

Ethics Code Task Force (ECTF) Meeting Summary – December 4, 2021

The Ethics Code Task Force met on December 4, 2021 to continue its work on revising the APA Ethics Code.

The Ethics Code Task Force had met previously on November 5, 2021 and begun its discussion of the comments received related to the posting of the draft Principles developed by the Task Force. The draft Principles were posted for a 90-day comment period beginning on July 15, 2021. At its November 5, 2021 meeting, the Task Force reviewed comments received related to the following draft principles: Human Rights and Civil Rights; Interrelatedness, Systems, and Environment; and Beneficence and Nonmaleficence. In addition to reviewing the comments received related to these specific principles, the Task Force reviewed comments that centered on common themes received by various groups.

During its discussion of the specific draft principles, the Task Force members discussed if the concepts noted in the comments should be further reviewed for inclusion in the draft document going forward. The following notes provide a brief review of the discussions by the Task Force members of the comments received for specific principles. However, the following notes do not reflect all of the points discussed by the Task Force members, including the extensive discussions by Task Force members related to the various concepts outlined in reference to each of the draft Principle and the comments provided by the various groups.

During its December 4, 2021 all member meeting, the Task Force had an extensive discussion of the draft principle related to Integrity. Amongst the issues discussed were the following: a) should the term “Trust” be added to the title; b) should the principles of Integrity be combined with the principle of Responsibility and Professionalism; c) is there a need to add language related to the concept of professional conduct in this principle; and, d) should this principle include the concepts related to social justice or do those concepts remain in a principle outlining social justice. There were comments related to the language used in the draft principle. For example, several commenters noted that the language might be stronger or concept could be reworded to use language similar to that used in APA guideline documents. In addition, several commenters noted the need for overall clarity in the concepts outlining this principle.

In addition, to its discussion on the principle of Integrity, the Task Force members had a broad and extensive discussion on the draft principle of Justice and Social Justice. The discussion of principle included and centered on the following: a) is there agreement on the inclusion of justice and social justice within the same principle; b) is there a need to better define the differences between these two concepts; and, c) is there a need to strengthen the language used in the principle, including the language describing the concepts of power dynamics outlined in the principle. In addition, the Task Force members reviewed and discussed several terms used in the principle (i.e. structural racism, colonialism) and made decisions regarding the inclusion of these terms in the final document.

Review of the Task Force Meeting Discussions with Liaisons: As the Task Force has done in the past during its full-day meetings, the Task Force invites liaisons from various APA groups (i.e. Boards and Committees, Divisions) to join the Task Force in a discussion hour at the end of the meeting. Appointed

liaisons were invited to register to participate in the open meeting discussion that occurred from 4:00-5:00 pm (eastern time).

Following the introduction of the liaisons and Task Force members, Task Force Chair, Linda Campbell, PhD, provided a general review of the discussions by the Task Force, including the work done-to-date by the Task Force members in its review of the comments from the various groups. In addition, Dr. Campbell noted the various themes from the comments received that members of the Task Force had discussed. Several Task Force members provided information on the process used for reviewing the comments received from the various groups and the more common issues that were outlined by groups in their review of the draft principles. Following the general overview of the meeting, liaisons were invited to make comments and ask questions of the Task Force.

Amongst the questions and comments provided by the liaisons were the following: a) questions about the general timeline for revising, soliciting public comment, and completion of the revised Code; b) concerns about what behaviors that might be outlined in the standards that may not be enforceable for state licensing boards; c) the need for the Code to address the ethical issues related to racism and power dynamics; and, d) the need for the Code to address how technology is impacting practice and research.