

Preparing Professional Psychologists to Serve a Diverse Public: Addressing Conflicts between Professional Competence and Trainee Beliefs

Thoughtful adoption of a program policy

- Determine a consistent approach for responding to trainees whose world views, beliefs, or religious values may impede the provision of competent professional services.
- Adopt a formal program policy that makes explicit the expectations of trainers and trainees when such conflicts arise that has the support of legal counsel and leaders of other similar programs within the university.
- Ensure there is consistency between this program policy and other program policies and descriptions.

Trainee informed consent

- Clearly communicate the program policy in all internal and publicly available program materials, including the program's website and admissions materials.
- Explicitly integrate attention to this program policy into admissions processes (e.g., individual/group interviews, application essays).
- Ask students to indicate their understanding and acceptance of this program policy when accepting an offer of admission.

Meaningfully integrate policy into education and training

- Include this program policy statement in the program's handbook and orientation.
- Address the program's expectations for how trainees will handle their worldviews, beliefs, and/or values as they relate to providing services to the public.
- Build attention to this issue into the curriculum (e.g., professional issues, ethics, and multicultural courses).
- Incorporate associated trainee competencies in practicum and program evaluations.

Maintain consistent, respectful expectations of competence

- Respectfully work with trainees in a developmentally sound manner to navigate value- or belief-related tensions that negatively impact professional competence.
- Although some trainees with sincerely held beliefs or values may wish to avoid working with certain clients, training programs are committed to preparing graduates to respond effectively to all types of clients.
- Recognize that some trainees may require additional time and pedagogical support to obtain competence.

Conflict resolution

- Ensure that trainees and their worldviews, values, and beliefs are treated with dignity and respect.
- If concerns about a trainee's competence are not resolved, document the trainee's inability or unwillingness to attain competencies as well as the steps taken to facilitate the trainee's attainment of competence.
- Base any determination to require remediation or recommend dismissal on prudent, consistent, and fair adherence to established program and institutional policies.
- Consult institutional leadership and legal counsel.

