



Saskatchewan College of Psychologists

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Membership Advisory

Responsibility of One's Actions as a Member of the Profession

Members of the profession may at times be directed by others who hold authority or influence over their practice (e.g. employers, insurers etc.) to take action that is incongruent with the direction provided within the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists 3rd Edition, and / or the Saskatchewan College of Psychologists (College) Professional Practice Guidelines (PPGs), and /or the Psychologists Act 1997. It is important for members to understand that they have responsibility for, and will be ultimately held responsible for their decisions and actions regardless of whether those actions were directed by someone with authority over them. Among the many important directives provided within the legislation, the Code, and the PPGs, the College would like to bring your attention to the following:

The Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (Code) directs that Psychologists must:

Principle 2 Responsible Caring-

- II.1 Protect and promote the welfare of clients, research participants, employees, supervisees, trainees, colleagues, and others
- II.2 Avoid doing harm to clients, research participants, employees, supervisees, students, trainees, colleagues, and others.
- II.3 Accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

The PPGs direct:

Competence -

3.1 Responsibility

Members must assume and be fully responsible for their decisions made and actions taken in the performance of psychological services.

3.4 Potential conflict between the needs of individual clients and those of corporate clients

The provision of psychological services on behalf of a third party payer client does not diminish a member's obligations and professional responsibilities to the individual client.

The Regulatory Bylaws of the College direct:

Compliance

- 20 Every member shall comply with the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, Third Edition, as adopted by the Canadian Psychological Association.

The Psychologists Act 1997 (Act) identifies:

Professional misconduct –

- 25 Professional misconduct is a question of fact, but any matter, conduct or thing, whether or not disgraceful or dishonorable, that:
- a) is harmful to the best interests of the public or the members of the college;
 - b) tends to harm the standing of the profession;
 - c) is a breach of this Act or the bylaws; or
 - d) is a failure to comply with an order of the professional conduct committee, the discipline committee or the council;

is professional misconduct within the meaning of this Act.

Professional incompetence –

- 26 Professional incompetence is a question of fact, but the display by a member of a lack of knowledge, skill or judgment, or a disregard for the welfare of a member of the public served by the profession of a nature or to an extent that demonstrates that the member is unfit to:
- a) continue in the practice of the profession; or
 - b) provide one or more services ordinarily provided as a part of the practice of the profession;

is professional incompetence within the meaning of this Act.

When there is a conflict between the expectations of the profession and that of the others who have authority or influence over the Psychologist’s practice (e.g. employer, insurer etc.) it is imperative that the Psychologist engage in an ethical decision making process, that includes consultation, a risk benefit analysis, consideration of the Code/PPGs/the Act and all relevant legislation, consideration of the client and their needs, and clear documentation of the decision making process and the ultimate decision. This information may be important in the event of a complaint to the College about one’s actions. It is important that members understand that **Section 28(1)** of the **Act** compels the College to accept and investigate all complaints received, and to adjudicate them relative to the definitions of Professional Misconduct and/or Professional Incompetence as defined in the legislation.

References:

- The Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists 3rd Edition (CPA, 2000) – the College is compelled to continue to use the 3rd Edition of the Code until it can achieve an amendment to Section 20 of the Regulatory Bylaws
- The Saskatchewan College of Psychologists Professional Practice Guidelines (SKCP 2010) – currently under revision
- The Psychologists Act 1997 (amended 2010)