

PRACTICE SUPPORT DOCUMENT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS

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The following document is intended to assist members in considering relevant issues related to providing assessment services. Members who provide psychological assessments may be asked to conduct assessments in a variety of contexts, with a diverse range of clients, and for a range of presenting concerns. Psychologists employ a unique skill set when conducting assessments, based on an empirically informed and scientifically hypothesis-driven approach that is the hallmark of all psychological assessments. Importantly, there are additional specific considerations in specialized areas of practice, such as family law assessments, neuropsychological assessments, psychoeducational assessments, etc., that require specific training and knowledge.

While it is understood that a treatment relationship and a formal assessment relationship are considered to be mutually exclusive due to various ethical considerations, some of the considerations below may also be useful for treatment providers (for example, when one is asked to address questions or provide an opinion for a third party about a therapy client's presenting symptoms, and/or diagnosis, or treatment progress).

Competency and Qualifications

Am I competent to conduct the required assessment?

- Do I have the requisite education, training, and experience to conduct this type of assessment and to respond to the specific referral questions(s)?
- Am I up-to-date on recent developments in this area of practice?
- Am I familiar with the relevant governing legislation that dictates how I must conduct this assessment, including all relevant federal and provincial statutes and regulations,

regulatory bylaws, standards of practice, organizational policies and procedures, and professional guidelines?

- Have I clarified any ambiguity related to the referral question(s), the scope of the assessment, and what questions can be answered or opinions provided in relation to the referral question(s)?

Assessment Methodology

Is my assessment methodology appropriate and sufficient for the purposes of the assessment?

- Have I selected psychological tests that are appropriate for this type of assessment?
- Do the tests have appropriate normative scores for the client being assessed?
- Have I considered whether the client belongs to a group for which specialized training or adjustments to the test administration or interpretation are necessary?
- Have I considered how any necessary adjustments or accommodations to the testing may affect the results?
- Have I considered how the individual's membership in a specific group may affect their test results?
- Have I used the most valid set of normative scores for the individual being assessed?
- Have I considered whether the individual belongs to a group for which the available normative scores are not appropriate and do not apply?
- If the examinee is Indigenous and I am not, do I have sufficient intercultural competency, including being mindful regarding: the importance of using culturally sensitive and respectful language and testing materials; Indigenous health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools; and where possible and appropriate, Indigenous teachings, practices, and perspectives?

As a treatment provider, can I provide the requested opinion?

- Do I have a sufficient basis through my role as a treatment provider to provide the requested opinion?
- Does the nature of the opinion affect or change my obligations to my client? For example, is the requested opinion being sought in order to assist the court with making a decision that may be at odds with the client's interests?
- Will providing the requested opinion put me in an inappropriate dual role, and if so, would it be more appropriate to make a referral to an independent assessor?
- Have I been asked to provide an opinion about matters that are beyond the scope of the treatment I am providing? For example, am I being asked to provide an opinion about an individual's parenting capacity when treatment has focused on their mood?
- Have I been asked to provide an opinion about anyone whom I have not directly assessed?

Informed Consent/Assent and Documentation

Have I obtained the necessary informed consent/assent to conduct an assessment?

- Am I clear regarding who my client is in this situation?
- Have I identified all parties from whom informed consent and/or assent needs to be obtained?
- Have I reviewed the referral documents, such as a joint retainer letter or Court Order, that define my role and obligations?
- Have I disclosed any known, suspected, or potential conflicts of interest?
- If there are multiple parties involved in the assessment, such as in the area of family law, have I disclosed any prior contact with either party and documented this disclosure as part of informed consent?
- Have I sufficiently explained the assessment process to the parties, including the procedures, fees, release of information, post-report services (e.g., expert testimony), and any other relevant information that may reasonably influence a client's decision-making to participate in the assessment?
- If the payor is different than the client, have I explained or received confirmation related to the fee arrangement?
- If I obtained informed assent, have I documented my process of obtaining the appropriate assents?
- If there are any changes to the information that was disclosed while obtaining informed consent/assent, including whether any conflicts of interest have arisen, have I revisited the informed consent/assent process with the relevant parties?
- If the assessment involves gathering information from collateral sources, have I explained to those collateral sources how the information they share may be used and who will receive the information? Have I documented this in my practice record?
- Have I sought wherever possible to obtain the client's consent/assent in writing, in order to avoid any ambiguity related to what information was shared while obtaining informed consent/assent? If this is not possible, have I thoroughly documented my informed consent/assent process in my practice record?

As a treatment provider, have I revisited informed consent with my client before responding to a request for my opinion?

- Have I revisited informed consent related to this request, including by fully reviewing with my client what the process is likely to entail, the potential risks and benefits, how it might affect the therapeutic relationship, any costs related to preparing the opinion, and how it may affect the client's privacy and confidentiality?

Assessment Process and Quality

Have I conducted the assessment thoroughly and answered the referral question(s)?

- Have I used assessment methods that are appropriate for the type of assessment?
- Have I used a multi-method approach to gather the data required to answer the referral question?
- Have I considered what information may be necessary to gather from other sources to inform my opinion (for example, collateral references, documentation/records, etc.)?

- Is my test selection sufficient and appropriate for the particular client, context, and referral question?
- Have I selected tools or tests that have sufficient reliability and validity for this particular assessment context?
- Have I considered factors that may influence the validity of the testing results and taken steps to address this (for example, secondary gain, the examinee's physical limitations, environmental distractions, language barriers, etc.)?
- Have I used the most appropriate normative sample for the examinee, including consideration of their demographic and contextual factors (for example, age, ethnicity, geographical location, cultural background, gender, sex, assessment context, etc.)? If the client is not represented in the normative sample, have I considered and documented the validity limitations of using the normative sample I chose?
- Have I documented all relevant aspects of the evaluation with sufficient detail and clarity that upon request for my records, they could be readily produced and understood?
- Have all interview records, testing protocols, and other assessment documents been signed, dated, and labeled with the client's identifying information (for example, with an anonymized identification number, initials, or name)?
- Are all assessment records created, maintained, and stored in a secure manner to protect the client's privacy and confidentiality?
- Have I refrained from making and communicating interim opinions and recommendations without an appropriate basis for doing so?
- For family law assessments involving multiple parties, have I followed a parallel assessment process? If not, do I have an appropriate reason for deviating from a parallel process, and have I documented my rationale?
- For assessments in a compensation-seeking context, have I considered and addressed the possible differential diagnostic issues?
- For assessments completed by video, have I considered how the modality may have affected the assessment process and results, and taken steps to safeguard the integrity of the assessment?

As a treatment provider, have I considered additional relevant factors?

- Have I considered the reliability of the client's self-report and whether there are any factors that may influence their self-report, such as exaggeration or minimization, and the possibility of secondary gain?
- Have I considered the adequacy of the information available to me as a treatment provider?
- Have I considered the impact of my treatment relationship on my objectivity in providing the opinion(s) requested?

Report Quality and Clarity

Is the report clear, cogent, and comprehensive, and does it address the specific referral question(s)?

- Have I presented the assessment results accurately, clearly, and in a way that is understandable for the intended audience?
- Have I communicated any limitations associated with the assessment process and the impact of those limitations on my opinions and recommendations?
- Have I acknowledged any limitations to my opinions based on relevant factors that remain unknown or ambiguous?
- Have I ensured that my opinions follow logically from the information that was gathered and reported?
- Have I complied with any requirements for producing the report, such as legal attestations for expert reports that are prepared for court?

As a treatment provider, have I been clear when providing my opinion(s)?

- Have I clearly communicated my role as a treatment provider when conveying my opinion?
- Have I restricted the opinion(s) I offered only to those issues I am able to address with my scope of competence and in my role as a treatment provider rather than assessor? Have I clearly communicated any necessary limitations to my opinion(s) based on my treatment role?

Post-Report Management

Have I appropriately managed any post-report requests?

- Have I informed clients whether they will be debriefed regarding the outcome of the assessment, or whether the circumstances prohibit a debriefing session?
- Have I informed clients regarding policies related to post-assessment communication?
- Have I informed clients regarding their entitlement to request records related to the assessment and which, if any, records cannot be released?
- For any post-assessment activity, have I preserved my role as independent and neutral in case I am required to provide additional services related to the matter (for example, providing expert testimony at court, or an update assessment)?
- For any requests for additional services (e.g., update reports), have I revisited informed consent with all relevant parties before proceeding?
- If I was jointly retained by multiple parties, how might providing additional services for one party affect my ability to provide additional services to the multiple parties? What do I need to consider prior to responding to any request for additional services? What steps do I need to take? Should I provide the requested service?