



**BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS**

**ETHICAL CONDUCT AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE:**

**PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS**

**FOR MEMBERS OF THE**

**BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS**

**March 2010**

## Preamble

*Ethical Principles* define the *ethical responsibility* required of members of professions towards the persons with whom they practice and with whom they work.

The purpose of the *Ethical Conduct and Professional Practice: Principles and Standards for Members of British Columbia Association of School Psychologists* (BCASP) is to protect the students who receive school psychological services by articulating the ethical aspects of the work of school psychologists. This includes the importance of promoting the development of high standards within the membership of BCASP and promoting the advancement of sound standards in areas of public relations, education and legislation. The aspirational nature of codes of ethics does not allow for concrete practice guidelines. The set of standards that provide the minimum expected *behaviour* required of practicing professionals, is known as the *standards of practice*.

Ethical codes are not static but are revised periodically to reflect contemporary practice. To review the *Ethical Conduct and Professional Practice: Principles and Standards for Members of British Columbia Association of School Psychologists*, a committee of five BCASP members: Maureen Godfrey (chair), Ken Cole, Barbara Holmes, Allison Mitchell and Susan Wagner were appointed by the executive. They worked with the previous BCASP code of conduct and standards of practice, as well as the codes authored by the Canadian Association of Psychologists (CPA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

## Introduction

This document gives expression to *Principles and Standards for Ethical Conduct and Professional Practice for Members of the British Columbia Association of School Psychologists (BCASP)*, referred to as *school psychologists* throughout the text.

BCASP recognizes its responsibility to define and maintain the professional practice and ethical behaviour of school psychologists.

Assuring ethical behaviour and professional practice includes:

- Articulation of ethical principles, values, and standards;
- Promotion of those principles through education, peer modeling, and consultation;
- Development and implementation of methods to help school psychologists monitor their practice; and
- Adjudication of complaints of noncompliance and application of corrective action when it is warranted.

## The Ethical Principles

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

- Principle I.1 Ensuring Informed Consent
- Principle I.2 Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality
- Principle I.3 Supporting Social Justice

### **Ethical Principle II: Professional Competence and Responsible Caring**

- Principle II.1 Maintaining Professional Competence
- Principle II.2 Practicing Responsible Caring
- Principle II.3 Applying Best Assessment Practices
- Principle II.4 Promoting Accountable Record Keeping
- Principle II.5 Using Assessment Tools Responsibly

### **Ethical Principle III: Integrity in Professional Relationships**

- Principle III.1 Identifying Professional Qualification
- Principle III.2 Respecting Other Professionals
- Principle III.3 Avoiding Multiple Relationships and Conflicts of Interest

### **Ethical Principle IV: Responsibility to Schools, Families, the Profession, and Society**

- Principle IV.1 Promoting Best Practices in School Psychology
- Principle IV.2 Supporting Professional Behaviour and Ethical Practice
- Principle IV.3 Contributing to the Profession by Mentoring, Teaching, and Supervision
- Principle IV.4 Contributing to the Profession of School Psychology

## Ethical Principle I: Respect for the Dignity of all Persons

### Values Statement

*In the course of their work, school psychologists maintain professional relationships with students, parents, school staff, other colleagues, and members of the community. In these relationships, school psychologists accept as fundamental the principle of respect for the dignity of all people. Such relationships are not compromised by issues of culture, ethnicity, colour, race, religion, gender, sexual preference, or personal characteristics. School psychologists consider students to be their primary responsibility and act as advocates for their rights and welfare.*

### Principle I.1 Ensuring Informed Consent

*School psychologists accept the rights of parents and involve them in making decisions on behalf of their children.*

**Performance Standard I.1.1** School psychologists obtain informed written consent from parents or guardians prior to beginning a psycho-educational assessment or providing direct service to a student under the legal age. This includes but is not limited to: the purpose of the assessment, the use that will be made of information collected, and the limits on confidentiality.

- It is ethically permissible to provide psychological assistance without parent notice or consent in emergency situations, or if there is reason to believe that a student may pose a danger to others; is at risk for self-harm; is in danger of injury, exploitation, or maltreatment; or has been a victim of injury, abuse, or exploitation.
- Parent consent is not ethically required for school psychologists to conduct classroom observations, participate in educational screenings conducted as part of the regular program of instruction, or to review a student's educational record. Parent consent is necessary if the consultation about a particular student is likely to be extensive and ongoing.

**Performance Standard I.1.2** School psychologists recognize that informed consent is the result of a process of reaching an agreement to work collaboratively, and requires more than having a consent form signed. In the process of obtaining informed consent, school psychologists ensure that the following points are understood by the parent or guardian:

- purpose and nature of the intervention,
- mutual responsibilities,
- likely benefits and risks,
- alternatives,
- likely consequences of non-action,
- right to refuse and withdraw at any time,
- period of time within which the consent applies,

- how to rescind consent if desired, and
- limits to confidentiality.

To ensure understanding by the individual providing consent, this explanation takes into account:

- language and cultural differences;
- cognitive capabilities;
- developmental level;
- age; and
- other relevant factors.

Any service provision by interns, practicum students or other trainees is explained and agreed to in advance, and the identity and responsibilities of the supervising school psychologist are explained prior to the provision of services.

**Performance Standard I.1.3** School psychologists encourage a student's voluntary participation in school psychology services.

- If a student's consent for services is not solicited, school psychologists nevertheless honour the student's right to be informed about the services provided.
- When a student is given a choice regarding whether to accept or refuse services, the school psychologist ensures the student understands what is being offered, honours the student's stated choice, and guards against overwhelming the student with choices he or she does not want, or is not able to make.

## **Principle I.2            Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality**

*School psychologists accept the right of parents and students to disclose or withhold personal information.*

**Performance Standard I.2.1** School psychologists actively collect and report only that information which is germane to the purpose(s) for which consent has been obtained.

**Performance Standard I.2.2** School psychologists respect the confidentiality of information obtained during their professional work. Information is not revealed to third parties (as any person or entity who are not specifically defined in the limits to confidentiality section of the informed consent) without the agreement of a minor student's parent or guardian (or an adult student), except in those situations in which failure to release information would result in danger to the student or others, or where required by law.

**Performance Standard I.2.3** School psychologists share confidential information only with the informed consent of the parent/guardian or as required or justified by law. School psychologists

accept that parents retain the right to request that personal information be removed from written reports.

### **Principle I.3. Supporting Social Justice**

*School psychologists support fairness and justice.*

**Performance Standard I.3.1** School psychologists pursue knowledge and awareness of how diversity factors may influence development, behaviour, and school learning. In conducting psychological, educational or behavioural evaluations, or in providing interventions, therapy, counselling, or consultation services, school psychologists take into account individual characteristics in the interest of providing effective services.

## **Ethical Principle II: Professional Competence and Responsible Caring**

### **Values Statement**

*A basic ethical expectation for school psychologists is that they are professionally competent. In ensuring responsible caring, school psychologists attempt to identify potential benefits and risks to parents and students in order for them to make informed choices.*

### **Principle II.1 Maintaining Professional Competence**

*School psychologists engage only in practices for which they are qualified and competent.*

**Performance Standard II.1.1** School psychologists recognize the strengths and limitations of their training and experience.

**Performance Standard II.1.2** School psychologists refer to an appropriate professional if a student's problems are outside their areas(s) of expertise.

**Performance Standard II.1.3** School psychologists pursue knowledge and understanding of the diverse cultural and experiential backgrounds of students and families in order to provide effective services.

**Performance Standard II.1.4** School psychologists refrain from any activity in which their personal problems may interfere with professional effectiveness. They seek appropriate help and/or discontinue professional activity when a physical or psychological condition reduces their ability to act in the best interests of others.

**Performance Standard II.1.5** School psychologists engage in continuing professional development.

## **Principle II.2          Practicing Responsible Caring**

*School psychologists accept responsibility for their professional work.*

**Performance Standard II.2.1** School psychologists accept responsibility for their professional practices, decisions, and recommendations.

**Performance Standard II.2.2** School psychologists evaluate the degree to which their own backgrounds, values, social context, and individual differences influence their interactions with others.

**Performance Standard II.2.3** School psychologists protect and promote the welfare of students, colleagues, and others with whom they come in contact.

**Performance Standard II.2.4** School psychologists avoid placing students, colleagues and others at risk.

**Performance Standard II.2.5** School psychologists maintain an understanding of the goals, processes, and legal requirements of the B.C. Ministry of Education, school districts, associated ministries, agencies and other systems, as these parameters relate to their practice.

**Performance Standard II.2.6** School psychologists make every effort to ensure that psychological knowledge is not misused, intentionally or unintentionally, to harm others.

## **Principle II.3          Applying Best Assessment Practices**

*School psychologists maintain the highest standard for responsible professional practices in educational and psychological assessments.*

**Performance Standard II.3.1** School psychologists use assessment techniques and practices that the profession considers to be responsible and researched-based.

**Performance Standard II.3.2** School psychologists select assessment instruments and strategies that are reliable and valid for the student and the purpose of the assessment. When using standardized measures, school psychologists adhere to the procedures for administration of the instrument as provided by the author or publisher. If modifications are made in the administration procedures for standardized tests or other instruments, such modifications are identified and discussed in the interpretation of the results.

**Performance Standard II.3.3** If using norm-referenced measures, school psychologists choose instruments with up-to-date normative data.

**Performance Standard II.3.4** When using computer assisted report drafting programs, school psychologists use professional judgment in evaluating the accuracy and appropriateness of the computer generated statements.

**Performance Standard II.3.5** School psychologists recognize that a psycho-educational assessment is based on a variety of different types of information from different sources. No important decisions are made on the basis of findings from a single test or assessment instrument.

**Performance Standard II.3.6** Consistent with sound professional practice, school psychologists recognize that students referred for assessment should also be screened in other areas related to their learning in order to answer the referral questions. This may include, but not be limited to: health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, academic performance, communicative status and motor abilities.

**Performance Standard II.3.7** It may be appropriate in some situations for school psychologists to make recommendations ***based on a review of a student's educational records***. School psychologists should explain the basis for, and limitations of, their recommendations.

**Performance Standard II.3.8** School psychologists adequately interpret findings and present results in clear, understandable terms so that the parent and school personnel can make informed choices.

**Performance Standard II.3.9** School psychologists provide recommendations or suggestions appropriate to the presenting problems and consistent with the data collected.

**Performance Standard 11.3.10** School psychologists discuss with parents or guardians recommendations and suggestions. This discussion takes into account each family's individual strengths and needs. Program changes or additional services should be discussed with parents or guardians, including any alternatives that may be available. Parents or guardians are informed of sources of support available in the school and community.

**Performance Standard II.3.11** When appropriate, school psychologists discuss with students the recommendations and plans for assisting them. When possible, students are invited to participate in selecting and planning interventions.

**Performance Standard II.3.12** When completing an assessment for senior secondary students, school psychologists may wish to make recommendations based on criteria established by the Ministry of Advanced Education for designations which allows for accommodations in post-secondary institutions.

## **Principle II. 4      Promoting Accountable Record Keeping**

*School psychologists share a role in safeguarding the privacy of psycho-educational records.*



**Performance Standard 11.4.1** School psychologists discuss with parents or guardians, and adult students, the distribution and storage of psycho-educational records that result from the provision of services.

**Performance Standard II.4.2** School psychologists write psycho-educational reports that are useful in decision-making by other qualified professionals.

## **Principle II.5            Using Assessment *Materials* Responsibly**

*School psychologists respect the intellectual property rights of those who produce tests, intervention materials, scholarly works, and other materials.*

**Performance Standard II.5.1** School psychologists maintain test security and prevent the release of specific content that would invalidate the use of assessment materials in their practice.

**Performance Standard 11.5.2** School psychologists promote the use of restricted psychological and educational tests only by individuals qualified to use them.

**Performance Standard II 5.3** School psychologists promote the use of up-to-date psycho-educational tests and other assessment tools and procedures.

**Performance Standard II 5.4** School psychologists do not duplicate copyright-protected test manuals, testing materials, or unused test protocols without the permission of the publisher.

## **Principle III: Integrity in Professional Relationships**

### **VALUES STATEMENT**

*School psychologists, in the course of their work, form professional relationships that are based on fairness and impartiality, accurate professional representation, and avoidance of conflict of interest.*

## **Principle III.1            Identifying Professional Qualifications**

*School psychologists accurately identify their professional qualifications.*

**Performance Standard III.1.1** School psychologists use the title *Certified School Psychologist* only when they meet all of the following criteria:

- They are employed by a school district or other agency as described in the *Psychologists Regulation of the Health Profession Act* section 3 (2) (c):

*“acting in the course of employment by*

*(i) a provincial, federal or municipal government or government agency,*

*(ii) an authority as defined in the Independent School Act,*

*(iii) a francophone education authority as defined in the School Act, or*

*(iv) a board of school trustees constituted under the School Act,*

***if qualifications in psychology are a condition of such employment;”***

**and**

- They are employees according to the criteria established by the Canada Revenue Agency;

**and**

- They are members in good standing of BCASP.

**Performance Standard III.1.2** School psychologists accurately represent their own professional qualifications, education, experience, competence and affiliations, in all spoken, written, and printed communications. They identify clearly their own work and that provided by other professionals.

**Performance Standard III.1.3** School psychologists communicate their knowledge and findings as completely, accurately, and fairly as possible, taking care to distinguish what is supported by objective evidence and what is personal interpretation.

**Performance Standard III.1.4** School psychologists assist in referring students for other professional services when needed.

## **Principle III.2      Respect for Other Professionals**

*School psychologists cooperate with other psychologists and professionals from other disciplines in relationships based on mutual respect.*

**Performance Standard III.2.1** School psychologists encourage and support the use of all resources in the best interests of students.

**Performance Standard III.2.2** School psychologists do not alter a report completed by another school psychologist without his or her permission.

**Performance Standard III.2.3** School psychologists may apply Ministry of Education or Ministry of Child and Family Development criteria for Special Education categories to a current report

written by another professional, for the purposes of determining whether a student meets specific criteria. When doing so, respect for the original report must be maintained.

### **Principle III.3      Avoiding Dual Relationships and Conflicts of Interest**

*School psychologists avoid dual relationships and conflicts of interest.*

**Performance Standard III.3.1** School psychologists avoid situations where there is a current or previous relationship such as familial, social, sexual, emotional, financial, supervisory, political, administrative, or legal.

**Performance Standard III.3.2** School psychologists avoid any activity in which conflicts of interest with a student or a student's family may interfere with professional effectiveness. School psychologists attempt to resolve such situations in a manner that provides the greatest benefit to the student.

**Performance Standard III.3.3** School psychologists are obliged to disclose any financial interest in the products or services they endorse.

**Performance Standard III.3.4** School psychologists neither give nor receive any remuneration for referring students and other clients for professional services.

## **Principle IV: Responsibility to Schools, Families, the Profession, and Society**

### **Values Statement**

*School psychologists maintain public trust in school psychology by respecting the law and encouraging ethical conduct. School psychologists advance professionalism by regularly collaborating with colleagues.*

### **Principle IV.I      Promoting Best Practices in School Psychology**

*School psychologists use their professional expertise to promote best practices in educational policies for students.*

**Performance Standard IV.I.1** School psychologists are knowledgeable about the organization, philosophy, goals and objectives within the settings where they provide services.

**Performance Standard IV.I.2** School psychologists respond to questions regarding their school psychology services.

## **Principle IV.2. Supporting Professional Behaviour and Ethical Practice**

*School Psychologists are familiar with the Ethical Conduct and Professional Practice Principles and Standards and thoughtfully apply them to situations within their employment context. In difficult situations, school psychologists consult experienced colleagues and BCASP.*

**Performance Standard IV.2.1** School psychologists, when they suspect that another BCASP member has engaged in unethical behaviour, attempt to resolve the concern through a collegial problem-solving process. If the issue remains unresolved, school psychologists refer to the BCASP *Ethical and Professional Conduct Committee Procedures* (see Appendix).

**Performance Standard IV.2.2** School psychologists recognize that BCASP's *Ethical Conduct and Professional Practice Principles and Standards* are applicable only to BCASP members. Reporting of concerns for non-BCASP members is pursued according to procedures outlined by the appropriate professional organization.

## **Principle IV.3 Contributing to the Profession by Mentoring, Teaching and Supervision**

*As part of their obligation to students, schools, their profession and society, school psychologists mentor less experienced practitioners and graduate students to encourage a high standard of practice, and they serve as role models for sound ethical and professional responsibility and decision making.*

**Performance Standard IV.3.1** School psychologists who supervise practicum students and interns are responsible for all professional practices of the supervisees. Interns and graduate students are identified as such and their work is co-signed by the supervising school psychologist.

**Performance Standard IV.3.2** School psychologists who supervise graduate students are responsible for ensuring that the students' work meets the expectations of the school district where they are completing their field experiences or internships.

**Performance Standard IV.3.3** School psychologists who are also faculty members at post-secondary institutions or who supervise graduate education field experiences, apply the *Ethical Conduct and Professional Practice Principles and Standards* in all work with school psychology graduate students. In addition, they promote adherence to the *Ethical Conduct and Professional Practice Principles and Standards* by the students.

## **Principle IV.4 Contributing to the Profession of School Psychology**

*School psychologists promote the value of the profession by serving as role models for sound ethical and professional practice and decision making.*

**Performance Standard IV.4.1** School psychologists are knowledgeable about their professional association, BCASP, and its roles and purposes. They communicate in a manner that is respectful to both the association and its members.

**Performance Standard IV.4.2** School psychologists contribute to the profession of school psychology by encouraging all members to actively initiate and participate in activities which maintain, expand, and update their professional skills, practice, and ethics.

**Performance Standard IV.4.3** School psychologists respect community customs and cultural expectations in all professional activities, provided they do not contravene respect for the dignity of persons, responsible caring, and integrity in relationships.