



## **Indian School Psychology Association (InSPA)**

**InSPA Code of Ethics for School  
Psychology Service Providers as  
approved in the 14<sup>th</sup> GBM held on  
24.4.2021 and 8<sup>th</sup> InSPA Council  
meeting held on 6.6.2021**

**2021**

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## Preamble

All psychology and remedial services including those provided in academic settings are delivered within a wider social context. Society and psychological services have reciprocal partnerships. Society entrusts service providers within the various disciplines of psychology to adhere to the highest standards of training and practice. It is therefore imperative that the discipline commit to ensuring that its members conduct themselves and their professional duties ethically. The discipline must strive to ensure that its members have a greater responsibility toward the welfare of members of society than toward the welfare of the discipline and its members.

In India, school psychologists are considered to be those individuals engaged in providing a wide variety of both educational and mental health services to districts, school staff, students, and their families. School psychology services are rendered by psychologists who are trained in both psychology and education with specialized training in child development and applied child psychology at a post graduate level. Services are also provided by teachers, counselors, and remedial support staff such as special educators. School psychologists have specialist training in mental health and educational interventions, child development, learning, behaviour, motivation, curriculum and instruction, assessment, consultation, collaboration, school law, and systems. School psychologists help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviourally, and emotionally. They also collaborate with educators, parents, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the community for all students.

The Indian School Psychological Association (InSPA) recognizes its responsibility to help assure ethical behaviours and attitudes on the part of its member psychologists, counsellors, and other service providers in school and private settings. The InSPA *Code of Ethics* intends to work towards the welfare and protection of the individuals and groups with whom psychologists work, and toward the education of its members regarding ethical standards of the discipline. The *Code of Ethics* is a framework that guides and inspires school psychologists toward the highest ethical ideals in their professional and scientific work. The *Code* guides the ethical conduct of psychologists and school psychology service providers, helping them monitor their behaviour, and providing guidelines to be used in the resolution of complaints of unethical conduct.

The InSPA *Code of Ethics* elucidates broad ethical principles and values. All InSPA members, whether affiliated to other psychology associations or not, at all levels of service – administrative, teaching or clinical, in research or practice, or any other role related to the provision of school psychology services are bound to abide by this *Code of Ethics*.

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## Structure of the InSPA Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics is organized into **four broad ethical principles** to be considered and balanced in ethical decision making. Each principle section begins with a statement of those values that are included in and define the principle. The *Code of Ethics* does not cover every situation and circumstance. Thus the responsibility for ethical action depends foremost on the integrity of the individual psychologists; that is, on each psychologist's judgment and commitment to behave as ethically as possible in every situation.

## Derivation of the InSPA Code of Ethics

The InSPA *Code of Ethics* and value statements are based on the code of ethics of the American Psychological Association, the Canadian Psychological Association, and the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists, an ethics framework developed under the auspices of the International Union of Psychological Science and the International Association of Applied Psychology. These ethical principles are used consistently by most international psychology associations and guide professional ethics in countries like the US and Canada where the discipline of school psychology is well established. The Universal Declaration describes those ethical principles that are based on shared human values. It reaffirms the commitment of the psychology community to help build a better world where peace, freedom, responsibility, justice, humanity, and morality prevail.

The Universal Declaration articulates principles and related values that are general and aspirational rather than specific and prescriptive. These principles and values shall be applied to the development of specific standards of training and professional practice in school psychology in India with reference to local social, cultural customs, beliefs, and laws.

## Definitions of terms used in this document

**Assent:** A child/minor's positive decision to engage in psychological services or testing which is verbally communicated.

**Child/Minor:** Anyone who has not attained the age of 18 years. Although "child" may be considered derogatory when applied to adolescents, it is used throughout this document to indicate minor status when required. When a less precise term is appropriate, the term student is used.

**Client:** An individual, family, or group (including an organization or community) receiving service from a psychologist. Clients, research participants, students, and any other individuals with whom psychologists come in contact in the course of their work, are "independent" if they can independently contract or give informed consent. Such persons are "partially dependent" if the decision to contract or give

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informed consent is shared between two or more parties (e.g., parents and school, adult members of a family and doctor). Individuals are considered to be “fully dependent” if they have little or no choice about whether or not to receive services or participate in an activity (e.g., children who have been involuntarily committed to a psychiatric facility, children with impaired cognitive functioning, or very young children involved in a research project).

**Community:** A group of individuals of any size whose members are connected by relatively durable social relations that extend beyond immediate family ties, and share a common sense of identity and interests. A community may or may not live in the same geographic area.

**Discipline:** The scientific and applied methods and knowledge of psychology, and to the structures and procedures used by its members for conducting their work related to society, members of the public, students or trainees, and each other.

**Group:** A number of human beings connected by a shared activity, interest, or quality. A group includes such entities as couples, families, organizations, communities, and peoples.

**Informed Consent:** The person giving consent has the legal authority to make a consent decision for themselves or on behalf a child, that he or she has a reasonable understanding of what he or she is consenting to, and that his or her consent is freely given and can be withdrawn without penalty.

**Legal rights:** Those rights protected under laws and statutes recognized by the state or region in which the psychologist is working.

**Parent:** The term "parent" may be specified in law to include the birth or adoptive parent, a person acting in the place of a natural or adoptive parent (such as a grandparent or other relative, stepparent, or domestic partner), and/or someone legally responsible for the child's welfare.

**Peoples:** A distinct group of persons who are linked by a common identity, culture, history, and collective interests.

**Persons:** means human beings both as individuals and as members of groups, including couples, families, organizations, communities, and peoples.

**Unjust discrimination:** Activities that are prejudicial or promote prejudice toward persons because of their caste, religion, race, nationality, ethnicity, sex, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or mental abilities, age, socio-economic status, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition, or status.

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**School psychologist:** Licensed psychologists working in school settings or child psychologists in private settings offering school psychology services with established competence in school psychology. Other licensed behavioural health sciences professionals including counselors, special educators and teaching professionals rendering psychological services with an established competence in school psychology. The term “licensed” is used to refer to those professionals who have sought and obtained licensure/registration with the appropriate central or state regulatory body established by governmental statute.

**Vulnerable:** Refers to individuals or groups whose dignity, well-being, and best interests are more easily violated due to such factors as: (a) characteristics of the individual or group (e.g., level of cognitive and emotional functioning; socioeconomic status; history of marginalization or oppression); (b) level of voluntary consent/assent (e.g., serious consequences threatened if consent not given); (c) interests of individual or group compete with interests of more powerful individual(s) or group (e.g., claimant and insurance company); and (d) high risk of harm (e.g., life-changing decision based on an inadequate assessment).

**Ethical Principle I: Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples**

Respect for the dignity of persons is the most fundamental and universally found ethical principle across geographical and cultural boundaries, and across professional disciplines. It provides the philosophical foundation for many of the other ethical principles put forward by professions. Respect for dignity recognizes the inherent worth of all human beings, regardless of perceived or real differences in social status, ethnic origin, gender, capacities, or other such characteristics. This inherent worth means that all human beings are worthy of equal moral consideration.

All human beings, as well as being individuals, are interdependent social beings that are born into, live in, and are a part of the history and ongoing evolution of their peoples. The different cultures, ethnicities, religions, histories, social structures and other such characteristics of peoples are integral to the identity of their members and give meaning to their lives. The continuity of peoples and cultures over time connects the peoples of today with the peoples of past generations and the need to nurture future generations. As such, respect for the dignity of persons includes moral consideration of and respect for the dignity of peoples.

Respect for the dignity of persons and peoples is expressed in different ways in different communities and cultures. It is important to acknowledge and respect such differences. On the other hand, it also is important that all communities and cultures adhere to moral values that respect and protect their members both as individual persons and as collective peoples.

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### ***Values related to Ethical Principle I***

In accepting the Principle of Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples, school psychologists accept and conduct themselves in accordance with the following related values:

- respect for the unique worth and inherent dignity of all human beings;
- respect for the diversity among persons and peoples;
- respect for the customs and beliefs of cultures, to be limited only when a custom or a belief seriously contravenes the principle of respect for the dignity of persons or peoples or causes serious harm to their well-being;
- free and informed consent, as culturally defined and relevant for individuals, families, groups, and communities;
- privacy for individuals, families, groups, and communities;
- protection of confidentiality of personal information, as culturally defined and relevant for individuals, families, groups, and communities;
- fairness and justice in the treatment of persons and peoples.

### **Ethical Principle II: Competent and Responsible Caring for the Well-Being of Persons and Peoples**

Competent and responsible caring for the well-being of persons and peoples involves working for their benefit and, above all, doing no harm. It includes maximizing benefits, minimizing potential harm, and offsetting or correcting harm. This concern includes both those directly involved and those indirectly involved in psychologists' activities. However, as with Principle I, psychologists' greatest responsibility is to protect the welfare of those in the most vulnerable position. Normally, persons directly involved in their activities (e.g., research participants, clients, students) are in such a position. Psychologists' responsibility to those indirectly involved (e.g., employers, third-party payers, the general public) normally is secondary.

Competent and responsible caring requires the application of knowledge and skills that are appropriate for the nature of a situation as well as the social and cultural context. It also requires the ability to establish interpersonal relationships that enhance potential benefits and reduce potential harm. Another requirement is adequate self-knowledge of how one's values, experiences, culture, and social context might influence one's actions and interpretations.

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## ***Values related to Ethical Principle II***

In accepting the Principle of Competent and Responsible Caring for the Well-Being of Persons and Peoples, school psychologists accept and conduct themselves in accordance with the following related values:

- active concern for the well-being of individuals, families, groups, and communities;
- taking care to do no harm to individuals, families, groups, and communities;
- maximizing benefits and minimizing potential harm to individuals, families, groups, and communities;
- correcting or offsetting harmful effects that have occurred as a result of their activities;
- developing and maintaining competence;
- self-knowledge regarding how their values, attitudes, experiences, and social contexts influence their actions, interpretations, choices, and recommendations;
- respect for the ability of individuals, families, groups, and communities to make decisions for themselves and to care for themselves and each other.

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

Integrity and honesty are vital to the advancement of scientific knowledge and to the maintenance of public confidence in the discipline of school psychology. Integrity is based on honesty, and truthful, open and accurate communications. It includes recognizing, monitoring, and managing potential biases, multiple relationships, and other conflicts of interest that could result in harm and exploitation of persons or peoples. The relationships formed by psychologists in the course of their work embody explicit and implicit mutual expectations of integrity. Psychologists have a responsibility to meet these expectations and to encourage reciprocity.

Complete openness and disclosure of information must be balanced with other ethical considerations, including the need to protect the safety or confidentiality of persons and peoples, and the need to respect societal and/or cultural expectations.

Cultural differences exist regarding appropriate professional boundaries, multiple relationships, and conflicts of interest. However, regardless of such differences, monitoring and management are needed to ensure that self-interest does not interfere with acting in the best interests of persons and peoples.

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### ***Values related to Ethical Principle III***

In accepting the Principle of Integrity in Professional Relationships, school psychologists accept and conduct themselves in accordance with the following related values:

- honesty, truthful, open and accurate communications;
- avoiding incomplete disclosure of information unless complete disclosure is culturally inappropriate, or violates confidentiality, or carries the potential to do serious harm to individuals, families, groups, or communities;
- maximizing impartiality and minimizing biases;
- not exploiting persons or peoples for personal, professional, or financial gain;
- avoiding conflicts of interest and declaring them when they cannot be avoided or are inappropriate to avoid

### **Ethical Principle IV: Professional And Scientific Responsibilities To Society**

Psychology functions as a discipline within the context of human society. As a science and a profession, it has responsibilities to society. These responsibilities include contributing to the knowledge about human behaviour and to persons' understanding of themselves and others, and using such knowledge for the welfare of individuals, groups, communities, and society. They also include conducting its affairs within society in accordance with the highest ethical standards, and encouraging the development of social structures and policies that benefit all persons and peoples. Psychologists acknowledge that many social structures have over time in response to human need and are valued by the societies that have developed them. In such circumstances, it is expected that psychologists convey respect for such social structures and avoid unwarranted or unnecessary disruption. Psychologists may suggest changes or enhancement of such through democratic means. On the other hand, if structures or policies seriously ignore or oppose Ethical Principles I, II, III, and IV, psychologists are responsible for speaking out in a manner consistent with the principles of this *Code*, and advocate for appropriate change to occur as quickly as possible.

Differences exist in the way these responsibilities are interpreted by psychologists in different regions. However, they need to be considered in a way that is culturally appropriate in the local context and consistent with the ethical principles and related values.

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### ***Values related to Ethical Principle IV***



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In accepting the Principle of Professional And Scientific Responsibilities To Society, school psychologists accept and conduct themselves in accordance with the following related values:

- the discipline's responsibility to increase scientific and professional knowledge in ways that allow the promotion of the well-being of society and all its members;
- the discipline's responsibility to use psychological knowledge for beneficial purposes and to protect such knowledge from being misused, used incompetently, or made useless;
- the discipline's responsibility to conduct its affairs in ways that are ethical and consistent with the promotion of the well-being of society and all its members;
- the discipline's responsibility to promote the highest ethical ideals in the scientific, professional and educational activities of its members;
- the discipline's responsibility to adequately train its members in their ethical responsibilities and required competencies;
- the discipline's responsibility to adequately familiarise members with the laws and regulations of the societies in which they work, especially those that are related to their activities as psychologists (e.g., mandatory reporting under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012; the Rights of Persons with Mental Illness under the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017).
- the discipline's responsibility to develop its ethical awareness and sensitivity, and to be as self-correcting as possible.

### **Resources for Ethical Decision Making**

#### **10-Step Process for Ethical Decision Making (Canadian Psychological Association Code of Ethics)**

1. Identification of the individuals and groups potentially affected by the decision.
2. Identification of ethically relevant issues and practices, including the interests, rights, and any relevant characteristics of the individuals and groups involved and of the system or circumstances in which the ethical problem arose.
3. Consideration of how personal biases, stresses, or self-interest might influence the development of or choice between courses of action.

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4. Development of alternative courses of action.
  5. Analysis of likely short-term, ongoing, and long-term risks and benefits of each course of action on the individual(s)/group(s) involved or likely to be affected (e.g., client, client's family or employees, employing institution, students, research participants, colleagues, the discipline, society, self).
  6. Choice of course of action after conscientious application of existing principles, values, and standards.
  7. Action, with a commitment to assume responsibility for the consequences of the action.
  8. Evaluation of the results of the course of action.
  9. Assumption of responsibility for consequences of action, including correction of negative consequences, if any, or re-engaging in the decision-making process if the ethical issue is not resolved.
  10. Appropriate action, as warranted and feasible, to prevent future occurrences of the dilemma (e.g., communication and problem solving with colleagues; changes in procedures and practices).

### **The NASP Ethical Problem Worksheet**

[https://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Standards%20and%20Certification/Standards/NASP\\_Ethical\\_Problem\\_Solving\\_Worksheet.pdf](https://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Standards%20and%20Certification/Standards/NASP_Ethical_Problem_Solving_Worksheet.pdf)

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