisions reflect a relative judgment of the value of the research and the effects of the procedures on the animals. Psychologists using animals for research or instruction should be prepared to make such decisions and to explain the bases of their decisions to an informed audience. The following guidelines are intended to assist the scientist in making these ethical decisions.

- 10.a Prior to undertaking a research or instructional project with animals, the scientist has a responsibility to be sufficiently knowledgeable to ensure compliance with these guidelines. When in doubt about compliance, the scientist should consult with informed colleagues and the institutional animal care committee and give due regard to their advice.
- 10.b A scientist trained in research methods and experienced in the care of laboratory animals should ensure that the comfort, health, and humane treatment of experimental animals are given appropriate consideration.
- 10.c The scientist should ensure that all individuals under his/her supervision have the training and competence needed to carry out their responsibilities for experimental procedures, care, maintenance, and handling of the species used.
- 10.d The scientist should be fully cognizant of the Canadian Council on Animal Care's Guide to the Care and Use of Experimental Animals and of current federal, provincial and local laws and regulations concerning the acquisition, care, use and disposal of animals.
- 10.e There must be a reasonable expectation that studies involving animals will: (i) increase understanding of structures and processes underlying behaviour; or (ii) increase understanding of the particular animal species used in the experiment; or (iii) result eventually in benefits to the health and welfare of humans or other animals.
- 10.f Procedures subjecting animals to pain, stress, privation, or death should be used only when an acceptable alternative procedure is unavailable.
- 10.g Scientists should examine methodological and procedural techniques for the purpose of minimizing discomfort, illness, and pain to animals.
- 10.h An experiment should be terminated whenever it becomes apparent to the scientist or the institutional animal care committee that its continuation will result in injury or suffering that is incompatible with these guidelines.
- 10.i The killing or other disposition of experimental animals at the termination of the experiment must be accomplished in a humane manner.
- 10.j The decision to use animals for instructional purposes must be based on a consideration of educational objectives rather than contributions to new scientific knowledge. In other respects ethical practices in the care and treatment of animals are the same as those that apply to the use of animals in research.
- 10.k Classroom demonstrations involving animals should only be used when instructional objectives cannot be achieved through the use of videotapes, films, or other methods. Careful consideration should be given to whether the type of demonstration is warranted by the anticipated institutional gain.
- 10.l Student projects involving pain or distress to animals should be undertaken judiciously and only when the training objectives cannot be achieved in any other way.

ADOPTED FROM THE CANADIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (SEPTEMBER 1982), ENDORSED BY THE CANADIAN COUNCIL ON ANIMAL CARE.

APPROVED BY ORDER-IN-COUNCIL 1260 DATED 13TH JUNE, 1985; AN AMENDMENT TO BYLAW 6.1 TO GOVERN THE PRACTICE OF MEMBERS PURSUANT TO SECTION 7(1)(D) OF THE PSYCHOLOGISTS ACT.

## Ethical Standards & Standards for Providers

### Standards for Providers of Psychological Services (1978)

#### Standard 1: Providers

- 1.1 Each psychological service unit offering psychological services shall have available at least one professional psychologist and as many more professional psychologists as are necessary to assure the quality of services offered.

##### INTERPRETATION

The intent of this Standard is that one or more providers of psychological services in any psychological service unit shall meet the levels of training and experience of the professional psychologist as specified by the College of Psychologists of British Columbia.

When a professional psychologist is not available on a full-time basis, the facility shall retain the services of one or more professional psychologists on a regular part-time basis to supervise the psychological services provided. The psychologist(s) so retained shall have authority and participate sufficiently to enable him or her to assess the needs for services, review the content of services provided, and assume professional responsibility and accountability for them.

- 1.2 Providers of psychological services who do not meet the requirements for the professional psychologist shall be supervised by a professional psychologist who shall assume professional responsibility and accountability for the services provided. The level and extent of supervision may vary from task to task so long as the supervising psychologist retains a sufficiently close supervisory relationship to meet this standard.
- 1.3 Wherever a psychological service unit exists, a professional psychologist shall be responsible for planning, directing, and reviewing the provision of psychological services.

##### INTERPRETATION

This psychologist shall coordinate the activities of the psychological service unit with other professional, administrative, and technical groups, both within and outside the facility. This psychologist, who may be the director, chief, or coordinator of the psychological service unit, has related responsibilities including, but not limited to, recruiting qualified staff, directing training and research activities of the service, maintaining a high level of professional and ethical practice, and assuring that staff members function only within the areas of their competency.

In order to facilitate the effectiveness of services by increasing the level of staff sensitivity and professional skills, the psychologist designated as director shall be responsible for participating in the selection of the staff and supporting personnel whose qualifications and skills (e.g., language, cultural and experiential background, race and sex) are directly relevant to the needs and characteristics of the users served.

- 1.4 When functioning as part of an organizational setting, professional psychologists shall bring their background and skills to bear whenever appropriate upon the goals of the organization by participating in the planning and development of overall services.

##### INTERPRETATION

Professional psychologists shall participate in the maintenance of high professional standards by representation on committees concerned with service delivery.

As appropriate to the setting, these activities may include active participation as voting and as office-holding members on the facility's executive, planning, and evaluation boards and committees.

- 1.5 Psychologists shall maintain current knowledge of scientific and professional developments that are directly related to the services they render.

##### INTERPRETATION

Methods through which knowledge of scientific and professional development may be gained include, but are not limited to, continuing education, attendance at workshops, participation in staff development, and reading scientific publications.

The psychologist shall have ready access to reference material related to the provision of psychological services.

Psychologists must be prepared to show evidence periodically that they are staying abreast of current knowledge and practices through continuing education.

- 1.6 Psychologists shall limit their practice to their demonstrated areas of professional competence.

##### INTERPRETATION

Psychological services will be offered in accordance with the provider's areas of competence as defined by verifiable training and experience. When extending services beyond the range of their usual practice, psychologists shall obtain relevant training or appropriate professional supervision.

- 1.7 Psychologists who wish to change their service specialty to or add an additional area of applied specialization must meet the same requirements with respect to subject matter and professional skills that apply to postgraduate training in the new specialty.

##### INTERPRETATION

The training of doctoral level psychologists to qualify them for change in specialty will be done under the auspices of

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accredited university departments or professional schools that offer postgraduate programs/courses in that specialty. Such training should be individualized, due credit being given for relevant course work or requirements that have previously been satisfied. Merely taking an internship or acquiring experience in a practicum setting is not considered adequate preparation for becoming a clinical, counselling, industrial-organizational, or school psychologist when prior training has not been in the relevant area. Fulfilment of such an individualized training program is attested to by the award of a certificate by the supervising department or professional school indicating the successful completion of preparation in the particular specialty.

### Standard 2: Programs

#### 2.1 Composition and organization of a psychological service unit:

- 2.1.1 The composition and programs of a psychological service unit shall be responsive to the needs of the persons or settings served.

##### INTERPRETATION

A psychological service unit shall be so structured as to facilitate effective and economical delivery of services. For example, a psychological service unit serving a predominantly low income, ethnic, or racial minority group should have a staffing pattern and service program that is adapted to the linguistic, experiential, and attitudinal characteristics of the users.

- 2.1.2 A description of the organization of the psychological service unit and its lines of responsibility and accountability for the delivery of psychological services shall be available in written form to staff of the unit and to users and sanctioners upon request.

##### INTERPRETATION

The description should include lines of responsibility, supervisory relationships, and the level and extent of accountability for each person who provides psychological services.

- 2.1.3 A psychological service unit shall include sufficient numbers of professional and support personnel to achieve its goals, objectives, and purposes.

##### INTERPRETATION

The work load and diversity of psychological services required and the specific goals and objectives of the setting will determine the numbers and qualifications of professional and support personnel in the psychological service unit. Where shortages in personnel exist so that psychological services cannot be rendered in a professional manner, the director of the psychological service unit shall initiate action to modify appropriately the specific goals and objectives of the service.

#### 2.2 Policies:

- 2.2.1 When the psychological service unit is composed of more than one person wherein a supervisory relationship exists or is a component of a larger organization, a written statement of its objectives and scope of services shall be developed and maintained.

##### INTERPRETATION

The psychological service unit shall review its objectives and scope of services annually and revise them as necessary to insure that the psychological services offered are consistent with staff competencies and current psychological knowledge and practice. This statement should be distributed to staff and, where appropriate, to users and sanctioners upon request.

- 2.2.2 All providers within a psychological service unit shall support the local and civil rights of the user.

##### INTERPRETATION

Providers of psychological services shall safeguard the interests of the user with regard to personal, legal, and civil rights. They shall continually be sensitive to the issue of confidentiality of information, the short-term and long-term impact of their decisions and recommendations, and other matters pertaining to individual, legal, and civil rights. Concerns regarding the safeguarding of individual rights of users include, but are not limited to, problems of self-incrimination in judicial proceedings, involuntary commitment to hospitals, protection of minors or legal incompetents, discriminatory practices in employment selection procedures, recommendations for special education provisions, information relative to adverse personnel actions in the armed services, and the adjudication of domestic relations disputes in divorce and custodial proceedings. Providers of psychological services should take affirmative action by making themselves available for local committees, review boards, and similar advisory groups established to safeguard the human, civil, and legal rights of service users.

- 2.2.3 All providers within a psychological service unit shall be familiar with and adhere to the College of Psychologists of British Columbia's Ethical Standards of Psychologists, and other official policy statements relevant to standards for professional services issued by the College.

##### INTERPRETATION

Providers of psychological services, users, and sanctioners may order copies of these documents from the College of

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Psychologists of British Columbia.

- 2.2.4 All providers within a psychological service unit shall conform to relevant statutes established by federal, provincial, and local governments.

### INTERPRETATION

All providers of psychological services shall be familiar with appropriate statutes regulating the practice of psychology. They shall also be informed about agency regulations that have the force of law and that relate to the delivery of psychological services (e.g., evaluation for disability retirement and special education placements). In addition, all providers shall be aware that federal and provincial agencies have policy statements regarding psychological services. Providers of psychological services shall be familiar with provincial and federal statutes and regulations, including those addressed to the civil and legal rights of users which pertain to their scope of practice.

It shall be the responsibility of the College of Psychologists of British Columbia to publish periodically those federal policies, statutes, and regulations relating to this section.

- 2.2.5 All providers within a psychological service unit shall, where appropriate, inform themselves about and use the network of human services in their communities in order to link users with relevant services and resources.

### INTERPRETATION

It is incumbent upon psychologists and supporting staff to be sensitive to the broader context of human needs. In recognizing the matrix of personal and societal problems, providers shall, where appropriate, make available information regarding human services such as legal aid societies, social services, employment agencies, health resources, and educational and recreational facilities. The provider of psychological services shall refer to such community resources and, when indicated, actively intervene on behalf of the user.

- 2.2.6 In the delivery of psychological services, the providers shall maintain a continuing cooperative relationship with colleagues and coworkers whenever in the best interest of the user.

### INTERPRETATION

It shall be the responsibility of the psychologist to recognize the areas of special competence of other psychologists and of other professionals for either consultation or referral purposes. Providers of psychological services shall make appropriate use of other professional, technical and administrative resources whenever these serve the best interests of the user, and shall establish and maintain cooperative arrangements with such other resources as required to meet the needs of users.

## 2.3 Procedures:

- 2.3.1 Where appropriate, each psychological service unit shall be guided by a set of procedural guidelines for the delivery of psychological services. If appropriate to the setting, these guidelines shall be in written form.

### INTERPRETATION

Depending on the nature of the setting, and whenever feasible, providers should be prepared to provide a statement of procedural guidelines in either oral or written form that can be understood by users as well as sanctioners. This statement may describe the current methods, forms, procedures, and techniques being used to achieve the objectives and goals for psychological services.

This statement shall be communicated to staff and, when appropriate, to users and sanctioners. The psychological service unit shall provide for the annual review of its procedures for the delivery of psychological services.

- 2.3.2 Providers shall develop a plan appropriate to the provider's professional strategy of practice and to the problems presented by the user.

### INTERPRETATION

Whenever appropriate or mandated in the setting, this plan shall be in written form as a means of providing a basis for establishing accountability, obtaining informed consent, and providing a mechanism for subsequent peer review. Regardless of the type of setting or users involved, it is desirable that a plan be developed that describes the psychological services indicated and the manner in which they will be provided.

A psychologist who provides services as one member of a collaborative effort shall participate in the development and implementation of the overall service plan and provide for its periodic review.

- 2.3.3 There shall be a mutually acceptable understanding between the provider and user or responsible agent regarding the delivery of service.

### INTERPRETATION

Varying service settings call for understandings differing in explicitness and formality. For instance, a psychologist providing services within a user organization may operate within a broad framework of understanding with this organization as a condition of employment. As another example, psychologists providing professional services to individuals in clinical, counselling, or school settings require an open-ended agreement, which specifies procedures and their known risks (if any), costs, and respective responsibilities of provider and user for achieving the agreed-upon objectives.

- 2.3.4 Accurate, current, and pertinent documentation shall be made of essential psychological services provided.

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### INTERPRETATION

Records kept of psychological services may include, but not be limited to, identifying data, dates of services, types of services, and significant actions taken. Providers of psychological services shall insure that essential information concerning services rendered is appropriately recorded within a reasonable time of their completion.

2.3.5 Providers of psychological services shall establish a system to protect confidentiality of their records.

### INTERPRETATION

Psychologists are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of information about users of services whether obtained by themselves or by those they supervise. All persons supervised by psychologists, including nonprofessional personnel and students, who have access to records of psychological services shall be required to maintain this confidentiality as a condition of employment.

The psychologist shall not release confidential information, except with the written consent of the user directly involved or his or her legal representative. Even after the consent has been obtained for release, the psychologist should clearly identify such information as confidential to the recipient of the information. If directed otherwise by statute or regulations with the force of law or by court order, the psychologist shall seek a resolution to the conflict that is both ethically and legally feasible and appropriate.

Users shall be informed in advance of any limits in the setting for the maintenance of the confidentiality of psychological information. For instance, psychologists in hospital settings shall inform their patients that psychological information in a patient's clinical record may be available without the patient's written consent to other members of the professional staff associated with the patient's treatment or rehabilitation. Similar limitations on confidentiality of psychological information may be present in certain school, industrial, or military settings, or in instances where the user has waived confidentiality for purposes of third-party payment.

When the user intends to waive confidentiality, the psychologist should discuss the implications of releasing psychological information, and assist the user in limiting disclosure only to information required by the present circumstance.

Raw psychological data (e.g., test protocols, therapy or interview notes, or questionnaire returns) in which a user is identified shall be released only with the written consent of the user or legal representative and released only to a person recognized by the psychologist as competent to use the data.

Any use made of psychological reports, records, or data for research or training purposes shall be consistent with this Standard. Additionally, providers of psychological services shall comply with statutory confidentiality requirements and those embodied in the College of Psychologists of British Columbia's Ethical Standards of Psychologists.

Providers of psychological services should remain sensitive to both the benefits and the possible misuse of information regarding individuals that is stored in large computerized data banks. Providers should use their influence to ensure that such information is used in a socially responsible manner.

### Standard 3: Accountability

3.1 Psychologists' professional activity shall be primarily guided by the principle of promoting human welfare.

#### INTERPRETATION

Psychologists shall provide services to users in a manner that is considerate, effective, and economical.

Psychologists are responsible for making their services readily accessible to users in a manner that facilitates the user's freedom of choice.

Psychologists shall be mindful of their accountability to the sanctioners of psychological services and to the general public, provided that appropriate steps are taken to protect the confidentiality of the service relationship. In the pursuit of their professional activities they shall aid in the conservation of human, material, and financial resources.

The psychological service unit will not withhold services to a potential client on the basis of that user's race, colour, religion, sex, age, or national origin. Recognition is given, however to the following considerations: the professional right of psychologists to limit their practice to a specific category of user (e.g., children, adolescents, women); the right and responsibility of psychologists to withhold an assessment procedure when not validly applicable; the right and responsibility of psychologists to withhold evaluative, psychotherapeutic, counselling, or other services in specific instances where considerations of race, religion, colour, sex or any other difference between psychologist and client might impair the effectiveness of the relationship.

Psychologists who find that psychological services are being provided in a manner that is discriminatory or exploitive to users and/or contrary to these Standards or to provincial or federal statutes shall take appropriate corrective action, which may include the refusal to provide services. When conflicts of interest arise, the psychologist shall be guided in the resolution of differences by the principles set forth in the Ethical Standards of Psychologists of the College of Psychologists of British Columbia and by the guidelines for Conditions of employment of Psychologists (1972).

3.2 Psychologists shall pursue their activities as members of an independent, autonomous profession.

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### INTERPRETATION

Psychologists shall be aware of the implications of their activities for the profession as a whole. They shall seek to eliminate discriminatory practices instituted for self-serving purposes that are not in the interest of the user (e.g., arbitrary requirements for referral and supervision by another profession). They shall be cognizant of their responsibilities for the development of the profession, participate where possible in the training and career development of students and other providers, participate as appropriate in the training of para-professionals, and integrate and supervise their contributions within the structure established for delivering psychological services. Where appropriate, they shall facilitate the development of, and participate in, professional standards review mechanisms.

Psychologists shall seek to work with other professionals in a cooperative manner for the good of the user and the benefit of the general public. Psychologists associated with multi-disciplinary settings shall support the principle that members of each participating profession shall have equal rights and opportunities to share all privileges and responsibilities of full membership in the human service facility, and to administer service programs in their respective areas of competence.

- 3.3 There shall be periodic, systematic, and effective evaluations of psychological services.

### INTERPRETATION

When the psychological service unit is a component of a larger organization, regular assessment of progress in achieving goals shall be provided in the service delivery plan, including consideration of the effectiveness of psychological services relative to costs in terms of time, money, and the availability of professional and support personnel.

Evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the psychological service delivery system should be conducted internally and, when possible, under independent auspices.

It is highly desirable that there be a periodic reexamination of review mechanisms to ensure that these attempts at public safeguards are effective and cost efficient and do not place unnecessary burdens on the provider or unnecessary additional expense to users or sanctioners for services rendered.

- 3.4 Psychologists are accountable for all aspects of the services they provide and shall be responsive to those concerned with these services.

### INTERPRETATION

In recognizing their responsibilities to users, sanctioners, third-party purchasers, and other providers, wherever appropriate and consistent with the user's legal rights and privileged communications, psychologists shall make available information about, and opportunity to participate in, decisions concerning such issues as initiation, termination, continuation, modification, and evaluation of psychological services. Additional copies of these Standards for Providers of Psychological Services can be ordered from the College of Psychologists of British Columbia.

Depending upon the settings, accurate and full information shall be made available to prospective individual or organization users regarding the qualifications of providers, the nature and extent of services offered, and, where appropriate, financial and social costs.

Where appropriate, psychologists shall inform users of their payment policies and their willingness to assist in obtaining reimbursement. Those who accept reimbursement from a third-party should be acquainted with the appropriate statutes and regulations and should instruct their users on proper procedures for submitting claims and limits on confidentiality of claims information, in accordance with pertinent statutes.

### Standard 4: Environment

- 4.1 Providers of psychological services shall promote the development in the service setting of a physical, organizational, and social environment that facilitates optimal human functioning.

### INTERPRETATION

Federal, provincial, and local requirements for safety, health, and sanitation must be observed. Attention shall be given to the comfort and, where relevant, to the privacy of providers and users.

As providers of services, psychologists have the responsibility to be concerned with the environment of their service unit, especially as it affects the quality of service, but also as it impinges on human functioning in the larger unit or organization when the service unit is included in such a larger context. Physical arrangements and organizational policies and procedures should be conducive to the human dignity, self respect, and optimal functioning of users, and to the effective delivery of service. The atmosphere in which psychological services are rendered should be appropriate to the service and to the users, whether in office, clinic, school, or industrial organization.

### Definitions

*Providers of psychological services* refer to the following persons:

- A. Professional psychologists. Professional psychologists are registered in the province where the service is provided and have appropriate training and experience in the area of service offered.
- B. All other persons who offer psychological services under the supervision of a professional psychologist.

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*Psychological services* refers to one or more of the following:

- A. Evaluation, diagnosis, and assessment of the functioning of individuals and groups in a variety of settings and activities.
- B. Interventions to facilitate the functioning of individuals and groups. Such interventions may include psychological counselling, psychotherapy, and process consultation.
- C. Consultation relating to A and B above.
- D. Program development services in the areas of A, B, and C above.
- E. Supervision of psychological services.

A *psychological service unit* is the functional unit through which psychological services are provided:

- A. A psychological service unit is a unit that provides predominantly psychological services and is composed of one or more professional psychologists and supporting staff.
- B. A psychological service unit may operate as a professional service or as a functional or geographic component of a larger governmental, educational, correction, health, training, industrial, or commercial organizational unit.
- C. A psychologist providing professional services in a multi-occupational setting is regarded as a psychological service unit.
- D. A psychological service unit also may be an individual or group of individuals in a private practice or a psychological consulting firm.

*User* includes:

- A. Direct users or recipients of psychological services.
- B. Public and private institutions, facilities, or organizations receiving psychological services.
- C. Third-party purchasers — those who pay for the delivery of services but who are not the recipients of services.

*Sanctioners* refers to those users and non-users who have a legitimate concern with the accessibility, timeliness, efficacy, and standards of quality attending the provision of psychological services. In addition to the users, sanctioners may include members of the user's family, the court, the probation officer, the school administrator, the employer, the union representative, the facility director, etc. Another class of sanctioners is represented by various governmental, peer review, and accreditation bodies concerned with the assurance of quality.

ADAPTED AS AMENDED IN BRITISH COLUMBIA NOVEMBER 1978 FROM THE "STANDARDS FOR PROVIDERS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES, JANUARY 1977", THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION. IN FORCE PURSUANT TO BYLAW 6.1 TO GOVERN THE PRACTICE OF MEMBERS AS SET OUT IN SECTION 7(1)(D) OF THE PSYCHOLOGISTS ACT.