



Code of Ethics

INTRODUCTION

Every profession is expected to have uniform and recognized principles and standards that serve the needs of the profession, clients, educators, legal bodies, and institutions. This Code of Ethics describes the ethical principles and standards of conduct of the International School Psychology Association (ISPA).

General purposes of an ethics code

Reciprocal relationships exist between society and school psychology. Society provides resources to the specialty of school psychology that allow it to function effectively as a profession. These resources include and are not limited to its ability to select those who aspire to become school psychologists, to prepare them academically and professionally, to conduct research that fosters good practices, to credential school psychologists, to fund school psychology services, and to foster the creation of the speciality of school psychology in other ways. In turn, society expects school psychologists to provide quality services to individuals and society through their teaching, research, and service. The ethical principles and standards of conduct discussed below constitute a statement to society of the professional behavior expected of school psychologists who are ISPA members.

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, there are numerous similarities in standards within the specialty of school psychology. Acceptable standards governing professional behavior span geographic and national boundaries. This ethics code endeavors to capture and highlight these commonalities.

Nonetheless, the translation and manifestation of ethical principles and standards important to this code may vary somewhat between countries as a reflection of each country's norms, values, traditions, and laws. 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 attempting to clarify the ethical principle or standard 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.

PREVAILING ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

School psychologists are expected to exemplify the profession's principles. These include transcending narrow personal, social, and cultural values and attitudes; adopting positions that benefit professional-client relationships; as well as acting in ways that are consistent with the best interests of children and youth, educators, parents, institutions, the community, and the profession. Children's rights are to be respected. Should conflicts occur between the interests of these individuals or organizations, members should seek to resolve such differences by attempting to clarify the ethical principle or standard from the respective individual or organization with which they are affiliated and work toward resolving the conflicts, recognizing the particular vulnerability that children present across cultures. As such, the following six principles constitute aspirational behaviors that underscore its standards.

Beneficence and Nonmaleficence

School psychologists strive to enable others to derive help and benefit from their professional services. They strive to understand the nature of requested services and, personally or through referrals, attempt to provide or secure needed and desired services. They are aware of possible professional and personal conditions that may limit their ability to help others. Minimally, they strive to do no harm.

Competence

Services provided by school psychologists reflect their areas of expertise established through their initial and continued academic and professional preparation. School psychologists strive to provide services at a high level of competence. When requested or needed to provide services for which they may be less qualified, school psychologists either refer to others or acquire needed training and work under consultation and/or supervision.

Fidelity and Responsibility

School psychologists acknowledge trust provides a foundation for professional service. They work to establish and maintain trust for them and their profession. They are knowledgeable of and uphold professional standards of conduct. When needed, they describe and clarify their professional roles, obligations, and professional limitations. They accept appropriate responsibility for their behavior. They manage conflicts of interest.

Integrity

School psychologists strive to display integrity, including consistency in the expression of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They are committed to the expression and promotion of accuracy, honesty and truthfulness through their scholarship, teaching, and clinical practices as well as to other professionals.

Respect for People's Rights and Dignity

School psychologists strive to promote and respect the dignity and worth of all people. They acknowledge an individual's rights to privacy, confidentiality, and self determination. They acknowledge cultural, individual, and role differences associated with age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status.

Social Justice

Consistent with the reciprocal commitment between their profession and society, school psychologists are committed to the principle that all people are entitled access to and benefit from the contributions of school psychology. Thus, they strive to promote free access to educational, social, and psychological services, to promote changes in schools or other educational practice settings that are beneficial to children and youth as well as educational staff, and to minimize biases.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

I. Professional Responsibilities

- A. School psychologists aspire to be knowledgeable about laws, judicial decisions, and administrative codes and guidelines in the locations in which they work. They act in good faith when these regulations conflict with ethical principles. They seek supervision or consultation with those knowledgeable if there is an area of concern. When codes of ethics differ from laws and regulations, school psychologists should seek to resolve such differences by attempting to clarify the ethical principle or standard and work to resolve the difference through changes in laws/regulations whenever possible.
- B. School psychologists do not allow personal prejudices or biases to interfere in their decision-making. They do not engage in discriminatory procedures or practices based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status.
- C. School psychologists respect the cultural environment within which they work, are sensitive to cultural differences, and knowledgeable of appropriate ways to provide services within multicultural settings.
- D. School psychologists are committed to protect the welfare and to act in the best interests of children and youth, their parents, educators, colleagues, and employees. When conflicts of interest arise, school psychologists' first concern is to serve the best interests of children and youth.
- E. School psychologists familiarize themselves with the goals and philosophy of the educational system and other organizations within which they work and engage effectively within their organizational structures.
- F. School psychologists, when working with families, respect the goals and philosophies of the families.
- G. School psychologists provide services to children and youth with the informed consent of the parents. Parental consent may be waived prior to the provision of services in an acute crisis situation (e.g., when a student is deemed to be a danger to himself/herself or to others) or when mandated by law.
- H. Educators, including internship and practicum supervisors, ensure that information conveyed during the preparation of students is accurate, timely, and relevant.
- I. Educators promote an awareness of and the importance of the adherence to ethical standards in their students and colleagues. They provide a range of appropriate professional experiences and offer constructive and timely consultation, feedback, and evaluation.

J. School psychologists avoid practices that are a result of bias. They avoid situations that would present a conflict of interest due to economic, political, social, religious, or personal issues.

II. Confidentiality

- A. School psychologists take precautions to protect the confidential information obtained through or stored in all locations and by any medium. They recognize that the extent and limits of confidentiality may be governed by law or established by institutional rules.
- B. School psychologists discuss with persons and organizations with whom they establish a scientific or professional relationship the relevant limits of confidentiality and foreseeable uses of the information generated through their professional activities. This discussion, when feasible, occurs at the outset of the relationship and thereafter as new circumstances warrant.
- C. School psychologists use professional judgment in accord with laws to safeguard confidential information obtained in their practice, including consultation, teaching, or research. Safeguards include, but are not limited to, ensuring that electronically stored information is secure and accessible only to persons who have legitimate rights to access such information.
- D. Student records are kept in a secure place in order to maintain their confidentiality. In addition, such records are not transmitted without a guarantee of privacy. Identification and personal data should be transmitted electronically only with assurance of password protection, e-mail encryption or secure fax.
- E. When discussing case studies, sufficient precautions are taken to protect the identity of persons. Confidential information is discussed only for professional purposes and only with persons who have a right to be informed.
- F. Informed consent is obtained from parents before releasing confidential student information. Under certain circumstances, assent (informal agreement) or consent should be obtained from children and youth before releasing information to parents or professionals in other agencies. School psychologists take the age into account at which a country legally defines one as being able to act and judge independently as well as the level of the student's mental development. An exception to this policy exists when the school psychologist believes a student is in immediate danger to himself/herself or to others, in which case the school psychologist must act in the best interest to protect the child or those who might be threatened.

III. Professional Growth

- A. School psychologists recognize the need for and participate in continuing education and continuing professional development.
- B. School psychologists maintain knowledge of current scientific and professional information by reading current research and other forms of scholarship, attending workshops and conferences, and becoming active in professional organizations.
- C. School psychologists are expected to have the appropriate and up-to-date credentials to practice.

IV. Professional Limitations

- A. School psychologists offer only those services within their areas of professional competence. They 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. Behaviors and Attitudes

- 1. School psychologists do not exploit their professional relationships with children and youth, parents, other clients, interns or research subjects for personal gains.
- 2. School psychologists do not engage in harassment and/or physical relations of a sexual nature with clients, children and youth, and trainees or others under their supervision.
- 3. School psychologists attempt to discuss and interpret the nature of any assessment or professional interactions with children and youth to them, to their teachers, and parents.
- 4. School psychologists attempt to communicate with persons in their primary language. When this is not possible, the school psychologist attempts to secure the services of a knowledgeable colleague who speaks the primary language. If this is not possible, the school psychologist attempts to secure the services of a properly prepared translator to facilitate communication. When working with a translator, the school psychologist works to ensure he or she is properly prepared to assist in this work and commits to maintaining the accuracy in the translation and the confidentiality of the client and related information.
- 5. 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 state of the art standards of services to children and youth are at risk.
- 6. School psychologists refrain from making demeaning or derogatory remarks about children and youth, parents, staff, or colleagues. In situations of disagreement or conflict they express their objection in a respectful way.
- 7. School psychologists generally avoid multiple relationships, namely those that occur when professional services are being offered to persons or family members at the same time when personal relationships or personal gain may occur.

B. Children and Youth

- 1. School psychologists consider the welfare of the children and youth to be of high importance. They value parents, teachers and other persons to whom the children are attached.
- 2. School psychologists strive to ensure children and youth understand the nature and purpose of any assessment or intervention/treatment to the best of their abilities and encourage their active participation in decision-making.

3. School psychologists generally obtain the assent of children and youth prior to providing their services.

C. Colleagues and School Staffs

1. School psychologists strive to develop cooperative working relationships with school staff and other colleagues. They recognize the need to function as a member of a team within schools, educational settings, other institutions, and communities.
2. When school psychologists become 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 school 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 outlined by ISPA or one's national association of school psychology or psychology should be followed when available.

D. Interprofessional

1. School psychologists strive to establish cooperative working relationships with other professionals, decision makers, and policy makers.
2. School psychologists strive to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of information conveyed to professionals who have a right to know.
3. School psychologists understand the areas of personal and professional competence and limitations of other professionals and limit their practices accordingly.
4. School psychologists use sound professional judgment when making referrals to other professionals.
5. School psychologists generally avoid offering professional services to a person who is receiving similar assistance from another professional except by agreement of or after termination of the relationship with the other professional. However, such dual services may be warranted when mandated by law or administrative decisions.
6. School psychologists make decisions in a thoughtful and deliberative manner.

II. Assessment

- A. School psychologists use tests or other assessment instruments only after being properly prepared and thus qualified in their use, and use them in the manner in which they were developed and intended.
- B. School psychologists typically administer standardized tests according to published directions in order to obtain comparable results. However, when administrative modifications are made or the validity of a test is questioned, these aspects are noted in the assessment report along with a discussion of their possible effects.
- C. School psychologists make reasonable efforts to maintain the security and integrity of test materials (e.g. manuals, instruments, protocols, test questions, and test materials). School psychologists guard against access to tests by unqualified persons and to the release of test materials to parents and other unqualified persons that may compromise their further use.

- D. 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.
- E. School psychologists remain alert to and guard against misinterpretation or misuse of assessment data.
- F. School psychologists are accountable for assessment techniques they use and are able to defend their use.
- G. School psychologists discourage use of psychological assessment instruments by inappropriately trained or otherwise unqualified persons.
- H. When using tests originally developed in another country, school psychologists encourage and, when possible, participate in studies that lead to suitable test adaptations as well as ensure the test is appropriately normed and validated based on professional test construction standards.
- I. School psychologists report limitations in their assessments due to the use of tests that are not properly developed for their country, the populations with whom they are working, or for the purposes of their assessment. Whenever possible, they avoid the use of such instruments.

III. Research

A. General Guidelines

- 1. School psychologists engage in or support efforts of others to conduct research that is reasonably calculated to provide information applicable to enhancing educational and psychological practices and services and professional scholarship.
- 2. School psychologists maintain high standards of professional competence by undertaking research only after obtaining applicable skills and knowledge.
- 3. School psychologists strive to avoid cultural, racial, social class, or ethnic biases in their research.
- 4. School psychologists inform parents and obtain their permission for their children to participate in a research project in accord with institutional, professional, and legal standards.
- 5. School psychologists inform children and youth and obtain their assent to participate in a research project in accord with institutional, professional, and legal standards.
- 6. 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.
- 7. School psychologists inform children, youth, and their parents of the nature and purpose of the research.
- 8. School psychologists strive to ensure that children and youth participating in research do not suffer mental or physical distress from the procedures.
- 9. School psychologists warrant the correctness of their published results and state the limitations of their findings.
- 10. When requested, school psychologists report the research results to all interested parties.
- 11. School psychologists give credit to those persons who have participated in conducting the research. Principal authorship and other publication credits accurately reflect the relative scientific contributions of all persons involved.

tific or professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their relative status. Mere possession of an institutional position, such as department chair, does not justify authorship credit. Minor contributions to the research or to the writing for publications are acknowledged appropriately, such as in footnotes or in an introductory statement. Except under exceptional circumstances, a student is listed as principal author on any multiple-authored article that is substantially based on the student's doctoral dissertation. Faculty advisors discuss publication credit with students as early as feasible and throughout the research and publication process as appropriate.

12. School psychologists strive to establish and maintain productive communication processes with the individuals and organizations involved in the studies.
13. School psychologists respect students' rights and strive to protect their welfare and dignity.
14. School psychologists strive to enrich and benefit the individuals, host institution, and/or community involved in their research.
15. School psychologists strive to consider unintended direct and indirect consequences of research activities for various members of the community.
16. School psychologists conduct research in accord with international (e.g. Helsinki) or other recognized university, institutional, or professional research standards.

B. Cross-Cultural and Cross-National Research

1. School psychologists conducting cross-cultural and cross-national research abide by the ethics codes of the professional associations they adhere to, as well as by the legal standards of each country in which they are conducting their research.
2. School psychologists demonstrate a respect for the host culture by avoiding actions that violate cultural expectations or reveal culturally biased perspectives while formulating research problems, executing the study, or reporting findings.
3. School psychologists undertaking cross-cultural or cross-national research are knowledgeable of cross-cultural or cross-national methodology and familiar with the cultural context of the research settings. They should exercise care when selecting measures, particularly when they are to be used for cross-cultural comparisons and when interpreting cultural differences.

Approved by the ISPA General Assembly

Date: July 22nd, 2011

Location: VIT, Vellore, Tamilnadu, India

Appendix

History of the Development of the ISPA Code of Ethics

Work on a code of ethics was initiated in 1985 when Herbert Bischoff, ISPA President, 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 drafts were made and presented to the ISPA Executive Committee for its 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 the ISPA Code of Ethics in July 1990 and recommended its adoption as a statement of ethics for the Association by the membership at the 1991 Colloquium. This document, approved by more than 75% of those in attendance, then became the official code of ethics of the International School Psychology Association.

Following its adoption, ISPA affiliate associations that lack an ethics statement were encouraged to review and adopt these or higher standards. Affiliates that presently have ethics statements were encouraged to review and compare the two sets of standards. Affiliates also were 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 created an ethics committee. The intent of the ethics committee is to educate the public and ISPA members and affiliates. The committee also serves in an advisory capacity in order to encourage high levels of ethical conduct. Its role is to provide guidance, not to adjudicate.

In 2009 Thomas Oakland and Gladiola Musabelliu, co-chairs of the ISPA ethics committee, and former ethics committee chair Mary Stafford undertook the revision of the existing code and established a revision process in collaboration with a task force of the executive committee chaired by Jürg Forster. This revision process once again recognized the need to rely on ethics codes from other psychological associations for guidance. Thus the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists, the Meta-Code of the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations, the Ethics Codes of the American Psychological Association and of the National Association of School Psychology were consulted as part of revising the code, and informed the revision process.

N.B.: In this document, the term 'parent' stands for biological and adoptive parent(s), and legal guardians.