

## **Prince Edward Island Psychologists Registration Board**

### **Practice Guideline: Regulation of Psychological Tests**

(adapted with permission from materials of the College of Alberta Psychologists)

In all of their professional activities, psychologists adhere firmly to the principle that protection of the dignity and welfare of the individual is their first priority. The misuse of psychological tests by unqualified persons can cause harm to individuals, and psychologists therefore have an obligation to ensure that psychological tests remain under the control of appropriately qualified psychologists. The commercial availability of computerized interpretations of psychological test results presents a particular danger for loss of professional control over psychological testing. Computer-generated interpretations are potentially useful in the hands of competent and responsible clinicians, but they are easily abused. Computer algorithms are not substitutes for clinical judgement, and computer printouts are not substitutes for professionally prepared assessment reports.

The following guidelines are intended to assist psychologists in maintaining proper control over psychological testing. Psychologists who encounter pressure from others to act in ways that the psychologist considers unprofessional should point out that they are legally bound to act within the restrictions of the *Psychologists Act and Regulations*. If this proves ineffective, or additional information is necessary, please contact the Board.

*Definitions:* Within the context of these guidelines, an “appropriately qualified psychologist” means a registered psychologist with graduate-level training in psychological assessment, psychometric theory and test construction, professional ethics, and other areas of study relevant to the specific type of psychological assessment.

A “psychological test” is used in psychological practice to measure psychological constructs and inform case conceptualization, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment planning. Psychological tests include, but are not limited to, any standardized test of intelligence or cognitive functioning, personality, behaviour, adaptive functioning, neuropsychological functioning, and mental health symptomatology.

#### **Guideline # 1**

Psychologists must at all times endeavour to maintain the integrity of psychological tests. They may not supply test materials, forms, and manuals to unqualified users. They must take reasonable steps to ensure that the purchase and distribution of psychological tests by their employing institutions are for the use of psychologists only.

#### **Guideline # 2**

Psychologists have an obligation to protect test security. For example, actual test items or specific test content should not be disclosed in reports and teaching situations (the teaching of

psychologists -in-training is an exception to this rule), and access to test protocols and materials should be restricted to registered psychologists only.

### **Guideline # 3**

The individual psychologist is responsible for choosing the most appropriate psychological tests or assessment methods in a given situation, based on the psychologist's perceptions of the needs of the person being assessed. These perceptions take precedence over the wishes or demands of referring agents, the client, or the guardian.

### **Guideline # 4**

It is incumbent upon psychologists to ensure that others use the results of psychological testing appropriately. Derived scores such as IQ's, percentiles, standard scores, age-equivalents, etc., should be disclosed in the context of an interpretive report containing appropriate cautions about the limitations of the psychological data unless compelled by law.

### **Guideline # 5**

Psychologists have an obligation to ensure that summaries of their results (e.g. in multidisciplinary conference summaries) are accurate. If psychological findings are misconstrued, misinterpreted, or misapplied by others, the psychologist must take reasonable steps to correct the situation.

### **Guideline # 6**

Psychological tests may be administered by psychological assistants, technicians, and students only under the supervision of a registered psychologist. The supervising psychologist bears full responsibility to provide ongoing supervision sufficient to ensure that appropriate tests are selected, tests are skilfully administered, scoring is accurate, and interpretations and recommendations are appropriate.

### **Guideline # 7**

Psychologists who teach psychological assistants, technicians, or students to use psychological tests must ensure that their trainees are aware of the limits of their competence and of the requirements that psychological tests may be used only by a registered psychologist or under the supervision of a registered psychologist.

### **Guideline # 8**

Psychologists offering test scoring and test interpretation services should be able to demonstrate that the programs and procedures used in arriving at the interpretation are valid. Psychologists who use these services must be able to evaluate the validity of computer-generated interpretations and hypotheses before using them and they are fully responsible for their decisions, statements, and actions based on these interpretations.

### **Guideline # 9**

Computerized test interpretations are potentially useful in the hands of appropriately qualified psychologists, as sources of hypotheses or aids in the decision-making process. Computer printouts should be treated in a manner similar to raw data. That is, printouts should not be

placed in files that are open to non-psychologists, nor should they be sent to referring agents in lieu of a professionally prepared report. In a proper professional report, psychological test results are combined with information about the examinee's current life situation, history, and clinical presentation, and the meaning for the individual client interpreted within this broad context.

**Guideline # 10**

The contents of a psychological report are fully and only the responsibility of the psychologist who signs the report. The psychologist must maintain professional objectivity and resist individual and institutional pressure that might bias or distort his or her conclusions.

**Guideline # 11**

Psychologists who are assessing the cognitive and academic abilities of an individual must outline the purpose of testing, the likely outcome, as well as alternative approaches or services. If the psychologist does not offer assessments for learning disabilities or diagnose the same, the client or guardian should be made aware of this before the assessment occurs.

**Guideline # 12**

Psychologists ensure that they provide feedback to the individual and / or guardian at the conclusion of a psychological or psychoeducational assessment.