

Dear Oregon Psychologist:

In early 2009 the Oregon Colleague Assistance Committee (OCAC – a committee of OPA) began to address the need for a “*change of culture*” among Oregon psychologists. Specifically, it had become evident that Oregon psychologists lived in a culture of trepidation when it came to seeking their own treatment from other psychologists. To substantiate this, OCAC completed two online surveys of OPA members and multiple field interviews of psychologists at various stages of practice.

Our initial online survey found that the majority of respondents would not be comfortable seeking treatment from another psychologist, and that psychologists feared judgment from their peers and had a strong belief that the treating psychologist would report them to the Oregon Board of Psychologist Examiners, if unethical or impaired behavior was observed or discussed.

Our second survey was an effort to clarify if indeed Oregon psychologists would report their colleagues to OBPE or other authorities, if impairment or ethical or legal breaches were observed within a confidential therapeutic relationship. The results were clear that the majority of psychologists who responded to the survey believed it was their ethical and/or legal responsibility to report their psychologist-client if this psychologist was manifesting impairment or unethical behavior. This is an inaccurate understanding of Oregon law and APA ethics.

OCAC has been collaborating with the OPA ethics committee, OPA Board of Directors, APA, and OPA legal counsel, to provide information to aid Oregon psychologists in correctly understanding Oregon laws and APA ethical principles that apply to psychologists as clients. Additional information is available:

- The October 2009 OPA Newsletter has an article written by Lori Queen Ph.D., and an ethics column written by the OPA ethics committee, involving the rights of psychologists as clients.
- The OPA website will soon feature video interviews with APA ethics director Steve Behnke Ph.D., OPA attorney Paul Cooney, an OBPE Board Member, and other ethics specialists, discussing the rights of confidentiality for psychologists as clients.
- OCAC has published an APA funded video on the topic of psychologists seeking help. This will soon be available via the OPA website, or this can be ordered directly through OPA.
- Attached to this letter is a decision tree pertaining to decisions that are relevant to treating a psychologist as a client.
- A document titled Confidentiality Rights and Principles for a Psychologist as Client in the State of Oregon is attached, clarifying issues related to psychologists as clients.

Our focus at this time is to ensure psychologists are aware of their rights to receive confidential psychological services, a benefit that is at the very foundation of our profession.

In highest regards,

Chris Allen Ph.D. Chairperson, OPA Oregon Colleague Assistance Committee
Marcia Wood Ph.D., President, Oregon Psychological Association
Beth Quackenbush Ph.D., Chairperson, OPA Ethics Committee