Ethics Code Task Force (ECTF) Meeting Summary – November 5, 2021

The Ethics Code Task Force met on November 5, 2021 to continue its work on revising the APA Ethics Code.

A major focus of the November 5, 2021 meeting was a review of the comments received from 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. In preparation for the meeting, Task Force members reviewed comments received from APA Boards and Committees, State Psychological Associations, APA Divisions, additional external groups and individuals.

As a starting point, in the discussion of the comments received by various groups, it was noted that there were common themes noted in the comments received related to the draft Principles. Among the common themes were the following: a) should the concepts of human and civil rights be considered together or separately; b) should the concept of social justice be included within the concept of beneficence or stand alone as a principle; c) are the draft principles outlined in the draft document overly broad in scope; and, d) is the expansion in the number of principles and the concepts identified within the principles broader than necessary.

Following its discussion of the common themes noted by various groups, the Task Force members reviewed comments received for each of the draft Principles and 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.

The comments received related to the draft principle on Human Rights and Civil Rights was discussed. Among the issues discussed were the following: a) is there a need to combine the principles related to human rights, social justice, and welfare of others; b) are there concepts noted in these principles which overlap as they are currently presented; c) is there a need to define the concepts of human rights and civil rights (to be included in a definition section); and d) how will legal definitions of these concepts be noted in the Code.

Amongst the comments discussed related to the draft principle of Interrelatedness, Systems, and Environment were the following: a) should the concepts outlined in principle be subsumed into other principles; b) concepts of power and oppression are central points of this principles and how should they be outlined within this principle (or within the Code); and, c) are there concepts related to the environment that should be included in the standards.

The comments received related to Beneficence and Nonmaleficence centered on the following: a) should the concepts related to beneficence and nonmaleficence be separated into two principles; b) should a statement related to personal versus professional behavior be included in this principle (or should it be stated in the introductory paragraphs); c) is there a need to clarify definitions included in this principles; d) is there a need to include a focus on the concepts of equity, diversity and inclusion (or

should it be included in the introductory paragraphs); and, d) include additional language that represents a more global perspective.

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. Following the general overview of the meeting, liaisons were invited to make comments and ask questions of the Task Force. Amongst the comments provided by the liaisons were the following: a) feedback related to concepts which might be included in standards, but might be better included in the principles (i.e. human rights); b) overreach in the behaviors that might be outlined in the standards (is the Code "policing" psychologists; c) concerns about what behaviors that might be outlined in the standards that may not be enforceable for state licensing boards; d) concerns about how the Code will address differences in the practices of clinicians and I/O psychologists; e) questions about the inclusion of a decision-making model and the type of model that will be included; and, f) the inclusion of new concepts in the principles and standards and how these concepts build on or stand apart from the current principles and standards outlined in the Code.