


New Practice Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients

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 The Council of Representatives of APA recently adopted as policy the Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients at its February 2011 meeting. This document officially replaces the 2000 Guidelines for Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients and will have a 10 year effective period. As with other sets of APA guidelines, these are differentiated from “standards,” in that standards are mandatory

and often accompanied by an enforcement process. Rather, these guidelines are being set forth as “aspirational in intent.”

As editor of the diversity column of TCP, I wanted to list these newly adopted guidelines in order for a broader audience (you, members of Division 12), to become more aware of this document, which can be accessed in its entirety on the web at <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/guidelines.aspx>. I have previously remarked that too often such information does not get published in

more mainstreamed venues (Nezu, 2005)—hence, my desire to “broadcast” these guidelines to a “larger” audience.

Because of lack of space for this column, I will be unable to provide detailed information regarding the history, rationale, and need for such guidelines. I only hope that you, the reader, will access the website for a more detailed scrutiny of this important document.

Taking full responsibility for the rationale behind the following statement, this is one of those times, on multiple levels, that I am very proud to be a psychologist!

There are 21 guidelines separated into the following categories: (a) attitudes towards homosexuality and bisexuality; (b) relationships and families; (c) issues of diversity; (d) economic and workplace issues, (e) education and training; and (f) research. The document also has updated literature reviews and resource lists, as well as guidelines regarding several new topics, including religion and spirituality, the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation, HIV/AIDS, and research considerations. The following is a simple listing of the guidelines. I urge you to read them in their entirety.

Attitudes Toward Homosexuality and Bisexuality

Guideline 1. Psychologists strive to understand the effects of stigma (i.e., prejudice, discrimination, and violence) and its various contextual manifestations in the lives of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people.

Guideline 2. Psychologists understand that lesbian, gay, and bisexual orientations are not mental illnesses.

Guideline 3. Psychologists understand that same-sex attractions, feelings, and behavior are normal variants of human sexuality and that efforts to change sexual orientation have not been shown to be effective or safe.

Guideline 4. Psychologists are encouraged to recognize how their attitudes and knowledge about lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues may be relevant to assessment and treatment and seek consultation or make appropriate referrals when indicated.

Guideline 5. Psychologists strive to recognize the unique experiences of bisexual individuals.

Guideline 6. Psychologists strive to distinguish issues of sexual orientation from those of gender identity when working with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients.

Relationships and Families

Guideline 7. Psychologists strive to be knowledgeable about and respect the importance of lesbian, gay, and bisexual relationships.

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Guideline 8. Psychologists strive to understand the experiences and challenges faced by lesbian, gay, and bisexual parents.

Guideline 9. Psychologists recognize that the families of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people may include people who are not legally or biologically related.

Guideline 10. Psychologists strive to understand the ways in which a person's lesbian, gay, or bisexual orientation may have an impact on his or her family of origin and the relationship with that family of origin.

Issues of Diversity

Guideline 11. Psychologists strive to recognize the challenges related to multiple and often conflicting norms, values, and beliefs faced by lesbian, gay, and bisexual members of racial and ethnic minority groups.

Guideline 12. Psychologists are encouraged to consider the influences of religion and spirituality in the lives of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons.

Guideline 13. Psychologists strive to recognize cohort and age differences among lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals.

Guideline 14. Psychologists strive to understand the unique problems and risks that exist for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth.

Guideline 15. Psychologists are encouraged to recognize the particular challenges that lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals with physical, sensory, and cognitive-emotional disabilities experience.

Guideline 16. Psychologists strive to understand the impact of HIV/AIDS on the lives of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals and communities.

Economic and Workplace Issues

Guideline 17. Psychologists are encouraged to consider the impact of socioeconomic status on the psychological well being of lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients.

Guideline 18. Psychologists strive to understand the unique workplace issues that exist for lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals.

Education and Training

Guideline 19. Psychologists strive to include lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues in professional education and training.

Guideline 20. Psychologists are encouraged to increase their knowledge and understanding of homosexuality and bisexuality through continuing education, training, supervision, and consultation.

Research

Guideline 21. In the use and dissemination of research on sexual orientation and related issues, psychologists strive to represent results fully and accurately and to be mindful of the potential misuse or misrepresentation of research findings.

References

- Nezu, A. M. (2005). Beyond cultural competence: Human diversity and the appositeness of asseverative goals. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 12, 19-24. □□

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