

# **SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL BOARD**

## **GUIDELINES FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS**

### **THE PROVISION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES TO PERSONS WHOSE FIRST OR BEST LANGUAGE IS OTHER THAN ENGLISH**

The purpose of these guidelines is to remind psychologists of their obligation to ensure clear and appropriate levels of communication in their interactions with clients whose first or best language is other than English.

#### **Background:**

Effective communication is a critical factor in providing a psychological service. This is true for history taking, ensuring informed consent, formal assessment procedures, report writing and therapeutic intervention.

A high level of proficiency in a shared language is essential for a psychologist to work to an appropriate standard with a client. All registered psychologists are required to be proficient in English but there is a proportion of the South Australian population whose first/best language is not English. Psychologists providing services to such clients must ensure they are able to communicate effectively with their clients. Professional considerations and access and equity considerations dictate that the same standards of quality in communication, validity in assessment and effectiveness in interventions should be provided at a standard consistent with that provided for native English speakers.

#### **Essential Criteria:**

1. Psychologists must consider their own levels of linguistic and cultural competence in their service provision to clients who are not proficient in their use of spoken and/or written English.

Consideration must then be given to recommending such clients are linked with registered psychologists who are able to practice in languages other than English. The SAPB's website has a search facility for identifying such psychologists.

If this is not possible then it is recommended that psychologists use a suitably qualified interpreter and brief him/her before commencing work. The local office of NAATI (National Authority for the Accreditation and Assessment of Translators and Interpreters) can help locate a suitable interpreting agency.

2. Psychologists must consider the linguistic and cultural validity of any psychometric tests used for assessments and the cultural appropriateness of therapeutic approaches to be used in the first/best language. This is even more important as it pertains to people from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds who are new arrivals to Australia.

Any reports should include comment about the level of caution that should be exercised in interpreting test results because of the barriers pose by linguistic or cultural differences.

Psychologists are referred to the test specifications to determine the appropriateness of formal tests.

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#### **Note:**

**Psychologists are referred to the following publications for more information about standards and issues in this area.**

## Bibliography:

- American Psychological Association. (1999). *Standards for educational and psychological testing*, Artiola I Frotuny L. and Mullaney H.A.(1998). *Assessing Patients whose language you do not know: Can the Absurd Be Ethical?.* The Clinical Neuropsychologist, Vol 12, No 1, pp. 113-126.
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- Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services. (1996). *National Standards for Mental Health Services.* Canberra.
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- Lezak, M.D., Howieson, D.B., Loring, D.W. (2004) *Neuropsychological Assessment. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.* Oxford University Press. P 13, pp122-123.
- Mitrushina, M., Boone, K.B., Razani, J., D'Elia, L.F. (2005) *Handbook of normative data for neuropsychological assessment.* Oxford University Press.
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- Paniagua F. (1994). *Assessing and Treating Culturally Diverse Clients*, Sage publications,, p11, pp 105-124.
- Pontón O. M. and León-Carrion (Eds) (2001). *Neuropsychology and the Hispanic Patient, a clinical handbook.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Sandoval J., Frisby C.L., Geisinger. K.F., Scheuneman J.D., Grenier J.R (1998). *Test Interpretation and Diversity: Achieving Equity in Assessment.* American Psychological Association, Washington DC.
- Strauss E., Sherman E.M.S. and Spreen, O. (2006). 'Test Modification and Testing Patients with Special Needs or English as a Second Language,' in: *A compendium of Neuropsychological Tests*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Oxford University Press,, pp 82-83.
- Suzuki, L.A., Meller, P.J. and Ponterotto, J.G. (Eds). (2001). *Handbook of Multicultural Assessment*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 2nd Edition

## Links:

- International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology <http://www.iaccp.org/>
- Society for Cross-Cultural Research <http://www.sccr.org/>
- International Psychology (APA Division 52) <http://www.internationalpsychology.net/>
- Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP journal) <http://www.iaccp.org/jccp/index.htm>
- Cross-Cultural Psychology Bulletin (IACCP newsletter) <http://www.iaccp.org/bulletin/>
- Cross-Cultural Research (SCCR journal) <http://www.sccr.org/CCR/CCR.html>
- Culture & Psychology (international journal) <http://cap.sagepub.com/>
- Online Readings in Psychology and Culture <http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~culture/readings.htm>

## International Test Commission:

[http://www.intestcom.org/itc\\_projects.htm](http://www.intestcom.org/itc_projects.htm) - ITC%20Guidelines%20on%20Adapting%20Tests

## ITC 2006 conference on test adaptation across languages and cultures:

[http://www.intestcom.org/itc\\_conference\\_2006.htm](http://www.intestcom.org/itc_conference_2006.htm)

## American Psychological Association on ethics and assessment:

<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code2002.html#9>