

What do I do when I have ethical questions?

The first place to go is the Standards of Practice. Many answers can easily be found there. Registrants should also refer to the Board's website for any updates. Within the [Standards and Guidelines](#) section of the website, the Board has a [combined document](#) entitled Standards of Practice that not only includes the standards and code of ethics, it also provides various guidelines NSBEP has established to direct practice and a listing of relevant legislation for psychologists.

Psychologists are also referred to the ethical decision making process outlined in the Canadian Code of Ethics and to Standard III.38 that states:

“Seek consultation from colleagues and/or where appropriate groups and committees, and give due regard to their advice in arriving at a responsible decision, if faced with difficult situations.”

The Board cannot provide specific practice advice. Registrants may contact the Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia. They have a Private Practice Committee, among other committees, and may also be able to recommend other psychologists open to consultation.

The Board communicates with registrants, providing regulatory information and guidance. Registrants are welcome to contact the Board for professional guidance related to regulatory information. Sometimes we cannot give you specific answers, but we can direct you to the existing regulatory information that addresses your inquiry and to other resources that will assist you.

If legal advice is required, the registrant is encouraged to consult with a lawyer through their insurer and/or independent counsel.

The value of consultation cannot be overstated; we continue to encourage all consultation. As directed by the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*, among its many benefits, consultation may enhance skills, augment knowledge, modify perspective and rectify biases, and therefore may have the overall effect of improving the quality of services you provide. Additionally, consultation protects you. Therefore we encourage you to consult with the Board, APNS, your colleagues, and other appropriate professionals who may be able to provide guidance on particular matters. Remember to document all consultations.

It is best to put your initial question in writing prior to contacting the Board and the following are some of the questions to include in your request. Some things to consider when you present your ethical problem may include:

- Who are the primary and secondary/ancillary clients?
- Who is your employer?
- Which privacy legislation applies to you (*Freedom of Information Protection of Privacy Act, Personal Health Information Act*, as a few examples)?
- If you are a psychologist (candidate register), have you consulted your supervisor?

Additional areas to consider are:

- From the [*Canadian Code of Ethics*](#), which principle(s) and standard(s) would apply to your ethical dilemma?
- Within the [*Standards of Practice*](#), which standard is relevant and applicable to your ethical problem?
- When considering the document *Jurisprudence: [*Standards of Practice*](#)*, which legislation or decision is relevant?
- Which practice guidelines are pertinent?

As psychology is a self-regulated profession, the decision for action remains with you, the registrant. It is important to seek consultation with another regulated registrant who has knowledge, skills, experience and judgment in the areas about which you are deliberating, and to thoroughly document your reasoned analysis and your decision-making process.