

# Ohio School Psychologists Association Code of Ethics

(Revised March 2000)

## Preamble

School psychologists believe in the dignity and worth of the individual, and are committed to increasing understanding of self and others. While pursuing this endeavor, school psychologists protect the welfare of persons who may seek their services or be the object of study. School psychologists do not use their professional position or relationships, nor do they knowingly permit their own services to be used by others for purposes inconsistent with these values. While demanding for themselves freedom of inquiry and communication, school psychologists accept the responsibility this freedom confers: For competence where they claim it; for objectivity in the reporting of their findings; and for considering the best interests of their colleagues and of society.

## I. Competence

School psychologists recognize the strengths and limitations of their training and experience, engaging only in practices for which they are competent.

### A. Representation

1. School psychologists do not misrepresent, directly or by implication, their professional qualifications, including their education, credentials, experience, or area(s) of competence.
2. School psychologists do not misrepresent their affiliations or the purposes or characteristics of institutions or organizations with which they are associated.
3. School psychologists do not associate with, nor permit their names to be used in connection with any services or products in such a way as to misrepresent them, the qualities, performance, or results to be obtained from their use; the degree of their responsibility for them; or the nature of their affiliation with such services or products.
4. School psychologists do not use their affiliation with the Ohio School Psychologists Association for purposes that are inconsistent with the stated purposes of the Association.

5. A school psychologist is responsible for correcting others who misrepresent that school psychologist's professional qualifications or affiliations to the extent that the school psychologist is aware of such misrepresentation.

**B. Limitations**

1. School psychologists recognize the limits of their competence and the limitations of their techniques, and do not offer services or use techniques that fail to meet prevailing professional standards.
2. School psychologists are aware of the limits of their own competence, and enlist the assistance of other specialists in supervisory, consultative, or referral roles as appropriate in providing services.
3. School psychologists engage in continuing professional development. They seek current information regarding developments in research, training, and professional practices that benefit children, families, and schools.
4. School psychologists refrain from engaging in any activity in which their personal problems or conflicts may interfere with professional effectiveness, and seek competent assistance to alleviate such conflicts.

## **II. Professional Responsibility**

School psychologists are committed to protecting the dignity and promoting the welfare of students, their families, and the community. School psychologists recognize that their primary responsibility is for the welfare of students referred to them for professional services. However, in choosing a course of action, school psychologists take into account the rights and responsibilities of those affected by their services, including parents and others responsible for the care of students. School psychologists accept responsibility for the nature and consequences of their professional activities.

**A. Welfare of the Client**

1. School psychologists respect all persons and are sensitive to physical, mental, emotional, political, economic, social, cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious characteristics.
2. School psychologists fully inform clients (including students and those responsible for their care) of the purpose and nature of their services, including the reason services are being provided, who will receive information about services, and possible outcomes. School psychologists inform clients of their right to initiate, participate in, or discontinue such services. Information is provided in a form readily understood by the client, taking into account

language and cultural differences, cognitive capabilities, developmental level, and age of the client.

3. School psychologists recognize the right and need of minor students to initiate self-referral. However, school psychologists are aware that the provision of psychological services without consent of parents or legal guardians poses serious risks, and carefully consider the need to balance students' rights to privacy and self-determination against the parental rights to be involved in decisions affecting student welfare. This principle supports the establishment of policies which, for example, permit students to attend one preservice screening session without the consent of parents or legal guardians, as long as that session is limited to an assessment of whether the student is in any danger and a discussion which includes a brief review of the student's concerns, the need to obtain parental consent, an offer to contact the parent or legal guardian on the student's behalf, or an offer to meet with the student and parent/guardian to discuss services and obtain consent.
4. School psychologists discuss recommendations and plans for assisting clients with parents and others responsible for their care. They recognize the importance of parental support, and seek to obtain such support by assuring that there is parental contact prior to the initiation of services; through frank and prompt reporting to the parent of findings and progress; and by advice regarding sources of help available at school and in the community. Such communication with parents conforms to the limits of previously determined confidentiality.
5. School psychologists do not exploit the trust or dependency of clients, nor do they use professional relationships with clients or immediate ex-clients to derive personal gain. School psychologists avoid sexual relationships with clients or others over whom they have therapeutic influence or evaluative authority, or any other relationship that might impair professional judgment or increase the risk of client exploitation.
6. School psychologists refrain from making deliberate comments, gestures, or physical contacts of a sexual nature to students, clients, employees, colleagues, and research participants.
7. School psychologists avoid any action that could violate or diminish the civil and legal rights of clients. They adhere to federal, state, and local laws and ordinances governing their practice.

## **B. Materials, Procedures, and Technology**

1. School psychologists select and use appropriate assessment or treatment procedures, materials, techniques, strategies, and technology. They collect

relevant data using valid and reliable methods that are appropriate to the characteristics of the client and the purposes of the assessment.

2. In conducting assessments, school psychologists seek and incorporate all information relevant to the purposes of the assessment, including observations, background information, and information furnished by other sources and disciplines.
3. School psychologists develop interventions that are appropriate to identified problems and consistent with assessment results. Intervention plans are modified or discontinued when data indicate that plans are not achieving intended goals.
4. School psychologists maintain test security, preventing the release of content that would undermine use of the device.
5. When using technological services and devices, school psychologists maintain full responsibility for all relevant ethical and legal principles. Responsibility cannot be transferred to equipment, software companies, or data processing departments. Technological devices are used only to improve the quality of client services. School psychologists resist applications of technology that ultimately reduce the quality of their services.

### **C. Conferences and Reporting**

1. School psychologists treat the results or interpretations of assessment and intervention services as confidential information, limiting the communication of such information to those with a legitimate right or need to know. School psychologists comply with relevant laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to the confidentiality of records in the storage, disposal, and release of such records.
2. To facilitate an effective and appropriate response to the identified needs of clients, school psychologists communicate findings and recommendations in a timely manner to appropriate persons.
3. In communicating information, school psychologists provide adequate interpretation and explanation in language readily understood by the recipient.
4. School psychologists prepare written reports in such form and style that the recipient of the report will be able to assist the student or client. Reports which present only test scores or brief narratives describing a test are seldom useful. Reports should include an appraisal of the degree of confidence which should be assigned to the information.

5. School psychologists review all of their written documents for accuracy, signing them only when they provide an accurate record of statements, results, conclusions, and recommendations generated by the school psychologist.

#### **D. Confidentiality**

1. School psychologists respect the confidentiality of information obtained in the context of professional relationships with clients. School psychologists discuss confidential information only for professional purposes, and only with persons who have a legitimate need for such information.
2. School psychologists inform clients of the limits of confidentiality at the outset of their professional relationship.
3. Confidential information is revealed only with the informed consent of the client or the client's parent or legal guardian, except in those situations in which failure to release information would, in the professional judgment of the school psychologist, result in clear danger to the client or others. In these situations, confidential information is revealed only to appropriate parties.
4. In situations in which more than one party has an appropriate interest in the professional services rendered by a school psychologist to a client, the school psychologist shall, to the extent possible, clarify to all parties the dimensions of confidentiality and professional responsibility pertaining to such services, preferably at the commencement of such services.
5. School psychologists observe and communicate the rights of parents and students regarding the creation, modification, storage, release, and disposal of confidential materials that result from the provision of school psychological services.

#### **E. Professional Relationships**

1. School psychologists are knowledgeable and respectful of the organization, philosophy, goals, objectives, and methodologies of the setting in which they are employed. They establish clear roles for themselves within that setting, and define and keep all parties informed of the nature and direction of personal loyalties and responsibilities.
2. School psychologists recognize the competence of other professionals. They seek, encourage, and support the use of all resources that may promote the welfare and interest of clients. School psychologists refer clients to other professions when a condition is suspected or identified that is outside the professional competencies or scope of the school psychologist's practice.

3. School psychologists cooperate with other professionals and agencies in a manner respectful of the rights and needs of clients. If a client is receiving similar services from another professional, school psychologists promote coordination of services.
4. When transferring professional responsibility for clients to other professionals, school psychologists ensure that relevant persons, including the student client as appropriate, are informed of the change and reasons for the change. Within the limits of confidentiality, school psychologists also arrange for the communication and release of findings and information which may be helpful in the delivery of services by other professionals.
5. School psychologists who employ, supervise, or train other professionals accept the obligation to provide continuing professional development, appropriate working conditions, fair and timely evaluation, and constructive consultation.
6. When producing materials for consultation, treatment, teaching, public lectures, or publication, school psychologists acknowledge sources and assign credit to those whose ideas are reflected in the product.
7. School psychologists do not condone the use of psychological or educational assessment techniques by unqualified persons in any way, including teaching, sponsorship, or supervision.
8. When, in the professional judgment of school psychologists, the practices or policies of a professional, institution, or agency are considered to be ineffectual, inadequate, or detrimental to the welfare of clients, school psychologists seek changes in such practices or policies.
9. School psychologists address concerns about suspected detrimental or unethical practices through direct discussion and informal attempts at resolution. If informal efforts are not productive, an appropriate professional organization is contacted for assistance. The filing of an ethical complaint against a professional practitioner is a serious matter. It is intended to improve the behavior of persons that is harmful to their profession and/or the public. School psychologists do not file or encourage the filing of an ethics complaint that is frivolous or motivated by revenge.

### **III. Professional Practice in Private Settings**

School psychologists employed in more than one setting recognize the potential for conflicts of interest, and observe ethical standards governing practice in private settings so as to protect the welfare of clients. They recognize that their primary obligation is to persons entitled to their services through employing institutions,

agencies, or schools. School psychologists who practice in private settings take full responsibility for protecting client welfare and informing consumers of issues which may affect their choice of services.

- A. School psychologists may not accept any form of remuneration for services from clients who are entitled to the same service provided at no cost by the same school psychologist while working in another public or agency setting. School psychologists working in public or agency settings that employ more than one school psychologist may, however, accept remuneration for private services to clients who are outside the realm of assigned responsibilities. In such cases, it is recommended that:

A written statement from the parent or guardian should be obtained by the school psychologist stating that the client is exercising the right of informed choice in selecting private services that are available at no cost to them in the public or agency setting. Copies of the statement should be maintained by the school psychologist in private practice, and provided to officials of the public setting or agency.

- B. Prior to delivering services for remuneration, school psychologists working in the private sector inform clients of psychological services available to them at no cost in the public or agency setting.
- C. School psychologists ensure that the promotion of private sector services is not a consideration in the assignment of responsibilities in the public setting or agency.
- D. School psychologists working in both public/agency settings and private sectors conduct all private practice outside of the hours of contracted public/agency employment. School psychologists do not use tests, materials, equipment, facilities, secretarial assistance, or other services belonging to the public setting or agency, unless approved in advance.
- E. School psychologists working in the private sector fully inform clients of all financial arrangements before providing services. School psychologists shall not charge fees that are excessive for the services performed.
- F. In announcing services available in the private sector, school psychologists accurately represent training, experience, services provided, and professional affiliations. They refrain from engaging in deceptive advertising or solicitation practices, and from soliciting testimonials from persons who are vulnerable to undue influence by the school psychologist. Announcements and advertisements of publications, products, and services are based on sound theory, research, and practice.

- G. School psychologists working in the private sector make every effort to prevent misunderstandings resulting from their recommendations, advice, or information. School psychologists encourage and cooperate in the sharing of pertinent information with school psychologists and other appropriate parties responsible for the client in the school setting. Direct consultation with such persons is recommended as a means to facilitate constructive action on behalf of the client, and to resolve minor differences of opinion.
- H. Personal diagnosis and therapy are not provided by means of public lectures, newspaper columns, magazine articles, radio and television programs, or mail. Any information shared through mass media activities is general in nature, and is openly declared as such.

#### **IV. Research**

In performing research, school psychologists accept responsibility for the selection of topics, research methodology, subject selection and participation, and data gathering, analysis, and reporting.

- A. School psychologists obtain the permission of their employer before proceeding with research conducted on-site or during employed hours.
- B. School psychologists clearly describe the nature, intent, and implications of research projects to primary employers, parents/guardians of participating students, and, when appropriate, to the students or clients themselves. Informed consent is obtained before engaging in research activities involving diagnosis, treatment, or the obtaining of personally identifiable information.
- C. In publishing reports of research, school psychologists respect the integrity and confidentiality of client information, provide discussion of the limitations of their data, acknowledge the existence of disconfirming data and alternative hypotheses and explanations of findings, and give credit to others for contributions to the research.