Call for Comments on Proposed Amendments to the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (2002)

Ethics Committee requests comments on proposed changes to the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (2002) by December 15th, 2009

The *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (2002) addresses conflicts between ethics and law in two separate sections. The Introduction and Applicability section of the Ethics Code states that psychologists faced with an irreconcilable conflict between ethics and law "may adhere to the requirements of the law, regulations, or other governing authority in keeping with basic principles of human rights." Ethical Standard 1.02 states that if a psychologist's attempt to resolve a conflict between ethics and law fails, the psychologist "may adhere to the requirements of the law, regulations, or other governing legal authority." The phrase "in keeping with basic principles of human rights" in the Introduction and Applicability section is not found in the enforceable ethical standard. This phrase is also absent from Ethical Standard 1.03, which addresses conflicts between ethics and organizational demands. The discrepancy in language has been the subject of extensive focus by APA governance.

In August of 2009, Council adopted a resolution calling for the Ethics Committee to propose language to amend the Ethics Code in preparation for Council's February 2010 meeting. Council's 2009 Resolution stated that the proposed language:

- "resolve the discrepancy between the language of the Introduction and Applicability Section of the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards 1.02 and 1.03";
- "clearly communicate that Ethical Standards 1.02 and 1.03 can never be interpreted to justify or as a defense for violating basic human rights."

The Committee believes that the proposed amendments fulfill Council's directive in two important ways. First, the words "If the conflict is unresolvable via such means, psychologists may adhere to the requirements of the law, regulations, or other governing legal authority" are removed from the Introduction and Applicability section and Ethical Standard 1.02. Second, the sentence "Under no circumstances may this standard be used to justify or defend violating human rights" is added to Ethical Standards 1.02 and 1.03.

The Committee seeks comments on the proposed amendments. The Committee also seeks comments on whether the language "commitment to" or "obligations under" the Ethics Code is preferred in the Introduction and Applicability, and Standards 1.02 and 1.03.

The Committee requests that comments on the proposed amendments and "commitment to" or "obligations under" be submitted electronically, at: www.apa.org/ethics. Hardcopy comments may be submitted to: APA Ethics Office; 750 First Street, NE; Washington, DC; 20002-4242; attn: Ethics Code Amendments.

Comments must be received by December 15, 2009.

Please visit the APA Ethics Office webpage, http://www.apa.org/ethics/standard-102/, for resources relevant to this *Call.*