

## **Guidelines for Non-Discriminatory Practice**

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### **Preamble**

These guidelines were developed to encourage non-discriminatory practice among psychologists. They were based on the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (CPA, 1991) and have been updated to cross reference to the third edition of the *Code* (CPA, 2000).<sup>1</sup> The guidelines are aspirational in intent. The goal is to promote non-discriminatory care in therapeutic work with clients, as well as to provide guidelines for evaluating the extent to which one's work falls within the parameters of non-discriminatory practice. As our society and culture become more diverse, and as we become more aware of specific diversities, it is important that psychologists gain an awareness of the need for non-discriminatory practice. As the need arises, guidelines can be developed for use of specific diversities.

### **Ethical Principles Applied to Non-Discriminatory Practice**

#### **Principle I: Respect for the Dignity of Persons**

The principle of Respect for the Dignity of Persons (CPA, 2000) requires psychologists in practice, teaching and research to actively demonstrate a belief that each person should be treated primarily as a person or an end in him/herself, not as an object or a means to an end. Psychologists appreciate that the innate worth of human beings is not enhanced or reduced by their culture, nationality, ethnicity, colour, race, religion, sex, gender, marital status, sexual

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<sup>1</sup> These guidelines were prepared and updated by Sharon Crozier, Susan Harris, Carolyn Larsen, Jean Pettifor, and Lynne Sloan, with the assistance of the Committee on Ethics of the Canadian Psychological Association.

orientation, physical or mental abilities, age, socioeconomic status, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition, or status. Psychologists also recognize that as individual, family, group, or community vulnerabilities increase, or as the power of persons to control their environment or their lives decreases, psychologists have an increasing responsibility to seek ethical advice and to establish safeguards to protect the rights of those less able to protect themselves. These responsibilities have special significance in a society which is becoming more diverse culturally and economically and which has not achieved gender equality. In addition to specific non-discriminatory practices, special care must be taken in providing for free and informed consent, respecting privacy, and clarifying the protection and limitations on confidentiality. Psychologists do not impose the dominant culture world view on those who are different. Psychologists continually monitor how they demonstrate respect when working with diverse populations.

### Principle II: Responsible Caring

The principle of Responsible Caring (CPA, 2000) requires psychologists to demonstrate an active concern for the welfare of all individuals, groups, and communities with whom they relate in their role as psychologists. There is an additional responsibility to take care that persons in vulnerable positions have equal access to the benefits of psychological knowledge and services. Psychologists recognize the impact of society in creating and maintaining the problems and issues faced by persons who are perceived as different from the norm of mainstream society. Psychologists are committed to the belief that all persons are of equal worth. Psychologists are interested in empowering vulnerable persons so that they have equal opportunities in mainstream society, recognizing that in addition to personal coping skills this requires political and social changes. Psychologists are particularly cognizant of power differentials in society that

discriminate against diverse populations. Responsible caring addresses the immediate short-term and long-term welfare of others.

Psychologists recognize that, in order to adequately care for the welfare of others, especially for the welfare of those who are vulnerable, dependent, or suffer oppression and discrimination in society, they need to be competent in their activities as psychologists.

Competence requires specific knowledge, skills and attitudes used for the benefit of others.

Competence also requires self-monitoring of one's own knowledge base, personal values, experiences, biases, attitudes, and socialization, which influence how they practice.

Psychologists also act to maintain their level of competence. Providing incompetent services places others at risk of harm.

#### Principle III: Integrity in Relationships

The principle of Integrity in Relationships (CPA, 2000) requires that psychologists be honest, open, objective and accurate in all their activities as psychologists. They avoid dishonesty, deception, bias, and inaccuracy. The individual characteristics, values and beliefs of psychologists influence the questions they ask and the assumptions, observations, and interpretations they make. Psychologists are responsible for managing situations where conflicts arise between their own personal, political, or business interests and the interests of others. Integrity in relationships can easily be compromised when working with diverse populations, especially with groups that may be generally devalued in society.

#### Principle IV: Responsibility to Society

The Principle of Responsibility to Society (CPA, 2000) requires that psychologists demonstrate a concern for the welfare of all human beings in society. They may choose for themselves the most appropriate and beneficial use of their time and talents to help meet this

collective responsibility. There are multiple avenues for social action. A discipline that maintains high standards for its members is serving the interests of society. Knowledge may be used to influence social policy. Public education, advocacy, and lobbying are appropriate. If social policy and societal attitudes seriously ignore or violate the ethical principles of respect, caring and honesty to the harm of special populations, then psychologists have a responsibility to be critical and to advocate for change to occur as quickly as possible. There is social injustice when segments of society are devalued or oppressed. In a society that is increasingly diverse, there is increasing potential for injustice. To the extent that individuals and groups without power suffer oppression in our imperfect society, psychologists have an ethical responsibility to use their knowledge and power to contribute to social change.

### **Guidelines for Ethical Practice with Diverse Populations**

1. Recognize the inherent worth of all human beings regardless of how different they may be from oneself.
2. Be aware of one's own cultural, moral, and social beliefs, and be sensitive to how they may enhance one's interactions with others or may interfere with promoting the welfare of others.
3. Recognize the power differential between oneself and others in order to diminish the differences, and to use power for the advantage of others rather than unwittingly to abuse it.
4. Study group or cultural norms in order to recognize individual differences within the larger context.
5. Be aware that theories or precepts developed to describe people from the dominant culture may apply differently to people from non-dominant cultures.
6. Recognize the reality, variety, and implications of all forms of oppression in society, and facilitate clients' examination of options in dealing with such experiences.

7. Recognize that those who are subjected to physical or sexual assault are victims of crime, and that those who assault are guilty of crimes.
8. Be knowledgeable about community resources available for diverse populations.
9. Respect, listen and learn from clients who are different from oneself in order to understand what is in their best interests.
10. Use inclusive and respectful language.
11. Share all relevant decision making with clients including goals of the interaction and the nature of proposed interventions in order to serve their best interests.
12. Ensure that consent is truly informed, keeping in mind diversity issues and cultural differences.
13. Be especially careful to be open, honest, and straightforward, remembering that persons who are oppressed may be distrustful or overly trustful of those in authority.
14. Assess accurately the source of difficulties, apportioning causality appropriately between individual, situational, and cultural factors.
15. Respect privacy and confidentiality according to the wishes of clients, and explain fully any limitations on confidentiality that may exist.
16. Evaluate the cultural meaning of dual/multiple and overlapping relationships in order to show respect and to avoid exploitation.
17. Constantly reevaluate one's competence, attitudes, and effectiveness in working with diverse populations.
18. Consult with others who may be more familiar with diversity in order to provide competent services.

19. Acknowledge one's own vulnerabilities and care oneself outside of relationships as psychologists.
20. Make competent services available to disadvantaged groups by offering services at a lower cost in proportion to the client's income for a proportion of one's caseload.
21. Choose ways in which one can contribute to the making of a society that is respectful and caring of all its citizens.

### **References**

Canadian Psychological Association. (2000 ). *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologist. Third edition*. Ottawa: Author.