

# Croatian Psychological Society

## Code of Ethics

### INTRODUCTION

The Croatian Psychological Association is committed to the Code of Ethics as a set of rules for professional conduct of psychologist whose aim is to attain highest ideals of humanity in psychology.

This Code of Ethics comprises the Preamble, the Basic Principles and specific moral standards. Those standards are defined in fairly general terms so as to be applicable in a variety of situations and to different professional roles. Thus defined, the standards are in no way conclusive meaning that this Code is subject to alterations in accordance with the requirements of transformable social conditions.

Holding membership of the Croatian Psychological Association implies lasting awareness by all members of the morale issues and their adherence to the rules of this Code. Students of psychology as well as all psychologists in the entire territory of the Republic of Croatia must be familiar with the Code. They must understand, the members of the Croatian Psychological Association and those who are not, that this Code applies to both alike in the best interest of the profession. Unfamiliarity with ethical standards or lack of understanding cannot justify unethical behavior. Breaches of the rules of the Code are dealt with by the Association's Board of Honor which appraises the gravity of a breach and imposes sanctions.

This Code is subject to permanent verification and contingent modifications. The Board of Directors of the Croatian Psychological Association will, at regular intervals (every two years as a minimum), examine the need for amending the Code.

### PREAMBLE

This Code of Ethics comprises a system of common values that psychologists honor in their professional work. It is viewed also as a principle model of profession conduct for psychologists.

Within the area of their interest and work, psychologists accept those explications of psychic functions that are based on validated and verifiable scientific knowledge. The knowledge thus acquired and adopted is applied in different professional situations and roles. Psychologists can be scientists, researchers, school teachers, educators, diagnosticians, therapist, supervisors, counselors, court experts and the like. Their common goal is to promote truthful knowledge of human behavior and to apply this knowledge with the aim of improving the quality of life for individuals and the human community as a whole.

Psychologists value and stress the key importance of the freedom of research and expression in science, instruction and publication. This freedom is seen as the foundations of the science and the overall human progress.

In a community in which they work psychologist make efforts to assist in getting to know and understand the phenomena related to human experience and behavior. In doing this they assert and promote the freedom for every individual to choose their behavior so long as it does not hurt others.

Attainment of highest ethical standards of behavior is the responsibility and duty of every psychologist. It is their responsibility to encourage their pupils, students, associates and colleagues to behave in harmony with ethical standards. When in doubt, they must consult with their colleagues. However, in the performance of their duties, psychologists act as independent persons, contributing and giving refinement by their personal system of values, culture and life experiences to the rules set out in this Code.

Members of the Croatian Psychological Association are aware of the more general issues that humankind is being faced with. They are aware of the profound ecological crisis and of the disturbing deterioration of life sustaining systems of the biosphere as well as other adverse developments on our planet. Bearing this in mind they are prepared to assume their share of responsibility together with all other scientists in the fulfillment of projects for sustainable development and the conservation of nature and life on Earth.

## **BASIC PRINCIPLES**

### **1. Respect for human rights and for dignity of the human person**

In their work and professional conduct psychologists declare full respect for fundamental rights and the dignity and worth of all human beings. They make every effort to develop those values in every individual they establish professional contact with. They acknowledge the right of an individual to privacy and secrecy and the right of self-determination. Psychologists are aware of the existence of individual and cultural differences among people with respect to age, gender, race, nationality, ethnic origin, religious affiliations, sex preferences, bodily characteristics, language and social and economic status. Psychologists make every effort in their work to eliminate all forms of discrimination, and are resolute in rejecting to participate in any kind of dishonorable and unethical discriminatory practices.

### **2. Competency**

Psychologists strive at obtaining and retaining high level of competency of their professional work. They are aware of the limitations of their knowledge and expertise. They only provide services and use techniques such as they are qualified for either by education or experience. In those fields of activity where reliable professional standards have not been established they undertake necessary measures of precaution in order to protect persons with whom they establish professional contact. They are aware of the significance of scientific and professional achievements within their scope of activity. They are aware of the dynamic development of psychology as a science and applied discipline, and make every effort to keep pace with these dynamics by constantly gaining new knowledge and skills and expanding them.

### **3. Professional and scientific responsibility**

Psychologists must foster awareness of their professional and scientific responsibility towards persons with whom they maintain professional contact and towards the community and society in which they live and work. Moral standards and conduct must be such as to promote the building of positive attitudes by the public towards psychology and psychologists. They have an obligation to promote professional and scientific ethics among their colleagues. When necessary they take counsel with their colleagues in order to prevent or avoid unethical practices.

### **4. Integrity of science and profession**

Psychologists seek to promote the integrity of the science of psychology, of education of psychologists and of psychological practice. In doing this, they act in a transparent and honest manner showing consideration for others. In reporting on the results of their research and instruction, the services they provide and the like are realistic and utterly frank. They avoid practices that can in any way cause harm to the image of psychologists or of psychology as a profession. They explain the role of psychologists to all those concerned and make efforts to perform in full harmony with their affirmative role.

## **ETHICAL STANDARDS**

### **1. General Standards**

#### **1.1 Applicability of the Code of Ethics**

This Code only applies to professional activities of psychologists. Activities which are not complementary to their professional role are purely private and this Code does not apply to them.

#### **1.2 Professional and scientific relationships**

Psychologists provide services including medical diagnosis, therapeutic work, research, supervision, counseling and other psychological assistance exclusively within the framework of professional and scientific relationships or roles.

#### **1.3 Describing the nature and results of psychological services**

In providing professional services to individuals, groups and organizations, psychologists must use the language and terms that the users of their services can fully comprehend. It is their duty to inform in advance about the nature of their services and to provide appropriate information afterwards accompanied by results that may have been obtained as well as to highlight conclusions. If for some statutory or any other organization regulation reasons the psychologist is prevented from providing for certain individuals or groups information mentioned above, he shall so inform them beforehand.

#### **1.4 Quality or relationships with persons in established professional contacts**

Psychologists do not deliberately undertake any actions that might be harmful to a person they maintain professional contact with. They do not under any circumstances underestimate those persons, nor do they humiliate them, and they make every effort to reduce the trauma to a minimum where it can be foreseen or where it is inevitable. In their professional work and other activities complementary to their professional role, psychologists are expressly forbidden to sexually harass or have sexual intercourse with persons they make contact with.

### **1.5 Personal difficulties and provision of professional services**

Psychologists are aware of the possible impact of their own personal difficulties and conflicts on their professional performance. Therefore they must avoid any activities that might have adverse influence on their pupils and students, associates in their research, clients, colleagues and other persons with whom they maintain contact. Psychologists should acknowledge their own difficulties and must seek assistance in order to avoid any possible difficulties in their professional work. When a psychologist arrives at a conclusion that due to personal difficulties he or she cannot continue with their professional activities, they must temporarily restrict over a certain period, or permanently suspend their professional activities.

### **1.6 Ill treatment or influence and work**

Being fully aware of the possible impact of their scientific and professional attitude and evaluation on lives of other people, psychologists must act with utter caution in order to prevent any possible ill treatment of their role. Psychologists do not take part in professional activities when there is reason to suspect that their skills or the information they have obtained might be misused unless remedial mechanisms have been foreseen. Psychologists do not take part in activities which aim at manipulating individual persons, groups or public opinion and which serve as a tool in the promotion of someone's social power. When they observe ill treatment or false interpretation of the results of their work, psychologists must undertake appropriate action in order to rectify or reduce to a minimum such ill treatment or false interpretations.

### **1.7 Multiple relationships**

In many communities and situations, psychologists cannot avoid non-professional contacts with persons with whom they otherwise maintain professional relationships (clients, students, pupils, test takers). Therefore, they must be all times susceptible and alert, lest those informal contacts should have unfavorable consequences on those persons. Psychologists will evade such relationships if they believe that they can influence their objectivity or interfere with the effectiveness of their professional role. In line with this, psychologists will decline to undertake professional obligations in situations where already existing relations represent a risk (i.e. might have adverse impact on persons concerned). When a psychologist observes that, due to reasons impossible to foresee in advance, unacceptable relations are being created which may have complex ramifications, he or she will make every effort to resolve them in the best interest of the person concerned and in full compliance with this Code.

### **1.8 Charging a fee for services**

The basic prerequisite for charging a fee for services is the existence of a legally registered business. Psychologists charge for their services in a manner and in accordance with appropriate laws. The Croatian Psychological Association does not stipulate the amount of fees to be charged by psychologists for their services. This comes within the competence of a trade union or a professional organization. The amount of the fee for services is agreed upon between the psychologist and the user of his services at the beginning of a professional relationship and as early as possible. The psychologist will not act in such a way to achieve the best possible fee for services. He will not exploit the user of his services by charging disproportionate fees. He will explain the amounts he charges in a faithful manner. The psychologist is conscious of the possible financial limitations of his clients and takes into account of this at the beginning of their professional relationship. In their report to the client or those who provide for research projects, psychologists describe truthfully and accurately the nature and the content of their services and research, the amount of compensation and where necessary, the findings they have obtained.

### **1.9 Documentation relating to professional and scientific work**

Psychologists must save methodically and in accordance with regulations, the documentation pertaining to their professional and scientific work in order to facilitate their own future work or the work of their colleagues, or for easier access to the findings of their work, and because of institutional and statutory requirements. They have an obligation to arrange and save their documentation in compliance with strict professional requirements.

## **2. Measurements and Evaluations**

### **2.1 Evaluation and diagnostics within professional framework**

Psychological measurements, professional recommendations, reports as well as psychological evaluation and diagnosis, must be founded on valid procedures and techniques that yield the necessary and sufficient information for interpretation, and are in keeping with the purpose they are utilized for.

### **2.2 Competency and utilization of measuring procedures**

Psychologists who construct, apply, score, and interpret or utilize psychological measuring instruments must act in keeping with the purpose and the requirements of the research or the services rendered. They must be familiar with the measuring characteristics of the procedures they utilize as well as with the utilization techniques.

Psychologists are aware of the limitations and imprecision of diagnoses, appraisals and predictions that relate to individual or group measurements. They are critical of improper utilization of psychological measuring instruments and of false interpretation of findings of psychological measurements to persons who are not qualified to utilize such information except, as necessary, to participants in research or to clients in which cases they interpret their own findings.

### **2.3 Interpretation of measurement findings**

When interpreting findings of measurements, psychologists must take into account all characteristics of the procedure they have used as well as the characteristics of individuals whose scores are interpreted. The purpose of such an approach is to enhance the precision and obtain control over possible false interpretations of findings. Psychologists must clearly state the factors of greater significance which contribute to their reservations in the interpretation.

#### **2.4 Utilization of inappropriate, outdated or overused measuring procedures**

Psychologists must not make professional judgments and decisions based on outdated or overused measuring instruments or on tests for which measuring characteristics are not known nor on tests with no standardization and norms for a given population.

#### **2.5 Testing**

Psychologists who conduct psychological measurements to be used by other professionals must describe accurately their purpose, validity, norms and procedures. They must be informed of the purpose for which their findings will be utilized and adjust accordingly their conduct and interpretation. Psychologists are responsible for appropriate application, interpretation and use of measuring procedures. They make every effort to prevent the use of psychological measuring procedures by non-qualified persons.

#### **2.6 Providing for test security**

Psychologists have an obligation to safeguard the integrity and secrecy of test and other psychological measuring instruments by saving them in such a way as to prevent the violation of principles of test utilization set out in this Code.

### **3. Protection of Secrecy and Privacy**

#### **3.1 Seeking consent of collection of data**

When taking on projects, psychologists must discuss with individuals or organizations concerned the nature of the data they will collect as well as the possible use, ill treatment and protection of those data. Consent must be sought from those concerned for every collection of data.

#### **3.2 Confidentiality of data**

It is primary obligation of every psychologist to respect the right of a human person to secrecy and privacy, therefore it is his duty to take the necessary caution in order to avoid violations of this aspect of the professional relationship. Included in written and oral reports, consultations and the like are solely those items of information for the sake of which the professional relationship had been established in the first place. Confidential information on partakers in the studies or on counseling or clinical relationships as well as information on clients, organizations or students can be provided only and exclusively with the consent of those concerned.

## **4. Research and Scientific Work**

### **4.1 Research planning**

Psychologists design, conduct and report on their studies in accordance with the known standards of scientific competency and research ethics. The studies are designed in such a way as to minimize the possibility of false interpretation of findings. In designing, psychologists show concern for ethical implications of the research in accordance with this Code. If in terms of ethics, a certain issue remains vague, the psychologist will present this for consideration before a competent body of the Croatian Psychological Association (the Board of Honor). Psychologists must undertake appropriate measures for the protection of the rights and the welfare of participants in the study or other persons whom it might affect as well as of the well-being of animals if those are used in the study.

### **4.2 Institutional approval**

Prior to every study, a psychologist must seek and obtain approval in writing from qualified institutions or organizations. Accurate information must be provided concerning the purpose and the planned course of the study. The study must be conducted in accordance with procedures agreed.

### **4.3 Scientific responsibility**

Psychologists conduct their studies in a qualified manner bearing in mind the dignity and the well-being of participants. Psychologists are accountable for ethical aspects of their own studies and the studies conducted under their mentorship or supervision. Researchers and their assistants are permitted to conduct only those assignments they have been qualified or specially trained for. When studies involve special populations, psychologists must seek counsel with experts for those populations of test takers. Except when the study involves observation under natural conditions and in case of similar studies, the nature of the study and the mutual responsibilities must be explained to those participating in an unsophisticated and understandable language prior to the commencement of the study.

### **4.4 Test Taker's consent**

Potential test takers must be given an opportunity to decide for themselves whether or not they wish to take part in the study after they have been informed of their obligations, limitations, possible consequences and the risks. Psychologists are under obligation to answer, in a frank manner, all questions that potential test takers might ask in relation to the planned study. In case of persons who are unable to assume responsibility for taking part in a study, a psychologist must (1) provide appropriate explanation to such persons; (2) obtain appropriate agreement; and (3) obtain approval from a legally authorized person or institution.

### **4.5 Making test takers acquainted with the study**

Psychologists should not give false information to the test takers concerning the nature and content of the study. This rule can be infringed solely in those cases where different means and methods for obtaining scientific knowledge of exceptional importance are nonexistent. Psychologists should not misinform the test takers about possible unpleasant aspects of their taking part in the study which might influence their decision to participate (for example, negative emotional states that might result from taking part in a study, physical risks, pain and the like). If there exist reasons justifying failure to offer relevant information in advance, they must be explained to the test takers as early as possible, if possible, immediately after the procedure has been conducted, and by all means prior to the completion of the study. In the course of the study, communication with participants is conducted solely in compliance with the design of the study and the role of a scrupulous scientist. Upon completion of the study, psychologists must give an opportunity to participants to obtain appropriate information concerning its nature, findings and conclusions. They make every effort to remove any vagueness, hesitation or doubts that the test takers may have. If there exist sound scientific and human reasons which may justify failure to offer information, psychologists must take appropriate measures to minimize possible risks for participants. Upon completion of the study, psychologists must offer appropriate reward to participants for their effort during the study.

#### **4.6 Use of animals in research**

Animals which are used in research are treated with compassion, being creatures which cannot assume responsibility for what they are experiencing in the course of experimentation. Psychologist conducting experiments involving animals are accountable for treatment of animals while in their laboratory and must take care and inspect life conditions in it. They must undertake all possible measures to remove uncomfortable life conditions, infections, diseases and pain. Experimental procedures causing pain to animals, stress or deprivation of any sort are used only when other means and methods for obtaining scientific knowledge of exceptional import are unavailable. Here, it should be borne in mind that some animal species suffer less than others, therefore one should be familiar with the characteristics of individual species and select those which have higher resistance to pain and unpleasant treatment. Animals used in laboratory experiments should be reduced to the smallest possible number. The numbers of animals can be significantly reduced with a high-quality experimental outline and appropriate statistical procedures. When it is necessary for reasons of compassion to prevent the pain and suffering by termination, this is done quickly and in accordance with verified procedures. It is necessary to be familiar with different methods of euthanasia applicable to different animal species.

#### **4.7 Reporting on studies**

Psychologists report on findings of their studies in an accurate and precise manner. Misrepresentation of scientific data is the denial of fundamental ethical principles and of the meaning of science. Psychologist do not use or represent other people's concepts and data as their own. Plagiarism is the extreme form of unethical conduct. If a psychologist discovers at a later time a major error in his work which has already been published, he must undertake the necessary steps to make it known and to rectify this error. Psychologists appear as authors in their own scientific publications and as co-authors in those publications in which their contribution is significant. Appearing as author reflects a proportionate scientific contribution

and not one's scientific, professional or social status. Minor contribution to a study is noted in accordance with the rules of a publication in which the work is published (for example in a footnote or in introductory remarks). A graduate student appears as first author of a joint work if it is based predominantly on his or her master of science thesis or doctoral dissertation.

Psychologists do not publish as original the data they previously published elsewhere. This does not mean that articles cannot be published again elsewhere but if so, an appropriate note must be added giving the names of the original publication containing the work. After the findings of their studies have been published, psychologist should make the data they have saved available to scientists who show interest in it. It is possible in such a way to redo analyses and verify conclusions. In doing this, it is necessary to safeguard the confidentiality of information concerning participants and to protect one's rights of ownership. Original protocols are recommended to be saved for a period of five years and a computer database of published works should be saved on a permanent basis.

#### **4.8 Reviews**

Psychologists who evaluate studies, project plans, applications for scholarships or jobs, make every effort to protect confidentiality of information and ownership of persons whose works they review.

### **5. Education of Psychologists**

#### **5.1 Education and advanced training**

Psychologists who are responsible for education and professional improvement of other psychologist make every effort to offer educational programs based on competent planning. Those programs must enable attendees to acquire the knowledge, skills and experiences which meet the requirements for obtaining appropriate diplomas, certificates, licenses or other goals for which they have been designed.

#### **5.2 Providing information and attaining objectivity in training**

When involved in an educational process or any other type of training, psychologists must provide information which is based on scientific knowledge and explain phenomena with the highest degree of objectivity. Being aware of the influence they have as teachers or leaders and any sort of training over their pupils (students, attendees, those who are supervised) psychologists make every effort not to misuse their status, humiliate, or in any other way threaten the integrity and self-esteem of students.

#### **5.3 Limitations of training**

Psychologists do not train persons who do not possess academic education, specialization, work experience or any other proof of qualifications about how to use specialized techniques or procedures (hypnosis, biofeedback, projective techniques etc. ).

#### **5.4 Advertising nonacademic programs**

Psychologists who are responsible for advertising and for publishing written materials, leaflets, posters, etc. about educational programs which are not designed to give professional qualifications (various lectures or seminars for example) must state for whom such programs are designed (the population), describe their goals, name the lectures, and state price.

## **6. Advertising and Appearing in Public**

### **6.1 Definition of appearance in public**

Psychologists perform their professional roles also by appearing in public. Appearing in public includes advertising of all forms of services, either paid for or not, publishing written, audio and video material, writing articles for professional and other magazines, as well as interviews and commentaries given to media, expert opinions in court procedures, and lectures and reviews.

### **6.2 Responsibility for appearing in public**

Psychologists assume full responsibility for their appearance in public. This must be in accord with this Code. When appearing in public, psychologists should not provide inaccurate information that might mislead the user. Above all, psychologists must give accurate information pertaining to their: (1) experience and qualifications, (2) academic degrees, (3) published works and the findings of their studies, (4) professional status and employment, (5) services they render and the scientific or clinical corroboration of the outcome of those services, (6) fees for the services.

### **6.3 Appearing in public media**

When appearing or making comment on some issue in public media, in articles, in radio or television programs, lectures, psychologists make efforts to base their conduct on relevant psychological literature and practice taking care that the statements and the overall conduct are in accord with this Code.

## **7. Counseling and Therapy**

### **7.1 Structuring therapeutic relationships**

At the beginning of a therapeutic relationship, the psychologist must discuss with the client the course of treatment, the fee to be charged, if any, and the confidentiality of information, and make arrangements with him or her regarding these. Psychologists must give a frank answer to clients' every question in order to avoid any misunderstandings regarding treatment. If treatment is conducted by a student therapist, this must be brought to the client's attention. The client must also be acquainted with the supervisor of a therapeutic process.

### **7.2 Family and marriage therapy**

When several persons mutually interrelated (a husband and wife or parents and children for example) receive services from a psychologist, he will try and to explain (1) which person is the client and (2) what his relationship with each of the persons concerned is like. This explanation must also comprise the role of the psychologist and the use of findings which are obtained. In case of role conflicts (when for example, the psychologist is required to witness in divorce procedure as a husband's or wife's marriage counselor) he or she will try to explain the situation, adapt to these roles or withdraw from them in an appropriate manner.

### **7.3 Providing services to persons already undergoing treatment elsewhere**

When deciding whether to provide services to persons already undergoing treatment elsewhere, the psychologist will carefully examine the content of the treatment and potential benefit for the client. He will discuss those issues with the client or with the person representing the client in order to reduce the risk of confusion or misunderstanding. When necessary, the psychologist will also consult experts involved in a therapeutic process.

### **7.4 Sexual intimacy with clients**

Psychologists should not maintain sexually intimate relations with their clients. Psychologists should not include in therapy those persons with whom they previously maintained sexually intimate relations.

### **7.5 Discontinuance of therapeutic services**

When therapy has to be discontinued due to an illness or unavailability of a psychologist, for example, or because of the clients change of residence or financial difficulties, the psychologist will plan and arrange for the subsequent care of the client.

## **8. Resolution of Ethical Issues within the Croatian Psychological Association**

### **8.1 Discussion of ethical issues**

When in doubt whether a certain situation or some planned activity is in accord with this Code, the psychologist must consult another psychologist who is familiar with ethical issues and problems or raise this matter before the Board of Honor of the Croatian Psychological Association.

### **8.2 Informal resolution of ethical issues**

When a psychologist notices that a colleague or his or hers violates ethical principles or professional conduct, he or she must signal this to them and help resolve the problem in an informal way.

### **8.3 Reporting violation of the Code**

If apparent violations of the Code or Ethics cannot be resolved in a friendly and informal fashion, they should be made known to the Board of Honor of the Croatian Psychological Association. The Board or Honor will take the necessary measures. Psychologists do not deal with such reporting, the aim of which is to hurt or humiliate someone rather than to protect the public and the profession.

#### **8.4 Cooperation with the Board of Honor**

All psychologists cooperate with the Board of Honor or the Croatian Psychological Association on supervision of ethical issues and their promotion. Refusal of cooperation in itself represents the violation of this Code.

### **9. Closing Provisions**

#### **9.1 Familiarity with the Code**

Psychologists are obliged to get familiar with the Code and other relevant ethical regulations and their application in psychological practice.

#### **9.2 Support by the Croatian Psychological Association**

Members of the Croatian Psychological Association have an obligation to refuse any professional activity inconsistent with the principles set out in this Code. The Croatian Psychological Association has an obligation to support them in fulfilling this duty by its reputation and legal means if need be.

#### **9.3 Entry into force**

This code of Ethics entered into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1996, upon its formal approval at the Annual Conference of the Croatian Psychological Association.