



# Northamerican Association Of Masters In Psychology

## Ethical Standards & Code of Conduct

GOVERNING NORTHAMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MASTERS IN PSYCHOLOGY (NAMP)

*Revised July, 2000*

APPROVED BY NORTHAMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MASTERS IN PSYCHOLOGY (NAMP)

**PRESIDENT:** Randy Churchill, *New York*

Past-President: Cliff McQuillen, *Missouri*      Past-President: Margaret Joyal, *Vermont*

Past-President: Ted Dorfman, *Pennsylvania*      Past-President: Nolan Terrill, *Texas*

Past President: David Mitchell, *Oklahoma*

**ORIGINALLY DEVELOPED BY:** Logan Wright, *Oklahoma* (deceased)

### BOARD of DIRECTORS

Patricia Szriftgiser, *New Jersey* - Elizabeth Glenn, *Arkansas* - Lesia Foerster-Doan - *Oklahoma*

### PROLOGUE

Persons with Masters degrees in Psychology (hereafter referred to as Master's Psychologists), in order to provide an ever-complex society with a corresponding level of competent care, must fully comprehend the ethical and judicial implications of providing mental health services and be well-acquainted with the extensive range of issues which they will inevitably encounter.

The Ethical Standards and Code of Conduct governing the Northamerican Association of Master's Psychologists (NAMP) is designed to equip its Master's Psychologists with guidelines for dealing with such ethical issues.

The guidelines are aspirational and individual circumstances as well as professional judgment must be employed to provide the highest level of care possible, as any ethical violations reflect unfavorably on the profession as a whole.

### APPLICABILITY OF THE ETHICAL STANDARDS

Members of NAMP comprise several dimensions of the masters level degree programs, from current students to licensed therapist, as well as psychologist and psychiatrist.

Members of the Northamerican Association of Masters in Psychology (NAMP), shall abide by NAMP's Ethical Standards and Code of Conduct, and other regulations governing Master's Psychologists which shall be established by the Association.

This body of regulations governing the practice of Master's Psychologists is relevant to all activities of psychology as a science and psychology as an applied profession that its members perform.

These codes regulate only those actions related to ones role as a provider of psychological services and do not govern ones personal and private civil actions.

# GENERAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

## PRINCIPLE 1: COMPETENCE

### 1.1 MAINTENANCE OF STANDARDS AND QUALIFICATIONS

Master's Psychologists shall maintain the highest possible standards of practice based on established research techniques while preserving and observing these fundamental ethical principles and codes of conduct. Each individual is directly responsible for respecting and conserving human civil rights, while aspiring to the highest possible standards of conduct. Master's Psychologists shall accurately and objectively represent their professional qualifications, affiliations, as well as the institutions and organizations for which they work or are affiliated in any respect.

### 1.2 EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS, CERTIFICATION, and SPECIALIZATION

Master's Psychologists shall meet all particular educational, examination, and practice requirements of the position[s], which they intend to or currently occupy. The Master's Psychologists, in most cases, should meet the requirements of the Professional Psychologists Certification Board (PPCB), and all state standard certification requirements or shall be actively pursuing required certification from an accredited institution.

### 1.3 EXPEDITIOUS SUPERVISION

Master's Psychologists shall obtain timely supervision of practice techniques, assessments, and treatment when appropriate.

### 1.4 ACCURATE REPRESENTATION

Master's Psychologists shall represent themselves accurately according to the degree for which they are qualified to practice. Master's Psychologists should not provide any service for which they are not adequately trained, experienced and competent.

### 1.5 CONTINUING EDUCATION

Master's Psychologists shall abide by NAMP's continuing educational requirements and other standards of proficiency, which are incorporated by the Association. Master's Psychologists shall continually maintain current knowledge of general psychological developments while remaining updated on the efficacy of contemporary psychological procedures. Master's Psychologists shall remain updated as to current knowledge of psychology as both a science and psychology as an applied practice. Master's Psychologists shall apply those psychological methods for which they have been trained.

Master's Psychologists shall receive training in the provision of psychological services that reflect sensitivity to culturally diverse and special populations.

## PRINCIPLE 2: RESPONSIBILITY

### 2.1 INFORMED CONSENT

Master's Psychologists have a responsibility to directly inform clients about the principles regarding confidentiality and the duty to warn at the onset of treatment. Conditions and comprehension of the contract should be unambiguous and specific. General conditions of the contract should include comprehension of and agreement to the probable length of therapy, goals of therapy, payment schedules, and the right to end therapy including termination procedures.

## **2.2 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Master's Psychologists have a responsibility to the community, both locally and at large, to contribute a certain amount of time and knowledge to the community in which they live and to the general psychological education of the public, as well as providing a determinate amount of services for no financial gain.

## **2.3 ETHICAL OBJECTIVES**

Master's Psychologists shall in the pursuit of these ideals, subscribe to the Principles of Ethical Standards presented in this document.

## **2.4 CONSULTATION and REFERRAL**

Master's Psychologists shall request consultation at the earliest possible date perceived necessary in order to provide the client with the most efficacious health care available.

### **PRINCIPLE 3: INTEGRITY**

#### **3.1 SERVICE PROVISION**

The Master's Psychologists shall provide all aspects of their work with integrity.

#### **3.2 HARASSMENT**

The Master's Psychologists shall not engage in harassment, of a physical, emotional, or sexual nature while providing psychological services or in conjunction with providing psychological services.

#### **3.3 DUAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Master's Psychologists shall exercise all possible precautions regarding "dual-relations" of any kind, and should avoid social contact with individuals such as clients, students, and supervisees in order to avoid actual or apparent exploitation. When, due to unanticipated circumstances, the provider discovers that a dual-relationship[s] exist, the provider exercises all possible care within the guidelines set forth in these ethical principles. Master's Psychologists should also abstain from entering into dual-relationships within business or research relationships, which might violate these ethical principles or establish an unethical atmosphere.

#### **3.4 THIRD PARTY OBLIGATIONS**

Master's Psychologists shall, when involved in treating third party individuals or providing services to a individual at the request of a third party, shall accurately, clearly and explicitly discuss, at the onset of therapy, the attributes of the therapeutic setting and what the decisive relations between the therapist and third party clients will be.

#### **3.5 OBSERVING LEGAL PROCEDURES GOVERNING PRACTICE**

The Master's Psychologists shall make every effort to be familiar with and to comply with federal, state, and local government statutes. Master's Psychologists shall be familiar with relevant legal issues that will affect their ability to provide psychological services.

### **PRINCIPLE 4: CONFIDENTIALITY, PRIVACY, and PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATION**

#### **4.1 MAINTENANCE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

Master's Psychologists shall maintain current knowledge regarding the laws and regulations on both state and federal levels pertaining to confidentiality, privacy, and privileged communication. Master's Psychologists have a basic responsibility to regard and protect clients' confidentiality, even after the client is deceased.

#### **4.2 RECORD MAINTENANCE**

Master's Psychologists shall maintain current as well as accurate and applicable records of the type and purpose of the psychological services provided. Records include any data (regardless of the medium used to record information base), which should at least include the dates of any service, types of service[s] provided, fees and payments, any assessment results, and future treatment plans.

### **4.3 LIMITS of CONFIDENTIALITY**

Clients must be made aware that any information contained within records may be legally required to be disclosed in a court of law under certain conditions no matter what the therapist or client may petition. Master's Psychologists should dissent any court petition which infringes on patient confidentiality.

### **4.4 USE of RECORDS**

Clients should be informed of any action[s] taken with respect to information contained within their records. Master's Psychologists may not withhold record data because of any unpaid financial balance due the provider. A reasonable fee is allowed to cover expenses related to consultations, duplications and transfer of client data.

### **4.5 DUTY to WARN**

Clients must also be made aware that the Master's Psychologist has a duty to use reasonable care to Warn and Protect any potential victim if a client threatens harm or serious injury against a specific or identifiable individual[s].

### **4.6 RELEASE OF RECORDS TO A THIRD PARTY**

Master's Psychologists shall not release or discuss any client information without specific written permission of the client or the client's legal guardian.

### **4.7 RECORD PRESERVATION**

Records should be maintained a minimum of ten years. Appropriate adjustments must be made if the client is a minor or judged to be "at the time" unfit to comprehend their rights concerning the use and release of recorded data. Master's Psychologists must assiduously attend to the protection and maintenance of records to protect the confidentiality of clients, especially concerning new forms of electronically stored data.

## **PRINCIPLE 5: WELFARE & RESPECT for CLIENTS RIGHTS & DIGNITY**

### **5.1 INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS and DIGNITY**

Master's Psychologists shall be committed to increasing knowledge of human behavior, to understanding of their own and others sociocultural orientation, and to the relief of human suffering. Master's Psychologists need knowledge about and skills for multicultural assessment and treatment. They should comprehend the interactions that culture, gender, and sexual orientation can have on behavior and appreciate how sociocultural roles of the majority culture, ethnicity and or race, and varied political factors play in the development of ethnic and culturally diverse groups.

### **5.2 REFERRALS and CONSULTATIONS**

Master's Psychologists shall, when appropriate, refer clients to applicable supplementary specialists or other medical, legal, social, educational, etc. providers of requisite assessment and/or treatment techniques and services. When required, the Master's Psychologists shall consult and collaborate with professionals from various fields, or use supervisory support from appropriate professional[s], in planning the best program of services to furnish clients with the best alternative[s] of qualified treatment.

### **5.3 RIGHT to REFERRAL**

The Master's Psychologists shall make certain that clients have a clear understanding of their right to referral as well as the right to discontinue therapeutic services at any time.

### **5.4 MISAPPLICATION OF PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

The Master's Psychologists shall use his/her skills only for purposes consistent with the values herein set forward and do not knowingly permit misuse of these skills by themselves or others. The Master's Psychologists shall strive to remain objective in the applications of professional skills, while maintaining concern for the best interest of their clients, colleagues, and society in general.

## **5.5 WELFARE OF CLIENT**

The Master's Psychologists shall pursue professional endeavors while making every reasonable effort to protect the welfare of those they provide services and to protect any participant or subject that may be the object of study.

## **5.6 RESPECTFUL of HUMAN RIGHTS**

The Master's Psychologists shall observe the human rights of individuals and shall not violate the legal civil rights of anyone who receives any type of therapeutic services. Master's Psychologists are answerable for any treatment they provide and are responsive to the unique individual needs of their clients.

## **5.7 RESPECTING OTHERS**

In their work-related activities, The Master's Psychologists shall respect the rights of others to hold values, attitudes, and opinions that differ from their own.

## **5.8 RESPECT FOR PEOPLE'S RIGHTS AND DIGNITY**

The Master's Psychologists accord appropriate respect to the fundamental rights, dignity and worth of all people. They respect the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, self-determination, and autonomy, mindful that legal and other obligations may lead to inconsistency and conflict with the exercise of these rights.

## **5.9 NONDISCRIMINATION**

In his/her work-related activities, The Master's Psychologists shall not engage in unfair discrimination based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or any basic characteristic regulated by law.

## **PRINCIPLE 6: ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES & THERAPY**

### **6.1 ASSESSMENT CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Master's Psychologists shall make all assessment results confidential, as provided by law, while at the same time respecting the client's right to know about aspects concerning the interpretation of assessment results.

### **6.2 ASSESSMENT USE and INTERPRETATION**

The Master's Psychologists shall take care to administer and interpret only those assessment instruments for which they have received appropriate training, and for which they hold an appropriate license or credential.

### **6.3 EXPLANATION of INTERPRETATIONS**

The Master's Psychologists shall provide an explanation of assessment results in a verbal manner that can be easily comprehended by the individual being assessed.

## **PRINCIPLE 7: RESEARCH WITH HUMAN & ANIMAL PARTICIPANTS**

### **7.1 RELEVANT RESEARCH**

The Master's Psychologists shall only undertake research pertaining to human or animal subjects when such research contributes to psychology as a science and humankind in general. On the premise of this forethought, one conducts the research with the utmost concern for the dignity and welfare of their research participants.

### **7.2 INFORMED CONSENT in RESEARCH**

The Master's Psychologists shall make certain that research participants fully understand the conditions and comprehend the general nature of the research when requesting informed consent. Research that involves deception on the part of the researcher should in general be avoided, unless the perceived outcomes far exceed any perceived minimal adverse reactions and in either case a debriefing session suitable to the research will always be conducted.

### **7.3 RESEARCH DISSEMINATION**

When Master's Psychologists engage in research, they shall endeavor to disseminate the results of that research.

## **PRINCIPLE 8: FORENSIC PARTICIPATION**

### **8.1 FORENSIC TESTIMONY**

Master's Psychologists who provide expert testimony shall possess proficiency and specialized competence based on having received education, additional training and/or demonstrated experience in the area in which they are providing testimony. Master's Psychologists will state any perceived limits on their specialized knowledge, either by themselves or the profession. Master's Psychologists shall take care to provide expert testimony in an objective manner.

### **8.2 FORENSIC EVALUATION OF INDIVIDUALS**

When the Master's Psychologists provides forensic assessments of an individual, he/she shall base such reports on established techniques of evaluation appropriate to provide substantiation for their conclusions. Any written or oral forensic assessment results or testimony will be provided after a face-to-face examination of the individual in question.

## **PRINCIPLE 9: PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

### **9.1 REPRESENTATION of SELF**

Master's Psychologists will be accurate when submitting degrees, certification, specialization qualifications, and affiliations.

### **9.2 PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

Master's Psychologists should conscientiously consider how their public statements and public presentations-of-self will be perceived before such statements are made.

### **9.3 ADVERTISING**

Advertising is acceptable as long as such advertisements are accurate and provide information necessary for potential clients to make informed decisions and avoid anxiety-inducing claims or statements. In particular Master's Psychologists should avoid employing testimonials or claims of competence by clients, false or deceptive statements, direct supplication of clients, claims of comparative services, or engaging clients' fears if services are not obtained.

## **PRINCIPLE 10: SUPERVISION**

### **10.1 PROPER SUPERVISION**

The Master's Psychologists shall maintain proper supervision of their employees, subordinates, supervisees, and research assistants in the delegation of duties and shall make every ethically appropriate effort to ensure that only those individuals competent to perform such services do so.

## **PRINCIPLE 11: RESOLVING ETHICAL CONFLICTS**

### **11.1 FAMILIARITY with ETHICAL GUIDELINES**

The Master's Psychologists shall be familiar with the ethical rules and guidelines stated herein and ignorance of these principles are therefore not grounds for defense against charges of unethical conduct.

### **11.2 ETHICAL BEHAVIOR**

The Master's Psychologists being familiar with these guidelines, shall when confronted with possible and or potential unethical conduct, or ethically conflictual situations, act on the side of these ethical codes and conclude the situations, in accordance with the law, along the guidelines set forth in these standards.

### 11.3 FAMILIARITY with APA CODES OF CONDUCT

The Master's Psychologists shall be familiar with the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologist and Code of Conduct (1992), as well as the guidelines set-forth in this statement established and adopted by the Northamerican Association of Masters in Psychology (NAMP).

## References

- American Psychological Association. (1992). Ethical principles of psychologist and code of conduct. *American Psychologist*, 47, 12, 1597-1611.
- American Psychological Association. (1987). General guidelines for Master's Psychologists of psychological services. *American Psychologist*, 42, 7, 712-723.
- American Psychological Association. (1993). Record keeping guidelines. *American Psychologist*, 48, 9, 984-986.
- American Psychological Association. (1992). Standards for educational and psychological testing. Washington DC.
- American Psychological Association. (1991). Guidelines for Master's Psychologists of psychological services to ethnic, linguistic, and culturally diverse populations. Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs. Washington DC.
- Bales, J. (1988b. June). New laws limiting duty to protect. *APA Monitor*, 18, 4.
- Bergin, A.E. (1991). Values and religious issues in psychotherapy and mental health. *American Psychologist*, 46, 4, 394-403.
- Corey, G., Corey, M. & Callanan, P. (1993). Issues and ethics in the helping professions. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Custer, G. (1994). Can universities be liable for incompetent grads? *APA Monitor*, 26, 7.
- DeGroot, G. (1994). Should CE be mandated for every psychologist? *APA Monitor*, 25, 6.
- Keith-Spiegel, P.C. & Koocher, G.P. (1985). Ethics in psychology: Professional standards and cases. New York: Random House.
- Koocher, G.P. (1994). APA and the FTC: New adventures in consumer protection. *American Psychologist*, 49, 4, 322-328.
- National Association of Social Workers. (1981). Standards for the private practice of clinical social work. Washington DC: Author.
- Schutz, B. (1992). Legal liability in psychotherapy. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Steininger, M. Newell, J.D., & Gracia, L.T. (1984). Ethical issues in psychology. Homewood, Il: Dorsey Press.
- Sue, D.W., & Sue, D. (1990). Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Swenson, L.C. (1993). Psychology and the law for the helping professions. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole
- Szasz, T. (1963). Law, liberty, and psychiatry. New York: MacMillian.
- VanHoose, W.H., & Kottler, J.A. (1991). Ethical and legal issues in counseling and psychotherapy. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Wyatt v. Stickney, 325 F. Supp. (M.D. Ala. 1971), 334 Supp. 1341 (M.D. Ala.), 344 F. Supp. 373 (M.D. Ala. 1972), aff'd sub nom. Wyatt v. Aderholt, 503 F.2d 1305 (5th Cir. 1974).