

# The apa code of ethics



**APA Code of Ethics**

Understanding the American Psychological Association (APA) code of ethics is the key influence to good professional behavior that Psychologist should adhere to. Almost 60 years APA has been working and defining these guides, and serves as a guide in this profession (Fisher, 2009). The code of ethics consists of a Preamble, five general principles, and ten ethical standards. The Preamble and general principles are goals to guide Psychologist but are not enforced, but should help psychologist make the correct ethical decision. The ten standards are written in broad terms but broken down into a variety of situations that possible potential decision would need to be made (Fisher, 2009). This project summarizes the APA code of ethic, as a starting point and its relevant application to practice, then will provide a more in-depth look on how these codes affect me in my work.

“ Psychologists are committed to increasing scientific and professional knowledge of behavior and people’s understanding of themselves and others and to the use of such knowledge to improve the condition of individuals, organizations and society. Psychologists respect and protect civil and human rights and the central importance of freedom of inquiry and expression in research, teaching, and publication. They strive to help the public in developing informed judgments and choices concerning human behavior” (Fisher, 2009. p. 19).

In other words,

**General Principles**

The general principles help guide psychologist in making good decisions and “reflect the underlying values and ideals of the discipline” (Fisher, 2009. p 19).

Principle A: Beneficence and Nonmaleficence; Psychologist are obligated to do good and avoid harm. They take precautions when making decisions to protect the welfare of those they work (Fisher, 2009).

Principle B: Fidelity and Responsibility; under this standard, psychologist are faithful, dependable, and conscientious. Psychologist should work to avoid, possible conflicts of interest situations that could lead to harm (Fisher, 2009).

Principle C: Integrity; Psychologist live up to integrity by not stealing, cheating, and all forms of dishonesty. They do not make false statements nor making commitments can't they live up to (Fisher, 2009).

Principle D: Justice; Psychologist make judgments that are reasonable and make sure that their biases, competence, and limitation don't lead to unjust practices (Fishers, 2009. p. 318).

Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity; Psychologist “Respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination” (Fisher, 2009. p. 30). In other words, they protect their clients confidential unless it would do more hard to do so. Psychologist respect the differences in people's cultural, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and sexual orientation in people and

eliminate any biases they might have in order to successfully making appropriate decisions (Fishers, 2009. p. 319).

### **Ethical Standards**

The ten major ethical standards set by the APA for psychologist that they are required to follow or be in violation to the ethical code. Not knowing these codes does not wave the penalties for violating them. (1) Resolving ethical issues (2) Competence (3) Human relations (4) Privacy and confidentiality (5) Advertising other public statements (6) Record keeping and fees (7) Education and training (8) Debriefing (9) Assessments, and (10) Therapy (Fisher, 2009).

Ethical problem tend to happen when principles or standards emerge when one principle is in conflict with another one. Psychologist should takes steps to understand these standards and make ethical decisions that will be effective and not harm others (Fisher, 2009. p. 39). When a psychologist knows another psychologist has broken a code of ethic there are things they can do to solve the issue. The first thing to do is to find an informal resolution (Standard 1. 04). The psychologist should talk to the other and confirm if there actually was misconduct and recommend ways they can solve ethical issues in the future. If it can't be worked out or significantly harmful to another person such as, sexual misconduct or insurance fraud has happened. Standard 1. 05 mandates to report ethical violations to state or national board (Fisher, 2009). .

Standard 2 Competence: Psychologist is required to work only in areas that they have the proper training in (Fisher, 2009). For example, I received by

degree in Applied Behavior Analysis and if I had a client with a drug and alcohol problem, I would not be able to provide the best treatment because I am not trained in that specialty area. Psychologist should keep up with up to date knowledge to make sure they understand new techniques available so that they can be effective in implementing those techniques. A psychologist can provide temporarily treatment in a crisis situation (standard 2. 02) as long as they take precautions to not further harm a client and if they know that they are not competent in this area to make a referral..... Furthermore, this standards suggest to delegate client to another psychologist when you have a dual relationship with the client, (standard 2. 05) such as, you are a potential client psychologist, child guardian at Liam, in this circumstance it would be a dual relationship and should be avoided

(Fisher, 2009). A psychologist according to standard 2. 06, which has personal problems, can be in conflict with their ability to perform there job professionally and in a competent manner. Problems that can affect a psychologist work are substance abuse, severe depression, mental disorders, life-threatening diseases, and stressful events (divorce, death of love one). These things might prevent them from implementing effective treatment (Fisher, 2009, p. 85).

Standard 3 deal with human relationship psychologist needs to be aware of. Psychologist should not discriminate based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status (3. 01) furthermore, psychologist are to respect people's rights and dignity as mentioned in principle E (Fisher, 2009 , p. 91). Psychologist are to avoid harassment of any kind (standard 3. 02, & 3. 03);

sexual, and any of the discrimination mentioned above. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcomed verbal, physical, or nonverbal offensive behaviors that makes a hostile work environment. If a person is being harassed they should first bring it up to the person and try to resolve it informally (standard 1. 04), if that does not work, then report it to their supervisor (Fisher, 2009). Standard 3. 04, says psychologists are to make sure they take precaution to minimize and prevent harm and safeguard the welfare of those they work with. This standard is in connection with principle A (Fisher, 2009).

Psychologists are to be careful not to engage in multiple relationships with whom they work that would be in ethical violation of standard 3. 05. This standard states that the psychologist shouldn't be in a dual relationship that is closely related to their profession, such as psychologist and old lover. This standard is not in violation if they go to the same church. " Multiple relationships that can cause impairment or harm is unethical" (Fisher, 2009, p. 100). It is unethical for a psychologist to do therapy with those that they have had sexual or non sexual relationship with in the past or begin dating a previous or current client they are working with (standard 10. 5, 10. 07, & 10. 08). Likewise they should not counsel relatives of a person they are or have been in a relationship with as mentioned in standard 10. 07 (Fisher, 2009). It is unethical to have sex with their clients/patients with whom they work. It is prohibited by the ethic code ( 1989).

A Psychologist should get informed consent (standard 3. 10) when doing research, assessment, and therapy, to protect the right and privacy of those they work with. This includes with the use of electronic devices. With children and those determined .... The psychologist needs to get informed

consent from the client's legal guardian (Fisher, 2009). In Canada children who are mentally capable are legally able to consent, although there is big controversy concerning this (Hesson, Bakel, & Dobson, 1993).

Standard 3.12 Interruption of Psychological Services: Psychologist make effort to provide an alternative service in case they are no longer able to provide them service. The psychologist need to make effort to ensure service are continued in case you leave to another job, death, mental health problems, or illnesses (Fisher, 2009).

The strength of the text is they gave examples of possible ethical dilemmas and explain the code of ethic in a positive way. I felt the weakness are that the author did not go into depth of how to handle the dilemmas in the case studies, so I might know what to do if that situation came across in my profession. It was interesting how the author intermixed the standard and principles within the specific topic they were talking so I understood what codes it was without having to go back and look and also she mentioned each code it could relate to in that category.

I work at Progressive Behavior Systems (PBS) as a Psychosocial Rehabilitation Specialist (PSR), and our center abides by the National Association of Social Workers. Their core values includes service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence.(NASW, 2008). The six major ethical standards that social worker's must abide by to are: To clients, to colleagues, practice settings, as professionals, to the social work profession, and responsibilities

to the broader society. Most, if not all, of the ten standards of the APA fall under one of these six categories (NASW, 2008).

I will apply the ethic code by when a situation comes up to think about the codes and is it how I handle it going to cause harm? A possible situation that comes up when an employee changes the company they work with and go to another one would be what do they do with the clients they have. Do they warn them they are leaving to another company? Or do they not say a word and go their merry-o-way? In NASW, ethical principle 3.06 client transfer; a social worker think about the clients need to minimize confusion and conflict. The worker should discuss the client's current relationship with the current provider and the benefits and risk of going to another company (2008). In other words, if I leave a company, ethically I should not convince my clients to switch companies that I am moving to, but to tell them where I am going and giving them a list of companies that provides PSR services and allow them to make their own choice. If I leave and don't provide them with their choices and they are not receiving services I could be considered abandoning my client and causing harm and not being loyal to my clients principle 1.01 (NASW, 2008).

According to the NASW principle 6.04d, I should not discriminated against race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability (NASW, 2008). I should be knowledgeable about cultural awareness concerning these topics and not pressure those beliefs on them. For example if I am working with a catholic young adult women that is pregnant, I should be aware that they don't



believe in abortion before I suggest that as an option. Or if she is LDS and she felt guilty for her premarital sexual relations. I should be aware that that is wrong according to her belief before I say she shouldn't feel guilty and help her deal with choice and consequences. Religious clients have particular characteristics that psychologist should learn about and acknowledge when they are treating them (Hawkins, & Bullock, 1995).

In conclusion, psychologist should be aware and live up to the principles and standards in the ethic code. When an ethical situation comes up they should use wise judgments and determine what is in the best interest of their clients and avoid at all cost to prevent harm. Likewise, personally I need to be aware of these codes along with the National Association of Social Workers code of ethics so that I know and is aware of situations that can come up and make ethical decisions in my career.

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