



**AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
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Ethical Guidance for AI in the Professional Practice of Health Service Psychology

UPDATED: JULY 2025

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into behavioral health is evolving rapidly, presenting opportunities and challenges for health service psychologists. AI has the potential to enhance psychological clinical decision-making and outcomes, improve access to care, and enhance provider workflow and efficiency. As AI tools become increasingly integrated into health care and other workforce settings, human oversight and thoughtful human-technology interaction are critical. While we do not yet have all the answers, we do know that AI is already supporting clinical decision-making and improving outcomes for some providers and patients/clients.

However, in its current state, significant ethical issues exist, including transparency, bias, data security, and misinformation. In addition, there are issues of professional liability. As AI's influence on health care continues to grow, psychologists are encouraged to take a proactive role in shaping its development and implementation to ensure its ethical, responsible, and equitable use. We need a balanced, flexible approach that allows us to learn and adapt as these technologies evolve—especially since many tools are already being deployed in practice.

This document outlines some key considerations for health service psychologists who use AI in professional practice.

This document is not exhaustive and does not represent official APA policy but was informed by relevant APA standards and guidelines, including the *APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (APA, 2017). The considerations included in this document are intended to educate and inform psychologists, and are aligned with fundamental Ethical Principles, including Beneficence and Nonmaleficence, Fidelity and Responsibility, Integrity, Justice, and Respect for People's Rights and Dignity. They do not reflect standards that are mandatory, exhaustive, or accompanied by an enforcement mechanism, nor are they intended to guide regulatory action. Psychologists are also aware of the

standards of practice for the settings in which they practice, and they are expected to comply with those standards, including any federal and state laws and regulations.

1. TRANSPARENCY & INFORMED CONSENT

AI use in settings where psychological services are offered are encouraged to be disclosed to other relevant providers, individuals who are receiving direct care services, and any third parties who may be considered a patient/client of psychological services (e.g., the court) in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. Psychologists have an ethical obligation to obtain informed consent by clearly communicating the purpose, application, and potential benefits and risks of relevant AI tools. Transparent communication maintains patient/client trust and upholds Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity.

Recommendations for Health Service Psychologists:

- Be thoughtful in the disclosure of use of AI tools as it relates to patient/client care. While certain AI use cases may be considered more subtle and/or innocuous (e.g., using predictive text when writing provider notes), others may be considered more substantial and would require greater discussion and disclosure with patients/clients (e.g., a health care system using AI to determine the best mental health treatment approach for an individual). Discussion with the patient/client includes specific mention of the AI tool being used in the delivery of patient care as needed.
- In their written informed consent, psychologists may consider adding information regarding when, how, and the type of AI tool(s) they use in the delivery or support of patient care.
- Communicate information in a culturally, developmentally, and linguistically appropriate manner.
- Inform patients/clients about AI's role, limitations, risks, and benefits to ensure true autonomy.
- Inform patients/clients that they have the right to opt out of certain AI-driven interventions and will be provided with alternative options if available.
 - » Best practice would involve clearly explaining the available alternative options (e.g., non-AI facilitated care with the current provider, remaining on the waitlist, referral to another provider, etc.)

and reviewing the associated pros and cons of each option.

- » Patients/clients should be informed of whom to contact if they have concerns regarding the use of AI or wish to withdraw consent for the use of AI tools in their care.

2. MITIGATING BIAS & PROMOTING EQUITY

AI systems should ideally be evaluated with a focus on addressing bias and preventing exacerbation of existing health care disparities. Responsible AI development considers the full range of lived experiences to avoid unfair discrimination. The APA Ethics Code (2017) Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity calls on psychologists to strive to eliminate the effect of biases on their work.

Recommendations for Health Service Psychologists:

- Evaluate AI tools for potential biases that could potentially worsen disparities in mental health outcomes.
 - » For example, psychologists are encouraged to review how tools are/were normed and what data the AI was trained on, including diverse lived experiences to reduce inadvertently reinforcing discrimination and/or harmful stereotypes.
- To ensure AI serves everyone equitably, psychologists should strive to play a role in helping to build high-quality, representative datasets, especially from under-represented regions, which are consistent with data privacy requirements. This includes supporting health systems in these communities to participate in data creation and infrastructure development, so they too can shape and benefit from AI.

3. DATA PRIVACY & SECURITY

AI systems handling sensitive behavioral health data pose risks related to privacy breaches and unethical data use. Psychologists must ensure that any tools they select can be used in a manner that is in compliance with HIPAA and other relevant data privacy regulations; this necessitates advocating for robust cybersecurity strategies to protect patient/client information. Data privacy and security also aligns with professional standards of conduct and the APA Ethics Code (2017) Principles of Beneficence and Nonmaleficence, Fidelity and Responsibility, and Respect

for People's Rights and Dignity in maintaining privacy, confidentiality, and trust.

Recommendations for Health Service Psychologists:

- Review AI tools to check for compliance with relevant data privacy and security laws and regulations such as HIPAA, or other relevant federal or state privacy requirements to protect patient information. Health service psychologists should strive to avoid and/or discontinue using AI tools when security concerns arise.
- Be knowledgeable about how patient/client data are used, stored, or shared, including aggregated or de-identified data and inform patients/clients of this information.
- Strong cybersecurity measures should be in place to prevent data breaches or misuse.

4. ACCURACY & MISINFORMATION RISKS

AI tools should ideally be rigorously validated before implementation in psychological practice. Health service psychologists should strive to critically evaluate AI-generated content before applying it in clinical settings to the greatest extent possible and are encouraged to critically evaluate AI tools they recommend patients/clients to use. Psychologists should strive to assess AI tools for their quality, performance, and appropriateness in behavioral health settings, aligning with Principle A: Beneficence and Nonmaleficence. Upholding the Ethical Principle of Integrity, psychologists take responsibility for the quality of information used in their practice, including promptly discontinuing the use of AI tools if misinformation concerns arise.

Recommendations for Health Service Psychologists:

- Critically evaluate AI-generated content, both at the start of use and in ongoing applications.
- Health service psychologists are encouraged to review AI tools for information on how the tool was validated during development by health care experts and supported by transparent, high-quality evidence.
- Psychologists in health service settings are encouraged to use products and services that rely on AI models that have undergone rigorous accuracy testing to ensure reliability. This information should be easily identified by the developers (e.g., the model developers have published their testing/reliability data and outcomes).
- Psychologists should strive to integrate tools that disclose their training data source and provide evidence of validation.

- Psychologists should strive to integrate tools that offer recommendations for auditing model performance/effectiveness in health service contexts.

5. HUMAN OVERSIGHT & PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT

AI should augment, not replace, human decision-making. Psychologists remain responsible for final decisions and must not blindly rely on AI-generated recommendations. Maintaining professional oversight ensures adherence to the Ethical Principles of Beneficence and Nonmaleficence, and Fidelity and Responsibility, protecting patients/clients from potential harm.

Recommendations for Health Service Psychologists:

- Psychologists should strive to be competent regarding any AI tools they use
- Establish clear human intervention points (i.e., human in the loop) within AI-driven workflows to maintain professional accountability and to ensure that AI-generated insights are reviewed critically.
- Psychologists should strive for autonomy in approving or rejecting AI-generated recommendations based on their professional judgment and in line with available research evidence and/or professional standards.

6. LIABILITY & ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY

The legal implications of AI in behavioral health are still emerging. Health service psychologists are encouraged to consider liability risks related to AI tool selection and ensure that they provide proper training and understanding of AI systems that can help mitigate legal and ethical risks.

Recommendations for Health Service Psychologists:

- Health service psychologists understand legal and ethical risks associated with AI tool selection and use in health service settings.
- Negligent reliance on AI without proper validation or oversight could create liability issues.
- Transparency and competence in AI are crucial for managing legal risks and ensuring ethical practice.
- In alignment with best practice standards, psychologists should participate in continuing education about developments in mental health AI and how to leverage it in psychological practice.

CONCLUSION

Health service psychologists have an ethical obligation to prioritize patient/client safety, protect confidentiality and data privacy, promote equity, and function competently and transparently when integrating AI into their work. AI should serve as a tool to support, not replace, professional judgment in health care settings. The above considerations are meant to help health service psychologists assess whether their selection and use of AI-driven interventions aligns with existing principles and standards within the practice of psychology while safeguarding patient/client well-being and trust. When using AI-powered tools, health service psychologists have an ethical duty to act in the best interests of patients/clients and avoid contributing to greater disparities or harm when possible. Engaging in proactive discussions and continuing education, advocating for ethical AI development, and upholding professional standards will help shape a responsible and equitable AI-integrated future.

When opportunities arise, health service psychologists are encouraged to actively participate in interdisciplinary discussions (including with professionals from other subdisciplines of psychology), collaborate with AI developers, and engage with organizations shaping AI policies. Failure to engage in these conversations risks leaving critical decisions to those without the necessary psychological expertise. AI's expansion in mental health care necessitates that health service psychologists stay informed and adapt to technological changes. The practice of psychology must balance innovation with ethical responsibility to ensure long-term sustainability and public trust.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In January 2025, APA's Mental Health Technology Advisory Committee (MHTAC) hosted a day-and-a-half hybrid meeting in Washington, D.C., to develop a thought leadership paper about navigating the responsible and ethical incorporation of AI into mental health practice for psychologists. MHTAC members in attendance included: Jessica Jackson, PhD (chair), Victoria Bangieva, PhD, David Cooper, PsyD, Ellen Fitzsimmons-Craft, PhD, Karen Fortuna, PhD, Andrea Graham, PhD, Charmain Jackman, PhD, Eric Kuhn, PhD, Kay Nikiforova, MA, Marie Onakomaiya, PhD, Pooja Raghani, PsyD, and Hilary Weingarden, PhD. Additional stakeholders in attendance included: Deborah Baker, JD (APA Professional Legal & Regulatory Affairs), Lindsay Childress-Beatty, JD, PhD (APA Ethics), Corbin Evans, JD (APA Science & Technology), Kamieka Gabriel, PhD (APA Board of Professional Affairs), Tony Habash, DSc (APA Information Technology Services), Dominique Haywood (APA Public

Interest), Keely Kolmes, PsyD (Independent Psychological Practice), Laura Lamminen, PhD, ABPP (Former APA Ethics Committee Member; Independent Psychological Practice), Lauren Sommers, PhD, JD (APA Public Interest), Dennis Stolle, JD, PhD (APA Applied Practice), Andrew Strickland, JD (APA Public Policy & Engagement) and Wendy R. Williams, PhD (APA Education). MHTAC members drafted this document based on top themes and consensus areas of importance that emerged during the hybrid meeting. All attendees reviewed the draft document and contributed editorial feedback, as did Ashley Batastini, PhD (MHTAC), Ashleigh Golden, PsyD (MHTAC), and Clifton Berwise, PhD (Liaison to APA Committee on Early Career Psychologists). The APA Ethics Committee has adopted this document. The initiative was supported by APA's Office of Health Care Innovation: Leanna Fortunato, PhD, Aaron Jones, MA, and C. Vaile Wright, PhD.

APA RESOURCES

[Artificial Intelligence in Mental Health Care](#)

[APA's Technology in Practice](#)

[Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning](#)

[APA's Mental Health Technology Advisory Committee](#)

[APA's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct](#)

[APA Ethics Committee's Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Ethical Issues related to the Use of Artificial Intelligence and Social Media in Psychology](#)

CONTINUING EDUCATION RESOURCES

[Bringing the Power of Artificial Intelligence to Your Clinical Practice: A Hands-on Guide](#)

[From Couch to Computer: Converting Psychological Expertise to Digital Health](#)

[The Future is Now: How Digital Interventions Could Address the Mental Health Crisis](#)

[The Chatbot Cannot Replace You: Using Digital Technologies to Expand Your Positive Impact on Mental Health](#)

OTHER RESOURCES

[Describing the Framework for AI Tool Assessment in Mental Health and Applying It to a Generative AI Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Platform](#)

[Readiness Evaluation for AI-Mental Health Deployment and Implementation \(READI\):](#)

A Review and Proposed Framework

Google Generative AI-Powered Healthcare:

The Future is Now