

The following is a summary of the work of the Ethics Code Task Force (“ECTF”) at its Spring 2019 meeting which was held May 4-6, 2019

The ECTF focused on the work of a new subgroup, Principles, as well as the on-going work of the Introduction and Definitions subgroups.

Results of Principles Survey

The ECTF reviewed the results of its recent survey seeking input from divisions, boards, committees and SPTAs on the core Principles included in the current Code, as well as, suggestions for additional or alternative Principles. The survey was conducted during March and April 2019 and received 51 responses from various groups. The ECTF discussed the following which the survey suggested were specific needs for the Code to address:

- the concerns of psychologists practicing in different settings and within different practice areas of the discipline more broadly (e.g. I/O psychologists, military psychologists, researchers, and educators);
- the skills and practices of psychologists related to cultural competence, science and research, social justice and human rights;
- science and evidence-based practice;
- human rights and social justice;
- responsibilities beyond the profession related to the environment and sustainability of the planet;
- the issues of equity and equality in providing and accessing services; and,
- the need to hold other psychologists accountable for their work.

The ECTF also discussed other recommendations from the survey, including the following:

- consider inclusion of a decision tree;
- clearly define the Principles and how they are applied as concepts;
- consider renaming the principles to be more understandable as well as specific suggestions of names;
- discuss the interdependence of the principles; and
- integrate the principles more closely, as concepts, with the standards within the Code.

Principles – Conceptualization and Common Criteria:

Task Force members also discussed the broader issues to be considered in identifying the Principles within the revised Code, such as the importance of the principles providing additional guidance to psychologists during the decision-making process and in situations when standards do not apply. Task Force members considered common criteria that could be used when identifying Principles, such as the following criteria (developed by Louis P. Pojman): a) prescriptivity; b) universalizability (every judgement equally applicable to every relevant identical situation); c) overridingness (considers the weighting of principles); d) practicability; and e) publicity (widely known and available).

Break-out Groups for Models:

Following its discussion as a Task Force, break-out groups discussed how the Principles should be conceptualized and considered what model would visually represent the relationship between the Principles, including whether there is a priority in the listing of the Principles; and/or whether they should be clustered in groupings.

Review of Principle Concepts

Following its discussion of the two draft models, the Task Force members focused on a review of the Principles listed in the current Code, and discussed new and/or revised concepts to consider including in a new Code, including the following, which are not ranked in any order of importance:

- Beneficence and Nonmaleficence
- Integrity and Trust
- Professionalism and Responsibility
- Justice or Social Justice
- Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples
- Human and Civil Rights
- Recognition of the Interrelatedness among Individuals, Contexts, and Systems
- Scientific Discernment and Inquiry

The Task Force will continue to consider these concepts. Small groups would be responsible for defining specific Principle(s) as assigned.

Work Group Reports – Introduction and Definitions:

The ECTF reviewed and gave comments on a draft of the introductory paragraphs of the revised Code to the Introduction work group responsible for preparing the draft document. The Introduction work group will consider all comments received and revise the draft for additional review by the Task Force members.

The Definitions work group presented a listing of terms (including the rational related to defining the terms) that the work group defined for review and comment by the Task Force members. The Task Force determined that a separate section of defined terms will be added to the revised code. Following its discussion, the Task Force accepted the terms as defined and requested that the work group define additional terms to be reviewed by the Task Force.

Virtual Open Meeting Sessions – 4:00 – 5:00 pm (eastern time) on May 4th and May 5th:

Prior to the ECTF meeting, appointed liaisons from various groups, were invited to register to participate in a virtual open meeting discussion with the Task Force from 4:00 - 5:00 pm on May 4th and May 5th. Five appointed liaisons joined the virtual meeting discussion on May 4th and nine attended May 5th. Prior to the beginning of each of the virtual meeting sessions, liaisons attending the virtual meeting were asked to identify themselves and identify the groups that they represented. Following the introduction of the liaisons and Task Force members, Task Force Chair Linda Campbell, PhD, provided a brief review of the work and the issues that the Task Force members had discussed that day. Drs. Linda Woolf and Cyndie Buckson summarized the results of the Principles survey. During each of the virtual meetings, several concerns were raised by the participants, which included the following: a) utilization and applicability of the Code for undergraduate students and research assistants; b) the need for consideration of the ethical challenges for psychologists working in various specialty areas of the discipline (e.g. consulting, forensic, research); c) the need for consideration of the ethical challenges (e.g. multi-relationships) of psychologists practicing in various communities, including rural and frontier communities; d) the need for consideration of a Code that is based on common ethical principles used by other disciplines (e.g. social work); and e) the need to address emerging areas of practice, such as telepsychology.

Next Steps and Meeting Dates for 2020:

The Task Force concluded its meeting by determining its next steps for defining the concepts related to the Principles, as well as, the two work groups (Introduction and Definitions) which will continue to meet virtually throughout 2019. In addition, the Task Force set its two in-person meetings for 2020: April 24-26, 2020 and November 13-15, 2020.

A Town Hall Conversation with the Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Ethics Code Task Force will be held at APA 2019 on Friday from 3:00 to 3:50 in McCormick Place Room 190ab.