

**Tips for Trainers:
Implications of the New Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct
on Internship and Pre-Doctoral Training Programs**

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As most of you know APA has been working for quite a while on a revision of the Ethics Code. The task force to review the 1992 Ethics Code was appointed in 1996. The task force has put forth several drafts of the new Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct over the last year or two. The seventh and final draft was approved by Council at the most recent APA convention (with some minor amendments). By the time you are reading this column the final version should be available on-line at the APA website. I would encourage all internship and post-doc trainers to review this document.

I believe that as internship and post-doc trainers there are certain provisions in particular that are worthy of our attention, and in fact the APPIC board provided input related to some of these sections. In this column, I will highlight and comment on some of the most relevant provisions, those included in Ethical Standard 7 Education and Training.

Item 7.01 highlights that in the design of education and training programs, psychologists who are responsible for these programs among other things design the programs “to meet the requirements for licensure, certification, or other goals for which claims are made by the program.” This highlights that as internship and post-doc training directors we are responsible to stay cognizant of licensure/certification requirements in our own state/ province and in other states and provinces to ensure that our internship programs and post-doctoral programs will qualify as pre-doctoral and post- doctoral experiences, if we are advertising them as such.

Item 7.02 highlights that in offering descriptions of our training programs, psychologists who are responsible for the program “take reasonable steps to ensure that there is a current and accurate description of the program content (including participation in required course- or program-related counseling, psychotherapy, experiential groups, consulting projects, or community service), training goals and objectives, stipends and benefits, and requirements that must be met for satisfactory completion of the program. This information must be made readily available to all interested parties.” This highlights that for some programs, the brochure or website may need to be expanded to include these components.

Item 7.03 highlights the importance of accuracy in teaching and emphasizes that psychologists ensure that course syllabi are accurate along a number of dimensions and that the psychologists “present psychological information accurately.”

Item 7.04 highlights that “psychologists do not require ...supervisees to disclose personal information in ...program-related activities, either orally or in writing, regarding sexual history, history of abuse and neglect, psychological treatment, and relationships with parents, peers, and spouses or significant others except if (1) the program or training facility has clearly identified this requirement in its admissions and program materials or

(2) the information is necessary to evaluate or obtain assistance for students whose personal problems could reasonably be judged to be preventing them from performing their training- or professionally related activities in a competent manner or posing a threat to the students or others.” This item was of particular concern in earlier drafts of the ethical principles, as it originally did not include any of the exceptions that have been included in the final draft. While as trainers it does not seem wise to **require** supervisees to disclose such information, there was concern among the APPIC Board, that this statement could be interpreted as discouraging voluntary disclosure of personal information in the course of clinical supervision. It is our experience that such disclosure in the course of supervision can be quite useful as it relates to the clinical work being discussed. It seems clear that one of the implications of the new ethical guidelines as written, is that it will be essential for training programs that place value on such personal exploration in the course of supervision to state this value clearly in their internship and post-doc materials.

Item 7.05 relates to mandatory individual and group therapy. It highlights that such therapy should not be provided by anyone affiliated with the program or anyone who is likely to be evaluating the student’s academic performance. I would imagine that as training sites we have all recognized the importance of these sorts of policies. For those programs that may include a mandatory process group for the interns or post-docs, these policies should be reviewed for their implications.

Item 7.06 relates to assessing student and supervisee performance and highlights the importance of establishing “a timely and specific process for providing feedback to students and supervisees. Information regarding the process is provided to the student at the beginning of supervision.” It also highlights that “Psychologists evaluate students and supervisees on the basis of their actual performance on relevant and established program requirements.” I would assume that APPIC member sites would already be in compliance with these guidelines as stated.

Finally Item 7.07 highlights the prohibition against sexual relationships with students and supervisees. It states that “Psychologists do not engage in sexual relationships with students or supervisees who are in their department, agency, or training center or over whom psychologists have or are likely to have evaluative authority.” The APPIC Board worked to have the more inclusive language such as “agency or training center” included in this provision so that it would be clear that this applies to internship and post-doc sites as well as academic departments.

It may be a worthwhile endeavor to discuss the implications of these changes in the APA Ethical Principles for Psychologists and Code of Conduct with your training staff.