

The ISPA Code of Ethics

Introduction

Every profession is expected to have uniform and recognized standards that serve the needs of the profession, clients, educators, legal bodies, and institutions.

Work on a code of ethics was initiated in 1985 when Herbert Bischoff, President of the International School Psychology Association (ISPA), requested Thomas Oakland, Chair of ISPA's Standards and Practices Committee, to explore the feasibility of drafting an ethical statement for the Association. Susan Goldman soon joined the Committee and became involved in this task. The Committee contacted psychological societies that are members of the International Union of Psychological Sciences, affiliates of ISPA, and others to acquire copies of existing ethical standards. The Committee also drew heavily on the report by Tapp, J., Kelman, H., Triandis, H., & Coelho, G. (1974). Continuing concerns in cross-cultural ethics: A report. *International Journal of Psychology*, 9, 231-249.

Numerous revisions were made. Draft copies were presented to the Executive Committee for their review and comments in 1988, 1989, and 1990. Draft copies also were discussed during the 1989 and 1990 Colloquia and printed in the 1989 *World-Go-Round*, volume 16, issue 3. Requests for comments were solicited from ISPA members at these times. Comments were received from persons in 13 countries. The Executive Committee approved this ethical code in July, 1990 and recommended its adoption as a statement of ethics for our Association by the membership at the 1991 Colloquium. This draft, when approved by 75% or more of those in attendance, becomes the official code of ethics of the International School Psychology Association. Following its adoption by the Association, affiliate associations that presently lack an ethics statement will be encouraged to review and adopt these or higher standards. Affiliates that presently have ethics statements will be encouraged to review and compare the two sets of standards. Affiliates will be encouraged to inform the Association of the adoption of these or other standards and to recommend changes in these standards. Following its adoption, the Association is expected to create an ethics committee. The intent of an ethics committee is not to condemn or control. The committee would be responsible for educating ISPA members and affiliates and for serving in an advisory capacity in order to encourage high levels of ethical conduct. The work of the Committee was guided by the belief that school psychologists are expected to exemplify the profession's values and principles. These include transcending narrow personal, social, and cultural values and attitudes; adopting positions that benefit professional-client relationships; and acting in ways that are consistent with the best interests of children and youths, educators, parents, institutions, the community, and the profession.

Reciprocal relationships exist between our profession of school psychology and society. As professionals, we strive to have our clients trust our judgements and skills. In return, our clients rightly expect us to exercise levels of judgement and skills of the highest order. This code of ethics is developed to help clarify and promote these relationships.

The formation and adoption of a code of ethics is needed as professional organizations mature. While the development of an international code of ethics is particularly difficult in light of national, cultural, and political differences, the ISPA believes numerous similarities in standards exist within our profession and that similarities exceed differences. Acceptable standards governing professional behavior span geographic and national boundaries. This code of ethics endeavors to capture and highlight these commonalities. Nonetheless, the translation and manifestation of ethical principles important to this code may vary somewhat between countries as a reflection of each country's norms, values, and traditions. Ethical standards also may differ between professions. This code is not intended to supersede codes governing ethical and professional behaviors adopted nationally, by other organizations with which school psychologists may affiliate, or by educational authorities. When codes of ethics differ, members should seek to resolve such differences by seeking clarification of the ethical

principal from the respective organizations and by working to resolve the difference through changes in the codes whenever possible. School psychologists do not accede to lower ethical standards arbitrarily imposed upon them by others.

General Overview

School psychologists respect the dignity and worth of individuals and place the highest esteem on promoting and maintaining human rights. They endeavor to protect and promote the welfare of children and youth and the quality of their development through educational, psychological, and related services. Their roles mandate a mastery of knowledge and skills in both education and psychology. School psychologists work within their professional competencies and continually seek to upgrade their academic and professional abilities. They also strive to acquire and maintain the highest standards of professional competence and ethical behavior. School psychologists adhere to the highest standards of research practice.

Professional standards

I. Professional Responsibilities

A. School psychologists familiarize themselves with the goals and philosophy of the school system and other organizations within which they work and to work effectively within their organizational structure.

B. School psychologists, when working with families, attempt to familiarize themselves with the goals and philosophies of the families and to work effectively within their structures.

C. School psychologists are knowledgeable about educational law and guidelines. When administrative code and regulations conflict with ethical principles, good faith efforts are instituted to resolve problems and discrepancies. Should these efforts prove ineffective, ethical principles should take precedent.

D. School psychologists should not allow personal prejudices or biases to interfere in their decision-making. They should not engage in discriminatory procedures or practices based on social and economic background, race, handicap, age, gender, sexual preference, religion, or national origin.

E. School psychologists respect the cultural environment within which they work and are sensitive to cultural differences and of appropriate ways to provide services within multi-cultural populations.

F. School psychologists protect the welfare and act in the best interests of students, their parents, educators, colleagues, and employees. Protecting the welfare of students, their parents, and educators is of utmost concern and takes precedence over self-serving actions by school psychologists. When conflicts of interest arise, school psychologist's first priority is to serve the best interests of students.

G. School psychologists normally provide services to students with the informed consent of the parents or guardian. An exception to the need for parental consent prior to service exists in a crisis situation (e.g., when the student may be a danger to himself/herself or to others).

H. Preparation and Supervision

1. Educators of school psychologists ensure that all information, conveyed during their preparation is accurate and timely.

2. Educators of school psychologists promote an awareness of and adherence to ethical standards.

3. Educators of school psychologists and internship supervisors provide a wide range of appropriate professional experiences and offer constructive consultation and evaluation.

I. School psychologists avoid situations which would present a conflict of interest due to

economic, political, social, or personal issues.

II. Confidentiality

A. School psychologists have an obligation to safeguard confidential student information that has been obtained in the course of their practice, teaching, or research.

B. Student records are kept in a secure place in order to maintain confidentiality.

C. School psychologists obtain consent from parents before releasing confidential student information to professionals in other agencies. Under some circumstances they may obtain consent from students before releasing information to parents or professionals in other agencies. The need to obtain consent from students should consider the age at which a country legally defines one as being independent as well as the level of the student's mental and moral development. An exception to this policy exists when the psychologist believes the student is in immediate danger to himself/herself or to others.

D. Confidential information obtained on children and youth is discussed only for professional purposes and only with persons clearly concerned with the case.

III. Professional Growth

A. School psychologists recognize the need for and participate in continuing professional development.

B. School psychologists seek supervision and collaboration when working on issues with which they are less knowledgeable.

C. School psychologists maintain knowledge of current scientific and professional information in the field by reading current research, attending workshops and conferences, and becoming active in professional organizations.

IV. Professional Limitations

A. School psychologists offer only those services which are within their areas of professional competence and do not misrepresent their competence, qualifications, training, or experience.

B. School psychologists are aware of their professional limitations and enlist the assistance of other professionals in a consultative or referral role when appropriate. Implicit in this referral process is knowledge of the expertise and competence commonly held by other professionals.

Professional practices

I. Professional Relationships

A. Generally

1. School psychologists do not exploit their professional relationships with children and youth, interns, parents, teachers, or other clients or research subjects for personal gains. This includes refraining from engaging in harassment and physical relations of a sexual nature.

2. School psychologists attempt to interpret the nature of any assessment or professional interactions with children and youth, to teachers and parents.

3. School psychologists attempt to communicate to persons in their native language.

4. School psychologists attempt to discuss with children and youth, teachers, and parents their plans for assisting in the student's development, including various alternatives. Conflicts should not be avoided when their avoidance may result in a lowering of service to students.

5. School psychologists refrain from making demeaning or derogatory remarks about students, parents, staff, and colleagues.

B. Students

1. School psychologists consider the welfare of the children and youth to be of primary importance.

2. School psychologists ensure that children and youth understand the nature and purpose of any assessment or intervention to the best of their abilities.

C. Colleagues and School Staffs

1. School psychologists strive to develop harmonious and cooperative working relationships with colleagues and school staffs. They recognize the need to function as a member of a team within schools, other institutions, and communities.

2. Attempts to develop harmonious and cooperative relationships should not result in the lowering of standards for services provided to students.

3. When school psychologists are aware of possible unethical practices by another school psychologist, they should informally attempt to resolve the issue by bringing the behavior of concern to the attention of that psychologist in a constructive manner. If such informal efforts to resolve the issue are not productive, other steps to resolve alleged unethical practices should be taken.

Procedures outlines by one's national association of school psychology or, when unavailable, by one's national association of psychology should be followed when available.

D. Interprofessional

1.School psychologists strive to establish cooperative working relationships with professionals from related fields, community agencies, with community leaders, and others holding positions of respect.

2.School psychologists strive to insure the integrity of information given in confidence.

3.School psychologists understand the areas of competence and limitations of professionals in related fields.

4.School psychologists use their best professional judgement when making referrals to other professionals.

5.School psychologists do not offer professional services to a person who is receiving similar assistance from another professional except by agreement of after termination of the relationship with the other professional.

6. School psychologists avoid making expedient decisions.

II. Assessment

A. School psychologists maintain the physical security of tests and assessment techniques within the limits of legal mandates in order to maintain the validity of the tests.

B. School psychologists typically administer tests according to publisher guidelines in order to maintain the validity of the results. However, when modifications are made or the validity of a test is questioned, these aspects are noted in the assessment report along with interpretation of possible effects of these factors.

C. School psychologists interpret tests in light of the appropriateness of their norms or other well established standards as well as the reliability and validity estimates for the purposes for which they are used.

D. School psychologists guard against misinterpretation or misuse of assessment data.

E. School psychologists are accountable for assessment techniques they use and are able to defend their use.

F.School psychologists discourage utilization of psychological assessment instruments by inappropriately trained or otherwise unqualified persons.

G. When using tests developed in other countries, school psychologists conduct studies that help ensure the test is suitably normed and has adequate reliability and validity.

III. Research

A. General:

- 1.School psychologists strive to avoid cultural, racial, social class, or ethnic biases in their research.
- 2.School psychologists inform parents when their children are participating in research projects.
- 3.School psychologists respect the right of parents to decline for their child to participate in a research study or to withdraw from it at any time.
- 4.Whenever possible, school psychologists fully inform students and their parents of the nature and purpose of the investigation.
- 5.School psychologists ensure that students participating in research do not suffer any mental or physical distress from the procedures.
- 6.School psychologists ensure the exactness of their published results and state the limitations of their data.
- 7.School psychologists report the research results to educators, parents, students, and other interested parties.
- 8.School psychologists give credit to those persons who have participated in conducting the research.
- 9.School psychologists exhibit open communication between themselves and the individuals and organizations involved in the studies.
- 10.School psychologists respect students' rights and protect their welfare and dignity.
- 11.When possible, research experiences enrich and benefit in some way the individuals involved in the research activity and the host institution and community.
- 12.School psychologists maintain high standards of professional competence by not undertaking research without the necessary skills and knowledge.
- 13.School psychologists consider unintended direct and indirect consequences of research activities for various members of the community.

B. Cross-Cultural Research

- 1.School psychologists abide by the research ethics of the country in which they are performing their studies.
- 2.School psychologists demonstrate a respect for the host culture and avoid actions that violate cultural expectations or reveal culturally biased perspectives while formulating the research problem, executing the study, or reporting findings.

3. School psychologists undertaking cross-cultural research are knowledgeable in cross-cultural methodology and familiar with the cultural context of the research setting. The investigator should exercise care while selecting measuring instruments, particularly when these are to be used for cross-cultural comparisons and while interpreting cultural differences.