



Confidentiality

Psychologists are expected to address confidentiality when they serve in any professional roles including research, consultation, clinical practice, or education. Trust and confidentiality are an important part of a psychologist-client relationship. It takes a lot of effort on the clients' part to take the first step and divulge their personal and sensitive issues or experiences, expecting that it will be kept confidential. Absolute confidentiality does not exist, but the psychologist should try their best to provide clinical services by keeping all clients' information confidential and disclosing it only when deemed necessary. There are some exceptions to confidentiality as follows:

- If the court subpoenas clients' records or calls for testimony
- If there is a need to intervene to prevent serious harm to oneself or others (suicidal or homicidal)
- If there is a reason to suspect child abuse/neglect

It is also important for psychologists to not confuse the concepts of *privacy*, *privilege* and *confidentiality* which are related but different. Privacy is the basic right of all citizens. Privilege is a legal concept where individuals have the right to release or withhold confidential information. Confidentiality is a psychologists' ethical obligation to protect client information. When working with minors, families and groups, it is important to discuss their roles and obligations and address any confidentiality concerns. It is important for psychologists to understand and be aware of the relevant federal and provincial legislations and Acts.

It's important to review and familiarize oneself with the College of Alberta Psychologists' [standards of practice](#) (pp.28-30, Standard 12.1-12.19), the College of Alberta Psychologists' [practice guidelines](#), and the Canadian Psychologists Association's [practice guidelines](#) (pp.7-8).

References:

Canadian Psychological Association. (1992/2001/2017). *Practice Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services*.

Retrieved from

https://cpa.ca/docs/File/Ethics/CoEGuidelines_PracticeProvPsych2017_Final.pdf

College of Alberta Psychologists (2019). Practice Guidelines: Retrieved from [Disclosure of Personal or Confidential Information - August 2018.pdf \(cap.ab.ca\)](#)

College of Alberta Psychologists (2022). Standards of Practice: Retrieved from [https://www.cap.ab.ca/Portals/0/adam/Content/PCibGBBnCE6ZY6pd7EKcqQ/Link/Standards%20of%20Practice%20\(May%2031,%202023\).pdf](https://www.cap.ab.ca/Portals/0/adam/Content/PCibGBBnCE6ZY6pd7EKcqQ/Link/Standards%20of%20Practice%20(May%2031,%202023).pdf)

Disclaimer

The information provided in this document is intended to provide general guidance to members in identifying and addressing issues, increasing self-efficacy and improve practice in the field of psychology. This document is not exhaustive and may not contain all legislation or information required to make an ethically informed decision. Members are advised that this document provided by the PAA Professional Guidance Program (PGP) is not legal or clinical advice. For any legal advice, consult your liability insurance or a lawyer who specializes in psychological / health service practice. For financial or accounting advice, consult your accountant or auditor or a management accountant who specializes in Alberta health service provision.