



Conflict of Interest Policy. (Version 1, April 2008)

This policy has been written having regard to standards C3 (Conflict of Interest) and A3 (Informed Consent) of the Code of Ethics of the Australian Psychological Society. This practice subscribes to that code a copy of which is available for viewing in the waiting room.

1. Conflicts of Interest That May Arise From Situations Where Two or More Clients Are Known To Each Other

An example that has the potential for this type of conflict of interest would be if several members of an immediate family were separate clients of the same psychologist at the practice.

Psychologists working at Psychology and Living will always attempt not to enter into or continue to provide services in situations where clients they are seeing as individuals are known to each other if the overall dynamic:

- a). interferes with their effectiveness or ability to provide a psychological service in any way, or;
- b). harms or leads to exploitation of clients or other parties to a psychological service.

If this type of situation arises we will take steps to resolve it.

We may continue to provide services to the original client and offer the other clients a referral to another service that meets their specific needs, or;

If the psychologists ability to provide a psychological service to the original client has been comprised, we will offer a referral to all clients involved.

2. Conflicts of Interest That May Arise From Situations Where The Practitioner and Client Are Known To Each Other

There are at least two types of conflict of interest in these situations:

1. *One type would arise if, for example, a psychologists brother or close friend wanted to receive psychological services from the psychologist.*
2. *The other type could arise if, for example, a psychologists stock broker, wanted to receive or was receiving psychological services from the psychologist.*

In cases such as example 1.

Psychologists working at Psychology and Living will always refrain from engaging in psychological services with:

- a). members of their immediate or extended family;
- b). close friends.

In cases such as example 2.

Psychologists working at Psychology and Living will refrain from engaging in psychological services with individuals who are known to them if this activity:

- a). interferes with their effectiveness or ability to provide a psychological service in any way, or;
- b). harms or leads to exploitation of clients or other parties to a psychological service.

If this type of situation arises the client practitioner relationship must cease and the client will be offered a referral.

3. Perceived Bias

Perceived bias could occur in a situation where there is a potential conflict of interest between finding the facts and gaining some personal advantage or avoiding a personal disadvantage. It could also occur in a situation where a psychologist is engaged in offering or supplying psychological services to a client exhibiting behaviours that the psychologist has had personal issues with in their own history.

An example of the first situation is:

A psychologist is contracted to assess and furnish a report on an individual for the purposes of an ongoing legal proceeding the outcomes of which could potentially affect the psychologist materially or personally. In this example there may be a perception from others that the psychologists impartiality is compromised and indeed there is the potential for partial behaviour by the psychologist unless he or she takes deliberate steps to ensure against this.

An example of the second situation is:

The client of a psychologist has a history of violence against their partner and the psychologist, in a past relationship, has been the recipient of domestic violence. In this example the psychologist may have resolved all of their personal issues surrounding domestic violence but an outside observer who becomes aware of the psychologists history may offer a different opinion.

Psychologists working at Psychology and Living will always act to safeguard their professional ethics, skills and abilities in situations of possible perceived bias. If a potential situation presents the psychologist concerned will:

- a). fully disclose to the client the circumstances surrounding the perceived bias;
- b). inform the client of the steps they have taken and will take to deal with the perceived bias;
- c). document the situation including the steps they have taken in the past, if relevant, and the current steps they are taking to deal with the perceived bias;

- d). consult a senior, or at least equal to in seniority, psychologist concerning the perceived bias;

4. Unavoidable Conflict of Interest or Perceived Bias Situations

Psychologists can encounter situations when, due to overriding ethical considerations or by law, perceived bias and even conflict of interest is unavoidable. However in these situations a through d of standard 3 above apply either before the actions of the psychologist or, if this is not possible, as soon as reasonable and practicable after the psychologist has supplied the psychological service.

An example of 'by law' is:

A psychologist is subpoenaed to give evidence against one of their clients. In this example the psychological would apply a, b & c from standard 3 before they acted and 3.d either before or after.

An example of 'overriding ethical considerations' is:

A psychologist encounters an emergency situation which involves someone well known to them however, due to the imminent nature of the situation, they have no choice other than to supply a psychological service. In this example they would not be able to apply standard 3 until after the event and sections of standard 2 would also need to be considered.

5. Vested Interests

If psychologists working at Psychology and Living have any vested interests in the services they offer then they will fully disclose those interests to clients.

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