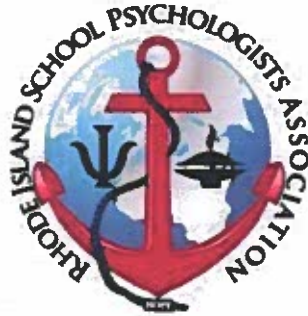


H8070

Rhode Island School Psychologist Association

Code of Ethics



Licensed School Psychologists

Adapted from California Association of School Psychologists

RISPA'S PRINCIPLES FOR PROFESSIONAL ETHICS for LSPs

Purpose

The formal principles that guide the proper conduct of a professional are known as Ethical Standards. By virtue of joining RISPA, each member agrees to abide by this Code of Ethics, acting in a manner that shows respect for human dignity, and assuring a high quality of professional service. RISPA acknowledges that ethical behavior is both the individual responsibility of each member, and the collective responsibility of RISPA as an organization, RISPA Affiliates, and any RISPA sponsored group or function. Upon receiving the license to practice privately in Rhode Island as a Licensed School Psychologist (LSP), each LSP agrees to observe the professional ethical principles outlined in this Code. The primary purpose of these guidelines is to educate Licensed School Psychologists (LSP) and the public regarding our professional ethical responsibilities. Because RISPA does not issue credentials or licenses, and RISPA cannot authorize services, RISPA does not engage in investigations regarding violations of these standards.

Introduction

A Code of Ethics includes both good practice and professional standards for conduct. The RISPA Code of Ethics for LSPs provides guidelines in the following areas:

- 1) Professional competence (personal and professional limitations, professional growth, confidentiality, records, information shared)
- 2) Professional relationships and responsibilities (clients, parents, school and the community, interpersonal relations)
- 3) Professional practice in public settings (assessment, use of materials and computers, intervention, school-based research and evaluation, reporting data and conferencing results); and
- 4) Professional practice in private settings (district employment, service delivery, announcements/advertising, online counseling or telehealth).

These guidelines recognize the obligation of professional persons to provide services and to conduct themselves so as to place the highest esteem on human rights and individual dignity. Even though ethical behavior involves interactions among the professional and employing institutions, responsibility for ethical conduct must rest with the professional.

The content of these guidelines is to supply clarification that will facilitate the delivery of high-quality psychological services in the school or community. Thus they acknowledge the fluid and expanding functions of the Licensed School Psychologist. In addition to these ethical standards, there is the ever-present necessity to differentiate legal LSP Code of Ethics mandate and ethical responsibility. The LSP is urged to become familiar with all applicable legal requirements and standards.

that protect the dignity and rights of persons served and that promote the quality of education and life in general. In situations where there are divided or conflicting interests psychologists are responsible for attempting to work out a plan of action that encourages mutual benefit and protection of rights. Ethical behavior may occasionally be contradicted by policy or law, in which case psychologists are expected to declare their dilemma and work to bring the discrepant regulations into compliance with the “RISPA Code of Ethics for LSPs.”

The development of a dynamic set of ethical standards for psychologists’ work-related conduct requires a personal commitment and lifelong effort to act ethically; to encourage ethical behavior by students, supervisees, employees and colleagues; and to consult with others concerning ethical problems. –American Psychological Association.

I. Professional Competency

A. Personal and Professional Limitations

1. School Psychologists offer only those services that are within their individual area of training and experience (*see section V.*). They must continually seek additional training with the welfare of those served in mind.
2. Competency levels, education, training, experience, and certification and licensing credentials are accurately represented to parents, recipients of services, and others. School Psychologists accurately represent their level of competence, education, training, and experience to schools and clients in a professional manner. School Psychologists correct any misperceptions of their qualifications. School Psychologists do not represent themselves as specialists in a particular domain without verifiable training and supervised experience in the specialty.
3. School Psychologists define the direction and nature of personal loyalties, objectives, and competencies, and advise and inform all persons concerned of these commitments. When these commitments may influence a professional relationship, the psychologist informs all concerned persons of relevant issues in advance. From the American Psychological Association: “A psychologist refrains from entering into a multiple relationship if the multiple relationship could reasonably be expected to impair the psychologist’s objectivity, competence or effectiveness in performing his or her functions as a psychologist, or otherwise risks exploitation or harm to the person with whom the professional relationship exists.” A multiple relationship occurs when a professional assumes two or more roles at the same time or sequentially with a client, family, or educational setting or with someone who has a significant relationship with the client, family, or educational setting.
4. School Psychologists refrain from any activity in which conflicts of interest or multiple relationships with a client or a client’s family may interfere with

2. School Psychologists follow the requirements of the Department of Health, along with any other applicable licensing, certification and/or credentialing entities with regards to continuing professional development.
3. School Psychologists will utilize assessment and counseling procedures, instruments, and methods that are consistent with accepted practice, recent research, and good judgment.
4. School Psychologists recognize that their clients' needs are their primary responsibility. If some organizational practices are not beneficial or are actually detrimental to the mental health of the population served, it is the psychologist's duty to consider whether he/she can contribute most by:
 - a. Remaining and working for improvements through the appropriate channels
 - b. Deciding whether the situation is serious enough to warrant use of professional avenues for modifying objectionable practices; and
 - c. Resigning if the detrimental practices cannot be modified by any of these procedures.
5. School Psychologists take the responsibility of informing school district personnel and supervisors/administrators of practices within the school district that are potentially detrimental to students, such as the misuse of instruments and results, use of test instruments by inadequately trained or unqualified personnel, or questionable counseling strategies.

C. Confidentiality

1. Informed Consent

- a. American Psychological Association position on informed consent:
 - i. "(a)When psychologists conduct research or provide assessment, therapy, counseling or consulting services in person or via electronic transmission or other forms of communication, they obtain the informed consent of the individual or individuals using language that is reasonably understandable to that person or persons except when conducting such activities without consent is mandated by law or governmental regulation or as otherwise provided in this Ethics Code.
 - ii. (b) School Psychologists obtain informed consent for assessments, evaluations or diagnostic services. Informed consent includes an explanation of the nature and purpose of the assessment, fees, involvement of third parties and limits of confidentiality and sufficient opportunity for the client/student to ask questions and receive answers.

- c. School Psychologists respect the right to privacy of clients, parents, and colleagues with regard to sexual orientation, gender identity, or transgender status. They do not share information about the sexual orientation, gender identity, or transgender status of a client (including minors), or parent, with anyone without that individual's permission.
- d. School Psychologists provide assessment, counseling, and consultation from an office or workspace that is adequate to ensure confidentiality and reliability of data.
- e. School Psychologists respect the confidentiality of information collected from other professional sources as they would their own.

3. Records

- a. School Psychologists are informed regarding confidentiality of client records and guide others in compliance with the law.
- b. Clients, when appropriate, are informed by psychologists of persons who have access to records and what those records would include.
- c. School Psychologists comply with all laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to the adequate storage and disposal of records to maintain appropriate confidentiality of information. Obsolete information will be shredded or otherwise destroyed before placement in recycling bins or trash receptacles.
- d. Records should be maintained for seven years after the services to the client have ceased.
- e. Paper records are to be stored in a locked file cabinet. Electronic records are to be kept on a password protected and/or encrypted, secure server or computer.
- f. School Psychologists discuss with parents and adult clients their rights regarding creation, modification, storage, and disposal of psychological and educational records that result from the provision of services. Parents and adult clients are notified of the electronic storage and transmission of personally identifiable records and the associated risks to privacy.
- g. Private notes maintained by the psychologist are not part of the client's record.
- h. School Psychologists should make arrangements for the management of client records in the event of their death or incapacitation. This can include creating a Professional Will, or naming a competent designee to contact and refer clients for continuing services with a qualified mental health professional. In such a case where no arrangements have been made, records should be forwarded to the new mental health professional, or released to the client.

A. Clients

1. School Psychologists consider the client to be their primary responsibility and act as advocates of the client's rights and responsibilities.
 - a. The "client" is defined by the fiduciary responsibility and contract between the psychologist and the party receiving the service. The client may be a child, adult, parent, school district, or agency.
2. School Psychologists are guided by an awareness of the personal nature of the assessment, counseling or consultation relationship. They perform in a manner that reflects a humanistic concern for dignity and personal integrity.
3. School Psychologists respect each client with whom they are working and deal justly and impartially with each, regardless of physical, mental, emotional, political, economic, social, racial, cultural, gender and sexual orientation or religious characteristics.
4. School Psychologists recognize the obligation to the client and respect his/her right to enter, participate, or withdraw from services voluntarily.
5. School Psychologists inform the client about important aspects of their relationship. They will be informed of the outcomes of assessment, counseling, and other services. The client shall also be informed of the uses that will be made of the information, persons who will receive specific information, and possible implications of the results. The sharing of information is formulated to fit the age and maturity of the client and the nature of the information.
6. School Psychologists do not exploit clients, supervisees, or graduate students through professional relationships or condone these actions by their colleagues. They do not participate in or condone sexual harassment of children, parents, other clients, colleagues, employees, trainees, supervisees, or research participants. School Psychologists do not engage in sexual relationships with individuals over whom they have evaluation authority, including college students in their classes or program, or any other trainees, or supervisees. School Psychologists do not engage in sexual relationships with their current or former pupil-clients, the parents, siblings, or other close family members of current pupil-clients, or current consultees.

B. Parents, Legal Guardians, and Appointed Surrogates

1. School Psychologists recognize the importance of the parent-child relationship and the need for appropriate family involvement when counseling and consulting with all clients.
2. School Psychologists confer with parents regarding assessment, counseling, and intervention plans in a language understandable to the parents. Goals of assessment or counseling and the continuum of alternative interventions available for clients are

10. School Psychologists adhere to federal, state, and local laws and ordinances governing their practice and advocacy efforts. If regulations conflict with ethical guidelines, psychologists seek to resolve such conflict through positive, respected, and legal channels, including advocacy efforts involving public policy.
11. When a psychologist suspects that another psychologist or another professional has engaged in unethical practices, he or she attempts to resolve the suspected problem through a collegial problem-solving process, if feasible.
12. If a collegial problem-solving process is not possible or productive, psychologists take further action appropriate to the situation, including discussing the situation with a supervisor in the employment setting, consulting with the RISPA Ethics Specialist, and if necessary in the case of a school psychologist, filing a formal ethical violation complaint with the Rhode Island Teacher Credentialing Commission, or the NASP Ethical and Professional Practices Committee in accordance with their procedures. Complaints against a Licensed Educational Psychologist are made to the Rhode Island Board of Behavioral Sciences.

D. Inter-Professional Relations/Cooperation

1. School Psychologists communicate with other community agencies regarding the welfare of the client within the confines of confidentiality and privacy rights.
2. School Psychologists cooperate with other professional persons and groups and accept administrative policies and decisions, but do not compromise the standards of the profession.
3. School Psychologists use their best professional judgment when making referrals to other professionals.
4. School Psychologists do not offer professional services to a person who is receiving assistance from another professional except by agreement or after termination of the relationship with the other professional.
5. When psychologists suspect the existence of detrimental or unethical practices by a member of another profession, informal contact is made with that person to express the concern. If the situation cannot be resolved, the appropriate professional organization may be contacted for assistance in determining the procedures established by that profession for examining the practices in question.

E. School Psychologist Trainees and Interns

1. School Psychologists who conduct or administer training programs provide trainees and prospective trainees with accurate information regarding program sponsorships/endorsements/accreditation, goals/objectives, training processes and requirements, and likely outcomes and benefits.

3. School Psychologists attempt to become integral members of the client service systems to which they are assigned. They establish clear roles for themselves within that system.
4. School Psychologists who provide services to several different groups may encounter situations in which loyalties are conflicted. As much as possible, the stance of the psychologist is made known in advance to all parties to prevent misunderstandings.
5. School Psychologists promote changes in their employing agencies and community service systems that will benefit their clients.

C. Assessment

1. School Psychologists strive to maintain the highest standard of service by an objective collecting of appropriated data and information necessary to effectively work with students. In conducting a psycho-educational evaluation and counseling/consultation service, due consideration is given to individual integrity and individual differences. School Psychologists recognize differences in age, gender, native language, disability, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds and strive to select and use appropriate procedures, techniques, strategies and instruments relevant to such differences.
2. School Psychologists understand the parameters of psycho-diagnostic instruments and utilize their data professionally. They are obligated to combine observations, background information, and other data to report the most comprehensive and valid picture possible of the individual.
3. School Psychologists do not promote the use of psycho-educational assessment techniques by inappropriately trained or otherwise unqualified persons through teaching, sponsorship or supervision.
4. School Psychologists assess the client in his/her native language or other mode of communication for completion of a valid assessment. In the event this is impossible, use of a skilled interpreter or pre-recorded material is clearly documented in oral and/or written reports. Adequate interpretation must follow such modified techniques.
5. School Psychologists assess in all areas of suspected disability. They restrict themselves to the collection and evaluation of information only to the depth that is relevant to the educational needs of the student.
6. School Psychologists draw upon their own professional experience and skill in deciding whether assessment is appropriate. Background and supportive data are acquired to justify the need for assessment. Final decisions regarding the need for assessment, however, are made by a team, based on school district policy. Parents' requests for assessment are honored when appropriate.
7. School Psychologists use assessment techniques and practices that the profession considers to be responsible, research-based practice.

e-mail messages must be encrypted or else stripped of all information that identifies the student/client.)

7. School Psychologists uphold copyright laws in their publications and presentations and obtain permission from authors and copyright holders to reproduce other publications or materials. School Psychologists recognize that federal law protects the rights or copyright holders of published works and authors of unpublished materials.
8. School Psychologists refrain from publishing or presenting fabricated or falsified data or results in their reports, publications and presentations.
9. If errors are discovered after the report, publication or presentation of research, data, or other information, psychologists make efforts to correct errors by publishing errata, retractions, or corrections.
10. School Psychologists only publish data or other information that make original contributions to the professional literature. School Psychologists do not publish the same findings in two or more publications and do not duplicate significant portions of their own previous publications without permission of copyright holders.
11. School Psychologists who participate in reviews of manuscripts, proposals, and other materials for consideration for publication or presentation respect the confidentiality and proprietary rights of the authors. School Psychologists who review professional materials limit their use of the materials to the activities relevant to the purposes of the professional review.

E. Intervention

1. School Psychologists use data-based decision making and evidence-based interventions to benefit students' mental health and well being, and to promote learning and utilization of new skills. In deciding whether counseling or other intervention is appropriate, the student's identified need(s), background, and supportive data, including that obtained from observations and interviews in the setting, are used to select the most appropriate intervention.
2. School Psychologists obtain necessary education, training, experience and supervision when learning to implement interventions with students/clients. Interventions are implemented as designed and with fidelity. Interventions are selected that are appropriate for the student and setting.
3. School Psychologists obtain informed consent, including written parent permission prior to counseling or implementing intervention that involves an individual or a select group of students. The exception to this standard lies in the area of emergency crisis counseling.
4. School Psychologists encourage and promote parental participation in selecting interventions for their children. When appropriate, this includes linking interventions

G. Reporting Data and Conference Results

1. When transmitting client information, psychologists ascertain that student/client information reaches only the authorized person(s) who is adequately trained in the use, interpretation, and confidential handling of the data.
2. School Psychologists communicate information in such a form and style as to assure that the recipient of the information will be able to give maximum assistance to the student/client. The emphasis is placed on the interpretations and recommendations, rather than just the reporting of test scores, and will include an appraisal of the reliability and validity of the data.
3. School Psychologists create a written minority or dissenting opinion when they are in disagreement with the multidisciplinary team decision. School Psychologists provide data and/or cite applicable law to support their position.
4. School Psychologists assist in interpreting district assessment data, students' cumulative folder information, and other records, when appropriate.
5. School Psychologists ensure the accuracy of their reports, letters, and other documents.
6. Interns and practicum students are clearly identified as such and their work is cosigned by the supervising psychologist.

H. Social, Emotional and Behavioral Health Services- Counseling

1. School Psychologists are trained to use evidence-based practices that promote social emotional skill development through coaching, teaching, and training. These services can be provided individually, in small groups, and in family sessions.
2. School Psychologists work with families, schools, and other agencies to support the generalization of learned skills across settings.
3. School Psychologists are responsible for working within the scope of educational counseling. Should the client need exceed the School Psychologist scope of practice, the client/parent/guardian will be notified and referrals to Clinical Psychologists or other qualified mental health professionals/agencies will be provided.
4. School Psychologists provide social, emotional and behavioral counseling related to learning, social relationships, responsible decision making, self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, managing emotions, and/or other barriers that impede academic achievement. Counseling services are also provided for students experiencing mental health problems such as feeling depressed, anxious, worried, or isolated.
5. School psychologists help students, families, educators, and members of the community understand and resolve both long-term, chronic problems and short-term issues that students may face.

4. School Psychologists who engage in private practice maintain professional contacts with school district professionals and value building cooperative relationships with other service providers, public and private.
5. School Psychologists who engage in private practice are obligated to inform clients of those aspects of the clinical relationship that might reasonably be considered important factors in the client's decision to enter the relationship.

C. Announcements/Advertising

1. Individual, agency, or clinical listings in telephone or internet directories should be modestly limited to the following: name/names, highest relevant degree, certification status, address, telephone number, brief description of major areas of practice, office hours, an appropriate representation of fee information, foreign languages spoken, policy with regard to third party payments, and license number.
2. Announcements of individual private practice, agency or clinic, will be done in a formal, professional manner limited to the same information that is included in a telephone or internet listing (see above).
3. School Psychologists who engage in private practice may utilize brochures in the announcement of services. They may include objective descriptions of services, and may be sent to professional persons, schools, business firms, government agencies, and other similar organizations.
4. Announcements and advertising of the availability of publications, products and services for sale are presented in a professional, scientific and factual manner. Information may be communicated by means of periodical, book, list service, directory, television, radio or internet and must not include any false, misleading, or comparative statements.
5. A media release must be obtained in order to use any likeness of a client for the purposes of advertising in print, television, film or on the internet.
6. School Psychologists who engage in private practice do not directly solicit clients for individual diagnosis or therapy.
7. School Psychologists who engage in private practice do not compensate in any manner a representative of the press, radio, or television in return for personal professional publicity in a news item.
8. School Psychologists who engage in private practice do not endorse products or services.

D. Online Counseling or Telehealth

1. School Psychologists who engage in private practice may provide telehealth (counseling over the internet) and follow the Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) statutes and regulations if licensed by the BBS. The License for Educational Psychology (LSP) is valid only in Rhode Island. LSPs may not provide online counseling or telehealth to a client