



Nederlands Instituut van Psychologen **NIP**

***2007 Code of Ethics for Psychologists
drawn up by the Netherlands Institute of
Psychologists***

Effective from 1 April 2007

Contents

	<i>page</i>
Introduction	3
Preamble	6
I. General	7
II. Basic principles	10
III. Guidelines for interpreting the basic principles	11
III.1 Responsibility	11
III.2 Integrity	14
III.3 Respect	17
III.4 Expertise	23

Introduction

It is a good tradition that psychologists reflect on the ethical aspects of their profession. Although such reflection is not exclusive to psychologists, the confidential nature of psychologists' work and of their relationship with their clients necessitates ongoing reflection on matters of professional ethics. It is a characteristic of professions such as psychology that the actions of the professionals involved cannot be prescribed in advance with any degree of accuracy. There is a certain scope within which psychologists have to decide how to act using their own judgement.

There are four aspects at the heart of the professionalisation of the profession: expertise, social aspects, professional standards and professional ethics. Expertise is the know-how, skills and art of the members of the profession. The role of the psychologist ascribed by society involves acknowledgement of, and the authority to apply in practice, the expertise of the academic discipline. Professional standards imply meticulous behaviour such as would be demonstrated by a reasonably competent fellow professional in similar circumstances using means that are acceptably proportional to the purpose of the intervention. This behaviour is based on the rights of the client and the social obligations of the psychologist. Professional ethics make up the system of values and standards that form the professional standards.

One of the objectives of the Netherlands Institute of Psychologists (NIP) as a professional association is to play an important role in this professionalisation process. One of the major ways it does this is by translating the principles of professional ethics into rules of conduct that can act as guidelines for professional behaviour.

Professional ethics for psychologists were codified in The Netherlands around fifty years ago. The first NIPP Code of Ethics was drawn up in 1960. There have since been four major revisions. The 1988 and 2007 revisions expressly take into account legislative developments in the field of health care and privacy as well as the Meta-Code of the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA), which was drawn up in 1995 and revised in 2005. The EFPA is the umbrella organisation of European psychologists' associations, to which the NIP is affiliated.

The Code of Ethics is an instrument used to measure the quality of professional behaviour. This is in the interests of clients, psychologists, other people involved and the practice of psychology in all its facets.

The Code acts as a guideline for professional behaviour by individual psychologists. It is also a source of information about what can be expected and requested from psychologists in general by anybody who comes into contact with psychologists' professional behaviour. Finally the Code of Ethics acts as a standard against which psychologists' behaviour can be evaluated if a complaint is made. Anybody who is aware of any ethically improper behaviour by a member of the NIP can use the NIP complaints procedure if this is in their reasonable interest.

This procedure is set out in the Supervisory Regulations. Using the adversarial principle the complaint is dealt with by the Supervisory Board. It is possible to appeal against the judgement of the Board to the Board of Appeal.

The starting point of the Code is the need to draw up rules of conduct with which psychologists' professional behaviour has to comply. Professional behaviour is taken to mean not only behaviour in the context of a professional relationship in a narrow sense but also every act carried out in the capacity of psychologist. The Code of Ethics as a whole is based on the following four basic ethical principles:

responsibility, integrity, respect and expertise

These basic principles were drawn up as general formulations the aim of which is to guide reflections on professional ethics with regard to professional behaviour. The basic principles were then worked out into rules and guidelines with a more concrete, specific character. These provide guidance to psychologists who have to make ethical decisions in a concrete situation. In some articles the formulated rule is derived from more than one principle. In such a case the article is linked to the principle that is deemed to be the most important in this case, even though the decision is sometimes arbitrary.

The Code of Ethics is first and foremost intended to present ethical dimensions to psychologists in guiding their professional behaviour. For this reason the Code of Ethics also includes rules that are formulated in a more general manner and that should be complied with. A decision was also made to sometimes waive the requirement of verifiability when drawing up rules of a more concrete, specific nature. However, wherever possible the rules have been drawn up such that they can be used to formally evaluate professional behaviour if necessary. But even then it is unavoidable that these rules will sometimes allow a certain professional margin for manoeuvre.

In order that the Code of Ethics should have a clear structure each guideline that is drawn up is linked to one of the four basic principles.

The Code of Ethics reflects the state of affairs in the ongoing ethical discussion in society and of course more particularly in the actual profession and in related professional groups. An important indicator for developments in thinking with regard to professional ethics is jurisprudence, which is shaped by the judgements of both NIP disciplinary tribunals.

As opinions as to what is or is not fitting and acceptable change over time, the Code is rooted in its time and needs to be revised regularly. The Netherlands Institute of Psychologists provides a revision procedure.

In addition to the Code itself, which was drawn up by the NIP Council of Members, notes to the Code have been drawn up by the Advisory Council on Matters of Professional Ethics (Rabez), which works out code stipulations in further detail and explains and illustrates them.

Whereas a decision was taken not to redraft the code more often than once every five years, the revision of the notes can be of a more dynamic character, providing a faster response to current developments.

This version of the Code of Ethics was drawn up by the Advisory Council on Matters of Professional Ethics and takes into account the remarks of a committee of external consultants put together for this purpose. The General Administrative Board submitted the proposal to the NIP Council of Members for approval. This accepted the Code in its meeting of 1 March 2007 and decided that this Code would come into effect on 1 April 2007.

March 2007

*Dr A.J.W. Boelhouwer,
chair of the NIP*

*C.J. Koene, chair of the Advisory Council
on Matters of Professional Ethics*

Preamble

In the interests of those affected by the professional behaviour of psychologists and in the interests of the quality of the practice of psychology the Netherlands Institute of Psychologists decided to formulate ethical principles and to base more detailed guidelines on these principles. These are set out in the Code of Ethics for Psychologists. The aim of the Code of Ethics is to promote reflection on professional ethics and to serve as a standard for the evaluation of psychologists' professional behaviour.

In their reflection psychologists should constantly bear the following in mind:

- In the practice of psychology a lot of relationships are basically unequal and can therefore easily result in dependence by the people concerned.
- In the practice of psychology relationships between psychologists and other people are subject to development, and different rules from the Code Ethics apply at different stages of the development.
- Psychologists may fulfil different roles simultaneously or successively with regard to clients or other people. These roles may be professional or non-professional. There is a risk that these roles might not be compatible or that they could cause confusion among the people concerned.

A Code of Ethics cannot be an unambiguous guide that gives definite answers, without any further considerations, about proper behaviour in any given situation. It should be borne in mind that in any given situation different basic principles and guidelines based on these principles are valid at the same time but may conflict with each other. In such a case this gives rise to an ethical dilemma, in which the importance of each ethical principle in this particular situation needs to be weighed up. The Code of Ethics aims to help psychologists make their ethical considerations more explicit and come to a responsible decision of their own. In such considerations it may be recommended that psychologists seek support from experienced colleagues and their professional association. Psychologists should not be blamed for not seeking such a consultation, if they have a convincing motive for their ultimate decision and if the importance of this decision does not necessarily presuppose a consultation.

Part of the responsible practice of psychology is being prepared to bring up for discussion the ethical aspects of one's own professional behaviour with colleagues. In such cases this involves the obligation to account for one's professional behaviour, to have one's professional behaviour evaluated by the competent Boards and to cooperate sincerely with such an evaluation.

Not cooperating with this evaluation, or thwarting it, conflicts with the spirit of the Code of Ethics.

The Code of Ethics is supported by the decision-making of the psychologists that make up the Netherlands Institute of Psychologists and is binding on all the individual members of the association (Article 4(1) of the Statutes).

The Netherlands Institute of Psychologists also believes that the Code should, by its nature, apply to the practice of psychology by all psychologists.

I. General

I.1.1.1 Coherence of the Code

The stipulations in this section should be read in connection with the other stipulations of the Code of Ethics. If circumstances so require, the relevant stipulations set out below form an integral whole with the other stipulations of the Code of Ethics.

I.1.2 Terms

I.1.2.1

professional behaviour: all actions carried out by psychologists when they act in their capacity as psychologists or use the title of psychologist, including professional relationships, acting as a scientific researcher, teacher or supervisor, in the media, etc;

I.1.2.2

the person concerned: any person who is involved directly or indirectly in psychologists' professional activities or whose interests are affected by these, such as the client, the partner and the closest relatives of the client, the principal, a colleague, student, experimental subject, etc.;

I.1.2.3

professional relationship: the relation established by psychologists with one or more people that focuses on treatment, coaching, advice or psychological research;

I.1.2.4

client: the person with whom psychologists establish, maintain or have maintained a professional relationship, for example the patient, the research subject;

I.1.2.5

the client system: several people who interact with each other with whom psychologists establish, maintain or have maintained a single professional relationship;

I.1.2.6

third parties: everybody other than the client or the client system;

I.1.2.7

assignment: this covers both the request underlying the professional activities and the agreements about progress, procedural aspects and reporting, and the financial settlement of the assignment;

I.1.2.8

principal: the client or the client system, or the external principal by whom the assignment is commissioned;

I.1.2.9

external principal: the person or legal person who has commissioned any form of professional behaviour but who is not themselves the client or the client system or the referrer;

I.1.2.10

referrer: the person on whose advice the client establishes a professional relation with the psychologist;

I.1.2.11

legal representative(s):

- the parent(s) of an under-age client who has/have parental authority over him/her, or this client's guardian;

- the curator or mentor of an adult client appointed by the judge.

I.1.2.12

specific consent: the consent regarding an activity given by a person concerned to the psychologist once the psychologist has explicitly made clear the nature, the purpose, the possible consequences and the scope of this activity. One of the conditions of specific consent is the opportunity to peruse written documents in advance that are sent to third parties.

I.1.2.13

data: all the data that can be traced to a person that are stored in any form, including in audiovisual form and in automated data files.

I.1.2.14

file: the collection of all data that relate to a client or client system that psychologists obtain during their professional activities and that they keep because of their relevance to the quality and continuity of the professional relationship. Personal working notes made by the psychologist are not part of the file.

I.1.2.15

report: all findings, assessment or advice that can be traced to one or more clients which are issued orally or in writing;

I.1.2.16

provision of data: the provision to third parties other than the external principal such as are included in the file, other than in the form of a report.

I.1.3 General stipulation

I.1.3.1 Meticulousness

Psychologists ensure that they are meticulous in the practice of their profession by acting in accordance with the stipulations of the Code of Ethics.

I.1.4 Exceptional circumstances

I.1.4.1 Incompatibility of Code articles

If psychologists find that, in a certain situation, compliance with one stipulation of the Code of Ethics means that another stipulation of the Code of Ethics cannot be complied with, they carefully weigh up the consequences of opting for one of the stipulations and consider consulting their professional association and/or experienced colleagues.

I.1.4.2 Deviations from the Code of Ethics

If in exceptional situations psychologists have reason to deviate from the course of action prescribed by the Code of Ethics, without there being any conflicting Code articles as referred to in the previous article, they should consult their professional association or a colleague who is not directly involved in the professional relationship. They do this before making a decision about their course of action. If the decision taken deviates from the Code of Ethics, there should be sound reasons for this. The reasons should show that the course of action that conflicts with the stipulations of the Code of Ethics is in accordance with the other stipulations of the Code of Ethics and is the result of a careful consideration of interests.

I.1.4.3 Application of exceptional stipulations

If psychologists have sound reasons to apply an exceptional stipulation, as formulated in an article of the Code of Ethics, they need to be able to justify their actions, as described in the previous article.

1.1.4.4 Deviations from the Code of Ethics because of specific legal rules

If specific legal rules oblige psychologists to deviate from any stipulation in the Code of Ethics for Psychologists, they strive to comply with the other stipulations of Code of Ethics as much as possible.

1.1.4.5 Legally required fulfilment of the assignment

If the professional relationship is established as the result of an assignment commissioned by an external principal who has the authority in law to demand fulfilment of the assignment, the rights of the client remain intact in so far as this does not conflict with any rules governing the relationship relating to this assignment.

1.1.5 Representation of the client

1.1.5.1 Underage clients

If clients are underage and have not yet reached the age of discretion, the rights assigned to them in the Code of Ethics are exercised by their legal representative(s), unless the psychologist has reason to suppose that the clients' interests would be seriously damaged by the involvement of the legal representative(s) in the professional relationship. Clients are deemed in any case to have reached the age of discretion once they are aged 16, unless they cannot be deemed capable of a reasonable evaluation of their interests in the matter. From the age of 12 years clients are involved in the exercise of their rights as much as possible regardless of the rights of their legal representative(s).

1.1.5.2 Information to a parent without authority

If only one of the parents has parental authority over the underage client, the information about the client that is provided to this parent is also given to the other parent on request, unless this would conflict with the interests of the underage client.

1.1.5.3 Of-age client unable to give informed consent

If the client is of age but is incapable of a making a reasonable assessment of his/her interests in this matter, the rights assigned to him/her in the Code are exercised by his/her legal representative. If no legal representative has been appointed, the rights are exercised by a representative appointed by the client. If the client has not been able to do this, psychologists have the rights of the client exercised by either the client's spouse or partner, parent, child, brother or sister, unless the client does not want this or psychologists do not deem this to be in the interests of the client. Even if there is a representation as detailed above, psychologists still involve the of-age client who is unable to give informed consent in the exercise of his/her rights wherever possible. Decisions of the above-mentioned representatives are not implemented by psychologists if the psychologists believe that in the given circumstances this would conflict with the interests of the client.

II. Basic principles

II.1.1.1 Responsibility

Psychologists recognise their professional and scientific responsibility towards the people involved, their surrounding area and society. Psychologists are responsible for their professional behaviour. As far as they are able, they ensure that their services and the results of their actions are not abused.

II.1.1.2 Integrity

Psychologists strive for integrity in the practice of their science, education and the application of psychology. In their activities psychologists demonstrate honesty, equal treatment and openness towards the people involved.

They provide clarity for all the people involved about the roles they fulfil and they act in accordance with these.

II.1.1.3 Respect

Psychologists show respect for the basic rights and dignity of the people involved. They respect the rights of the people involved to privacy and confidentiality. They respect and promote their self-determination and autonomy as long as this can be combined with the psychologists' other professional obligations and with the law.

II.1.1.4 Expertise

Psychologists strive to obtain and maintain a high level of expertise in the practice of their profession. They take into account the limits of their expertise as well as the limitations of their experience. They provide all the services for which they are qualified by their education, training and experience. The same goes for the methods and techniques that they use.

III. Guidelines for interpreting the basic principles

III.1 Responsibility

III.1.1 The quality of the practice of the profession

III.1.1.1 Confidence in psychology and the practice of psychology

Psychologists refrain from behaviour that they know or can reasonably predict will damage confidence in the science of psychology, the practice of psychology or their colleagues.

III. 1.1.2 Exercise of care

In their actions psychologists exercise care towards clients and other people involved.

III.1.1.3 Attention to quality

Psychologists should ensure the good quality of their professional conduct.

III.1.1.4 Professional and ethical standards

In the practice of their profession psychologists act in accordance with professional and ethical standards. They act in accordance with the state of the science. They contribute according to their ability to the development of such standards in their discipline.

III.1.1.5 Care and caution with new methods

When applying new methods or entering new fields psychologists act carefully and cautiously.

III.1.2 Continuity of professional activities

III.1.2.1 Continuity of the professional relationship

Psychologists are responsible for the continuity of the professional relationship. If necessary, they call in other experts. They take measures to ensure that one or more colleagues take over or complete their professional activities, if they are obliged for whatever reason to interrupt or halt the professional relationship prematurely. Psychologists are responsible for an adequate handover.

III.1.2.2 Completeness, necessity and up-to-dateness of the file

All the data that are necessary for the professional relationship and serve the purpose of this are stored by psychologists but not by anybody else. Psychologists store these data only in the file. They ensure that the file is always kept up to date such that, if they are unexpectedly absent, an expert colleague can continue the professional relationship.

III.1.2.3 Responsibility after the termination of the professional relationship

Even before establishing the professional relationship psychologists realise that after the formal termination of the professional relationship their professional responsibility towards the person involved does not just end. After all, as a result of the professional relationship there may still be a conflict of interests after the termination of the relationship or an unequal balance of power between psychologists and the people involved. Psychologists also retain a professional responsibility towards the people concerned if this arises from the earlier professional relationship.

III.1.3 Preventing and limiting harm

III.1.3.1 Obligations towards the external principal

Regardless of the stipulations in Articles III.3.2.12 and III.3.2.19, psychologists provide the external principal with the data that are required to itemise their fee statements.

III.1.3.2 Negative experiences

Psychologists do not expose the people involved to negative experiences unless this is necessary to achieve the aim of their professional activities and is the only way in which this aim can be achieved. In this case they strive to limit or to counteract the consequences of the negative experiences for the people involved as much as possible.

III.1.3.3 Prevention and restriction of animal suffering

If psychologists use laboratory animals in their research, the previous stipulation applies mutatis mutandis to the care and treatment of these animals.

III.1.3.4 Research using and judgements about people without their consent

Psychologists are aware of their responsibility to prevent harm if they carry out scientific research using people or make professional judgements about them without these people having given their consent.

III.1.3.5 Far-reaching indirect effects of the professional activities

Psychologists realise that their professional activities can have not only direct consequences but also far-reaching indirect effects. If this is the case, they act in accordance with the stipulation above.

III.1.4 Prevention of abuse

III.1.4.1 Prevention of the abuse of results

Psychologists ensure, in so far as they are able, that the results of their professional activities are not abused.

III.1.4.2 Prevention of unintentional use and abuse of reports

Psychologists take measures to prevent a report being used for any purpose other than that for which it has been drawn up. To this end it should be stated in the report that the report is confidential. The report also states that the conclusions relate only to the purpose or request that is the reason for the report and cannot simply be used to answer other questions. The report also states the time after which the conclusions could reasonably be regarded to be no longer valid.

III.1.4.3 Efforts by psychologists to combat abuse of reports

If psychologists know that a principal is not acting in accordance with the above article, they point out the improper behaviour to this person. If this does not have any effect, psychologists consider not accepting any other assignments from the principal in question, until this principal has changed their behaviour.

III.1.5 Psychologists and their working environment

III. 1.5.1 Freedom to act in accordance with the Code of Ethics

As professionals psychologists are fully responsible for their professional behaviour, regardless of their obligations to any managers. If relevant, psychologists ensure that everybody in their working environment is aware of

the requirements of the Code of Ethics for Psychologists and they ensure that there is the necessary freedom to act in accordance with these requirements.

III. 1.5.2 Co-responsibility for the quality of the team

Without prejudice to the responsibility of fellow professionals for their own professional behaviour psychologists are jointly responsible for the quality of the behaviour of the team of which they are a part.

III. 1.5.3 Responsibility for the quality of employees

Psychologists are responsible for the technical and ethical quality of the work of those people who work under their direct management on the implementation of assignments for which they are professionally responsible. If these employees are not subject to their own rules of professional ethics, psychologists inform them of the derived obligations of this Code of Ethics, in particular the requirement of confidentiality. They ensure the professional (and ethical) quality of the people whom they otherwise involve in their professional activities.

III.1.5.4 Help and support to colleagues, students and supervisees

Psychologists use their expertise and experience to provide help and support to colleagues, students and supervisees in order to help them practise the profession in a professionally and ethically sound manner. They refrain from behaviour that could adversely affect them in this.

III.1.5.5 Appeal among colleagues

Psychologists critically monitor the professional behaviour of colleagues and bring up this behaviour for discussion if there is any need for this. They hold colleagues to account about their behaviour if they believe that this behaviour conflicts or has conflicted with the stipulations of the Code of Ethics. They ensure that clients' interests are not adversely affected by their holding colleagues to account. Psychologists submit a complaint about a colleague only if this colleague refuses to account for their behaviour in a debate among colleagues or persists in the supposed ethically improper behaviour.

III.1.6 Accountability

III. 1.6.1 Accounting for behaviour

Psychologists make notes of their professional activities in such a way that they can account for their behaviour.

III. 1.6.2 Period of retention of a 'named' file

Following the termination of the professional relationship psychologists keep files bearing the name of an individual person for a year, or for longer than this if necessary for the purpose for which the file was created, or for as long as is legally prescribed. The file is not kept for longer than the amount of time set in advance. If a complaint is submitted to the Supervisory Board, psychologists cannot destroy the file when the period of retention expires if the complaint has not been fully dealt with in the first or second instance, unless the client asks for the file to be destroyed.

III. 1.6.3 Cooperation with the handling of a complaints procedure

Psychologists do not refuse to cooperate with the handling of a complaints procedure, if such a procedure is launched. They answer the questions put by the Boards to the best of their ability and comply with their requests.

III.2 Integrity

III.2.1 Reliability

III.2.1.1 Conditions for establishing and continuing the professional relationship

Psychologists should establish or continue a professional relationship only if this is professionally and ethically responsible.

III.2.1.2 Reason for terminating the professional relationship

Psychologists do not continue the professional relationship if there is no longer any reason to do this from a professional point of view or if this is no longer possible in a professionally responsible manner. They ensure that the professional relationship is terminated in consultation with the client and that there are no misunderstandings left unresolved.

III.2.1.3 Non-cooperation with activities that conflict with the Code

Psychologists do not cooperate with other people's activities if these activities conflict with the Code. Nor do they profit from the results of such work.

III.2.1.4 Independence and objectivity in professional activities

Psychologists ensure that they can act independently and objectively in their professional activities. They do not allow their professional activities to be influenced such that they cannot professionally account for their behaviour and the results of this.

III.2.2. Honesty

III.2.2.1 Avoidance of deception

Psychologists avoid deception in their professional activities. If temporary deception is unavoidable, psychologists ensure that the misunderstandings that arise from this are cleared up as quickly as possible.

III.2.2.2 No abuse of know-how, skills or authority

Psychologists do not abuse their psychological know-how and skills or the authority that is derived from their expertise or position.

III.2.2.3 References to education, qualifications, experience, expertise and titles

Psychologists are meticulous in referring to their training and qualifications, experience, expertise and titles. They refer to these only when they are relevant.

III.2.2.4 Not generating unrealistic expectations

Psychologists ensure that no expectations are generated with regard to the nature, the effects or the consequences of their services that are not based on reality.

III.2.2.5 Information about conditions under which assignments are accepted

Psychologists inform the person concerned before or in the earliest stage of the professional relationship honestly and meticulously about the financial and other conditions under which they accept the assignment, if this information is important for the person concerned to be able to make a well-considered decision about cooperating with the assignment.

III.2.2.6 Information about alternative theories or explanations

Psychologists are meticulous in providing information to the people concerned and inform these people in a suitable manner about any alternative theories or explanations and explain their professional opinion about these alternatives.

III.2.2.7 References to source

When presenting the findings of their professional activities psychologists refer in a suitable manner to the sources used, if the results or ideas do not come from their own professional work. This applies to both written and oral presentations.

III.2.2.8 Scrupulousness in obtaining and reporting data

Psychologists exercise care when obtaining and statistically processing data and when reporting and explaining results.

III.2.3 Role integrity

III.2.3.1 No improper furtherance of personal interests

Psychologists do not improperly further their own professional, personal, religious, political or ideological interests in their professional activities.

III.2.3.2 Recognition of incompatible interests

Psychologists recognise the difficulties that may arise because the client, principal and people who are part of a client system may have incompatible interests. They explain their choice of position to all the people concerned at as early a stage as possible.

III.2.3.3 Non-acceptance of incompatible assignments

Psychologists do not take on a new assignment that cannot be properly combined with an assignment that they have already accepted, even if this does not involve the same client. When giving reasons for such a refusal, psychologists take confidentiality into consideration.

III.2.3.4 Avoidance of the mixing of professional roles

Psychologists recognise the difficulties that can arise from the simultaneous or successive fulfilment of different professional roles with regard to one person or several people concerned. They preferably do not put themselves in such a position. If psychologists nevertheless under certain circumstances find it acceptable to successively or simultaneously fulfil more than one role with regard to the person/people concerned, they make this clear to the person/people concerned.

III.2.3.5 Avoidance of the mixing of professional and non-professional roles

Psychologists do not mix professional and non-professional roles that could affect each other in such a way that they can be regarded as being no longer able to maintain a professional distance from the person/people concerned or as a result of which the interests of the person/people concerned are adversely affected.

III.2.3.6 No sexual behaviour towards the client

Psychologists refrain from sexual advances towards clients and do not respond to such advances from clients. They refrain from behaviour that is sexually suggestive or could in general be interpreted as being such.

III.2.3.7 No sexual relationship with the client

Psychologists do not start a sexual relationship during the professional relationship or immediately afterwards. Even after the professional relationship they are reserved. The same applies to relationships with other people involved where there is a considerable imbalance in power or a high dependency, such as with students or supervisees.

III.2.3.8 Personal relationship after the termination of the professional relationship

If they start up a personal relationship after the termination of the professional relationship, psychologists ensure that the previous professional relationship no longer has any disproportionate significance. If it is a sexual relationship, psychologists are responsible for being able to demonstrate, if required to do so, that at the start of this relationship they took all due care that might be expected of them as professional psychologists.

III.3 Respect

III.3.1 Respect in general

III.3.1.1 Respect for know-how, insight and experience

Psychologists are aware of and respect the know-how, insight and experience of the person concerned.

III.3.1.2 Respect for mental and physical integrity

Psychologists respect the mental and physical integrity of the person concerned and do not harm their dignity. Psychologists do not probe further into the private life of the person concerned than is necessary for the purpose of their professional activities.

III.3.1.3 No unjustified discrimination

Psychologists are aware of the individual characteristics and circumstances of each client and the cultural differences that exist between clients and they take these into account. They strive to ensure that despite these differences everybody is given the same opportunities in a similar situation. Discrimination against race, ethnicity, gender, life philosophy, religion, political persuasion, sexual inclination or anything else is not permitted.

III.3.2 Autonomy and self-determination

III.3.2.1 Respect for autonomy and self-determination

In their professional activities psychologists respect the autonomy and self-determination of the person concerned and promote these. This self-determination of the person concerned is expressed in particular in the right to decide whether or not to establish, continue or terminate the professional relationship with the psychologist.

III.3.2.2 Respectful behaviour in the case of limited self-determination

The client's self-determination may be restricted by their age, temperament, development or mental health. It may also be restricted by legal stipulations or the power of decision of an external principal empowered by law or by a judicial decision. In this case psychologists still give the client's self-determination its due as much as possible within these restrictions.

III.3.2.3 Consent when establishing or continuing the professional relationship

Psychologists can establish or continue a professional relationship with somebody only with this person's consent. However, this consent is not required if the professional relationship is established as a result of an assignment commissioned by an external principal who is empowered by law to do this.

III.3.2.4 Informed establishing or continuing of the professional relationship

Before and during the professional relationship psychologists provide the client with such information that the client is freely capable of giving informed consent for the establishment and continuation of the professional relationship.

III.3.2.5 Information at the establishment of and during the continuation of the professional relationship

The information provided at the establishment of and during the continuation of the professional relationship is preferably given in writing and wherever necessary explained orally; it includes, where applicable:

- the purpose of the professional relationship, the context in which this takes place, and the position of the client and the psychologist in it;
- the research or treatment methods that are considered and what can and cannot be expected of these;
- the procedure, the activities and the situations in which the client will be directly or indirectly involved;
- the people with whom the psychologist in the professional relationship collaborates, either in a multi-disciplinary respect or not;
- the type of data that are collected about the client, and the way in which and the period for which these are stored;
- the method of reporting, if any, and for whom the reports are drawn up;
- the rules of the Code of Ethics regarding perusing, obtaining a copy of, correcting and blocking the report;
- any organisations that have an interest in the professional relationship;
- possible side-effects of the professional activities;
- the psychologist's obligations under the Code of Ethics and the right to complain.

III.3.2.6 The same information for external principal and client

Before the start of the professional relationship psychologists should ensure that both the external principal and the client or the client system have the same information about the purpose and the structure of the professional relationship and about the planned procedure. The assignment can proceed only if there is agreement between them about the purpose and the structure. If either the situation or the assignment changes, psychologists should conclude new agreements.

III.3.2.7 Discussion about the details of the professional relationship

Psychologists provide the client with the opportunity to discuss their wishes and opinions regarding the details of the professional relationship, as long as this does not impede the progress of the professional relationship.

III.3.2.8 Consent and information regarding professional activities in a broader sense

If psychologists carry out professional activities that cannot be regarded as being a professional relationship in the sense of this Code, the stipulations in this section apply, as long as they are applicable to those involved in the professional activities.

III.3.2.9 Perusal and copy of client's own file

Psychologists permit the client upon request to peruse their own file and give them a copy of it. They offer to provide both text and explanation. Before allowing the client to peruse the file, psychologists delete data that relate to other people, if these were not provided by the client him/herself. If there is a professional relationship with a client system, all data relating to the individual people that do not simultaneously (also) relate to other people in that system are stored in such a way that each person can be given the opportunity to peruse the file without violating the confidentiality of the data pertaining to the other people.

III.3.2.10 Accessibility of the file

Psychologists set out the file in such a way with regard to form and content that it is reasonably accessible to the client.

III.3.2.11 Improvement of, additions to or deletion of data in the file

Psychologists correct those data in the file which the client indicates are incorrect, incomplete or irrelevant, in view of the purpose of the file and in as

much as these data relate to him/her. At the client's request notes drawn up by the client with his/her opinions of the professional relationship are included in the file.

III.3.2.12 Right to destroy the client's own file

At the client's written request the client's file is destroyed by the psychologist. The destruction request is stored. The client's request for the file to be destroyed is not complied with if the file relates to a professional relationship commissioned by an external principal who is empowered by law to request fulfilment of the assignment and if this principal does not agree to the destruction.

III.3.2.13 Reports commissioned by the client

Reports commissioned by the client are given to the client only and are preferably in writing.

III.3.2.14 Requirement for consent for reports to third parties

The client's permission is required for reports to third parties.

III.3.2.15 Reports to third parties

The reports to a third party are generally in writing. If it can be argued that written reports cannot be in accordance with the purpose of the assignment, it is agreed in advance that the reports will be given orally.

III.3.2.16 Opportunity for perusal before the reporting

If psychologists report to a third party, they offer the client the opportunity to peruse the report before the report is issued. The right to perusal does not apply to parts of the report that concern other people. When the report is actually issued, psychologists give the client a copy, if required, if the report concerns the client.

III.3.2.17 Oral reports to a third party

If, with Article III.3.15 being taken into account, a report is given orally, the content of the report is discussed with the client before the report is issued.

III.3.2.18 Correction of, additions to or deletion of data in the report

The data in the report that the client indicates are incorrect are corrected by the psychologist, who adds to the data or deletes them if they are incomplete or irrelevant in view of the purpose of the report. This does not apply to the findings and conclusions; these are the responsibility of the psychologist.

III.3.2.19 Blocking the report to the external principal

As a rule the client has the right to block the report to the external principal. However, they do not have this right if the external principal is empowered by law to request a report. In this case psychologists give the client the opportunity to draw up a written objection to the report and to send this with the report to the principal. If the client does not have the right to block the report, psychologists are obliged to inform him/her of this in writing before the establishment of the professional relationship.

III.3.2.20 Right to peruse and block a report about a client system

Clients cannot simply call on the above stipulations with regard to perusal and blocking of the report if they are part of a client system. The purpose of the report and of the confidentiality with regard to the other people can oppose perusal and blocking. If this is the case, the client should be informed of this before the establishment of the professional relationship.

III.3.2.21 Provision of data about the client

Psychologists provide a third party who is not the principal only with those data about the client for which the client has given written consent in advance and which are relevant to and necessary for a specific request from this third party.

III.3.2.22 Provision of data about somebody other than the client

If there are data in the file about somebody other than the client and these data were not provided by the client him/herself, psychologists do not provide these data to third parties except with the specific consent of the other person and only if they are relevant to and necessary for the specific request.

The permission is given in writing.

III.3.3 Confidentiality

III.3.3.1 Confidentiality

In direct contacts psychologists establish a relationship based on trust with the person concerned. Psychologists are therefore obliged to keep secret anything they find out in their capacity as professional psychologists if the data are of a confidential nature. This obligation also covers psychologists' professional opinion of the person concerned. The duty of confidentiality continues to exist after the termination of the professional contacts.

III.3.3.2 Scrupulousness in communication

Psychologists take all reasonable precautions to avoid any confidential data about the client being imparted to third parties, without the client's consent, in written, telephone or electronic communication with the client or with other people concerned. At an early stage psychologists discuss with the client or with the third parties concerned how the communication can best take place and how this should be structured in order to protect client confidentiality.

III.3.3.3 Confidentiality in reports and the provision of data

If, with the client's consent, certain data are provided to or reported to third parties, there is then no duty of confidentiality towards the recipient of these data or the opinion that is contained in the statement or report. Psychologists have a duty of confidentiality with regard to anything else that they might find out.

III.3.3.4 Breaches of confidentiality

Psychologists are not obliged to take confidentiality into account if they have sound reasons to believe that breaching confidentiality is the only and the last resource to prevent direct danger to people or if they are obliged to do this by legal stipulations or a judicial decision.

III.3.3.5 Information about breaches of confidentiality

If it is foreseen that such a situation might arise, psychologists inform the person concerned that they may in that case be obliged to the breach confidentiality, unless such an announcement could cause critical danger for themselves or third parties.

III.3.3.6 Scope of the breach of confidentiality

If psychologists decide to breach confidentiality, the breach should not go further than is necessary in the given circumstances and psychologists should inform the person concerned of the decision, unless such an announcement could cause critical danger for themselves or third parties.

III.3.3.7 Appeal for exemption

Psychologists are obliged to appeal to the court for exemption, if giving evidence or answering questions brings them into conflict with their duty of confidentiality.

III.3.3.8 Confidentiality towards people other than the client

If it is necessary to include data in the file that relate to people other than the client and these data are not provided by the client him/herself, these data are recorded in such a form that they can be temporarily deleted so that, if the file is perused by the client, the confidentiality of these data can be guaranteed.

III.3.3.9 Confidentiality towards people in a client system

If data necessarily relate to several people at once, these data are collected in a file about the client system concerned. None of the people in the client system is entitled to peruse or obtain a copy of these data, unless the other(s) agree to this in writing. Before recording data in this kind of file, psychologists inform all the people about this and point out that this may involve a restriction on the right to peruse and obtain a copy if this is necessary to guarantee the confidentiality of everybody's data.

III.3.3.10 File security

Psychologists ensure that the file is stored in such a way that nobody has access to it without permission so that the confidentiality of the data remains protected.

III.3.3.11 Provision of data and assessments without consent

No specific consent by the client is necessary for data to be provided and for assessments to be given to other professional practitioners, if these other practitioners treat the client or carry out research which is related to the same thing as that to which the psychologist's professional relationship relates or which is related to something that is strongly linked to this. The provision of data is limited to those data and assessments that are necessary for the work of these other practitioners.

III.3.3.12 Legally required provision of data and assessments

No permission is needed from the client for the provision of data or of an assessment to third parties if psychologists are obliged by a legal stipulation to provide these. The client is informed of this in advance.

III.3.3.13 Provision of data to employees

No consent is needed from the client for the provision of data to somebody who is collaborating under the management of the psychologist on the execution of the professional relationship.

III.3.3.14 Provision of information for research and statistics

Psychologists can, if requested, provide data and assessments to a third party for research and statistics. These data and assessments should be provided in such a way that the person cannot be recognised, unless this is not possible given the purpose of the research. In that case the data or assessments can be provided only with the client's consent.

III.3.3.15 Use of data for publications, education, supervision and intervision

For scientific publications, educational purposes, supervision and intervision psychologists can use only data about and opinions about a client that do not

reveal the client's identity. The combination of data and circumstances described must not result in third parties recognising the client, unless the client has given consent for these data to be provided.

III.3.3.16 Reporting on people other than the client

When producing reports psychologists restrict themselves, when giving opinions and advice, to those that concern the client and do not give opinions or advice regarding anybody other than the client. If for the purpose of the report it is necessary to provide data about somebody other than the client, psychologists restrict themselves as much as possible to those data that they have obtained from their own observations or research. The provision of such data requires specific permission from the person concerned. If psychologists believe that it is necessary to include data in a report about somebody other than the client that they have not obtained from their own observation or research, they are extremely reticent and always supply the source and indicate the relevance of the data.

III.4 Expertise

III.4.1 Ethical awareness

III.4.1.1 Practice of psychology in accordance with the Code of Ethics

Psychologists are aware of the ethical aspects of their professional behaviour and carry out their profession in accordance with the 'Code of Ethics for Psychologists'.

III.4.1.2 Need for critical reflection

Psychologists reflect critically on their professional behaviour and on their personal values and motives that play a role in this behaviour. They bring up their professional behaviour regularly in meetings with colleagues, such as for supervision. They follow ethical discussions within their professional group.

III.4.1.3 Knowledge of legal stipulations

Psychologists stay abreast of the legal stipulations that apply to their discipline and act in accordance with these.

III.4.2 Professional competence

III.4.2.1 Maintenance and development of professional expertise

Psychologists maintain and develop their professional expertise in accordance with recent developments in psychology. They keep abreast of the professional literature of relevance to them and participate in relevant extra training and refresher training.

III.4.2.2 Use of effective and efficient methods

Psychologists choose methods that are effective and efficient and realise the limitations of these methods.

III.4.3 The limits of the professional activities

III.4.3.1 Professional and personal limitations

Psychologists recognise their professional and personal limitations and are open about them. Wherever necessary, they call in expert advice and support and refer clients on if required.

III.4.3.2 Limits of psychologists' own expertise

Psychologists take into consideration in their professional activities the limits of their own expertise and do not take on any assignments for which they lack the necessary expertise.

III.4.3.3 Limits of the scope of the practice of psychology

Every assignment should be based on a clearly described objective or request. Psychologists do not take on any assignment the objective or request relating to which does not fall within the scope of the practice of psychology. Nor do they do this if the available methods and techniques are inadequate for an appropriate intervention or response to the request. If psychologists receive such an assignment, they consult with the principal with a view to reformulating the objective or request before they can take on the assignment.

III.4.3.4 Qualifications

Psychologists use only methods for which they are qualified by education, training and/or experience.

III.4.3.5 Relevance and limitations of conclusions

Psychologists realise the extent to which the conclusions drawn from their findings are relevant and the limitations of these conclusions. They qualify their conclusions in accordance with this.

III.4.3.6 Restricting reports to relevant data

Psychologists restrict themselves in reports to only those data and opinions that are necessary for the purpose of the report. They report in terms that are comprehensible to and unambiguous for the recipient of the report. It should be clear from the report what the limitations of the judgements are and the grounds on which these are based. If there is a request for an assessment about the (future) condition or the (future) functioning of the client, psychologists should restrict themselves to an assessment that can be backed up by the data known to them.

III.4.3.7 Professional accountability for professional activities

Psychologists have to be able to account for their professional activities in the light of the state of the science at the time of these activities, as this is described in the professional literature.

III.4.3.8 Prevention of reduced capabilities affecting the sound practice of psychology

As far as possible psychologists recognise at an early stage signs that indicate personal, mental or physical problems that threaten to have a negative effect on their professional activities. They call in expert advice and support in good time in order to prevent or reduce the problems.

III.4.3.9 Discontinuation of professional activities in the case of reduced capabilities

If their mental, physical or judicious capabilities are affected or diminished in such a way that this impedes the sound practice of psychology, psychologists discontinue their professional activities for as long as this situation lasts.

Nederlands Instituut van Psychologen (NIP)

Postbus 2085
3500 GB Utrecht

Nieuwekade 1-5
3511 RV Utrecht
The Netherlands

T +31 (0)30 820 15 00

F +31 (0)30 820 15 99

E info@psynip.nl

I www.psynip.nl

© NIP, September 2011

All rights reserved. Nothing appearing in this publication may be copied or reproduced, unless explicitly permission has been given in writing.