

Ontario Psychological Association

OPA Guidelines
for Best Practices
in the Use of OPA's Community
Platform



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Hotlink to the College of Psychologists and Behavioral Analysts Of Ontario's Standards of Professional Conduct:

<https://cpbao.ca/members/professional-practice/standards-of-professional-conduct/>

Hotlink to the Canadian Psychological Association's Code of Ethics for Psychologists
www.cpa.ca/aboutcpa/committees/ethics/codeofethics



1.0 Preamble

One of the most significant benefits of membership in the Ontario Psychological Association (OPA) is the privilege of joining and participating in our Community. The OPA's communication platform supports open dialogue and promotes connections between members of OPA as related to the profession. The OPA platform is not to be used for dialogue or conversations related to social, economic or political that would be more appropriate for other non professional social media platforms.

The main aims of the OPA Community platform are to build a strong sense of community amongst our members and to help us as a profession to optimally meet the needs of Ontarians. The Community provides our members with the opportunity to learn from each other and to identify professional issues at the local, provincial, national and international levels that may require province-wide input and advocacy. Typical postings contain clinical and practice questions, identification of helpful resources, requests for referrals, announcements of relevant professional opportunities and educational events, requests for participation in research and other academic and professional activities and the ability to kept abreast of the latest research and health policy updates.

2.0 OPA Policy

The OPA community platform is not to be used

The framework for the use of OPA's Community platform is anchored in the OPA's foundational documents: *Mission Statement, Vision and Values, the Standards of Professional Conduct* set out by the College of Psychologists and Behavioural Analysts of Ontario (CPBAO) and the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) *Code of Ethics for Psychologists*.

3.0 OPA Community Rules

These rules will be enforced by members of the Board or designates.

The Rules guiding the use of the OPA Community platform are as follows:

1. **Collegiality:** In exchanges on the Community platform that refer to other members, non-members, organizations or government, members are expected to avoid personal attacks and characterizations that question the motives, qualifications, competency, fitness to practice or other demeaning attributes of the party in question. While the Board recognizes and firmly defends the value of freedom of speech, there is an expectation that exchanges on the OPA Community platform must be cordial, respectful, helpful and collegial.
2. **Discipline:** Community postings are not pre-moderated, normally. Moderators appointed by the Board will review all postings, after the fact. Any member demonstrating unprofessional behaviour (See Section 5 below - "Defining Unprofessional Behaviour) or violating any section of this policy will be contacted privately by a member of the OPA Board, or by its representatives. Repeated or severe violations will be met with a progressive suspension of OPA Community platform privileges for a specific period of time, or permanently, as determined at the discretion of the Board.
3. **Advice and Responsibility:** Advice given on the OPA Community platform does not constitute legal advice. When seeking advice, it must be recognized that the advice that is received is the personal opinion only of our members. Members are responsible for the decisions they make, regardless of any advice that has been received from colleagues. Users of the OPA Communities platform are expected to check with the CPBAO or with a lawyer before posting or using any advice received on the OPA Communities platform.
4. **Confidentiality:** Patient confidentiality must be respected at all times. It must be kept in mind that every post will be accessible to all OPA members, and may be saved on countless computers, essentially forever. As a result, there are countless ways in which confidentiality could be breached. It is, therefore, essential that any identifying information must be sufficiently masked so that any



individual who may know the patient would be unable to recognize them from the post. It is important to include only minimal information in a OPA Community platform post. Interested parties should be asked to contact the sender back-channel for more information, if necessary.

5. **Copyrighted Material:** Members are able to refer to an article or news items by posting a brief quote from copyrighted material and citing the source with typical reference citations. Posting the full text of articles, without the permission of the author, results in a prima facie case of copyright violations. Given the benefits of sharing key resources for continuing education and other purposes by offering a link to the online published content is permitted.
6. **Sharing Posts:** All posts to the OPA Community platform are considered to be under the copyright of the poster/author and the OPA. Items written for the OPA Community must not be re-posted or shared in any other form, without securing the expressed permission of the author and the OPA.
7. **Attachments:** Attachments to posts on the OPA Community platform must adhere to the rules and regulations set out in this policy. Given the current use of the APA software, members are advised to post a hyperlink in the email to documents rather than an attachment.
8. **Competition:** Discussions that violate the Competition Act will not be permitted. Attempts to “fix, or control” the fees charged for services, for example, are illegal. In keeping with the federal and provincial antitrust concerns, discussions about rates charged, efforts to exert collective pressure on payors, terms of contracts with insurance companies, internship salaries, etc. are prohibited.
9. **Political Endorsement:** As a communication platform of a not-for-profit organization, the OPA Communities platform cannot be used for electioneering for public office, nor for endorsing a specific candidate or political party. However, discussions of political policies and legislative and regulatory changes are permitted insofar as they relate to the profession of psychology.
10. **Policy and Procedure Revisions:** The OPA may from time to time establish and revise these Rules and Regulations.

4.0 Appropriate Use of the OPA Community platform

The OPA envisions an OPA Community platform that is a dynamic and valuable resource for each of our members - and adds significantly to the benefits that accrue as a member of the OPA.

1. While constructive criticism and dissenting positions are not considered “unprofessional behaviours”, comments expressing a negative evaluation should be presented in a collegial, respectful and constructive manner.
2. As you stimulate conversation or express differences of opinion, be courteous, respectful, and constructive. Avoid the use of inflammatory and/or ambiguous language that could be misconstrued as inflammatory or accusative in nature.
3. Write as clearly as possible, and with a respectful tone. Since text-based communications tend to amplify the expression or perception of negative emotion, always beware of “tone of voice” issues in text-based communication.
4. Ensure the post includes a clear connection to the OPA community 's purpose.
5. As recipients of emails, be respectful of the writer’s intentions and try not to read meaning into a message beyond the words presented. If in doubt, check the meaning you received with the sender and seek clarification if necessary - preferably offline (i.e., by telephone or in person).
6. To make it easier for your readers to identify emails of interest to them, use informative subject lines and provide an identification of the geographic area, as appropriate. Keep your message to a reasonable length, and if your message is long, consider starting the message with a brief paragraph to summarize its content.
7. As the lead member who stimulated the conversation, identify when the main issues have been addressed and, whenever possible, provide a concluding or summary statement.
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7. Communicate backchannel when the message will not be of general interest to Listserv members.
8. Since the OPA Community platform is restricted to members only, do not post messages on behalf of a non-OPA member psychologist, an allied professional or an organization without the expressed consent of the OPA CEO or designates.

5.0 Defining Unprofessional Behaviours

Unprofessional behaviour, for the purposes of this policy and procedure, is defined as any behaviour that may be construed as being unsupportive of or disrespectful to any OPA Community platform user or the OPA itself, or any behaviours that create a hostile environment for communications or postings.

Examples of unsupportive or disrespectful behaviour that contributes to the creation of a hostile environment on the Community platform or misuse of the Community platform include but are not limited to the following:

1. Hostile or sarcastic responses to a member's posting.
2. Negative remarks about a member, a non-member or another party's character or motives.
3. Repetitive postings making the same points.
4. Postings clearly indicating a relational or interpersonal issue with a specific member.
5. Postings not obviously relevant to the purpose of the OPA Community platform.

6.0 Disciplinary Procedure

The procedure to be followed if a violation of the rules occurs is a follow:

1. The Board will appoint a minimum of two Board members and their delegates to monitor the OPA Community platform on a daily basis (henceforth, referred to as the "*moderators*").
2. To ensure that the use of the OPA Community platform remains a professionally relevant and satisfying experience for all of our members, anyone violating the rules described above will be subjected to the following sanctions, listed in order of increased severity:
 - If a posting is viewed as violating any of the rules, a moderator will contact the member back channel by email or telephone to discuss the posting and the reasons for concern. Following this discussion, the moderator will forward to the member this Policy and Procedure, the CPBAO's Standards of Professional Practice and CPA's Code of Ethics for Psychologists.
 - Should a second violation occur within 6 months, the member's status on the OPA Community platform will be downgraded to moderated access for a period of up to 30 days. This level of access means that the member will be able to receive messages but permission to post items will be rescinded and/or any posts will be reviewed by OPA moderators or designates prior to being released.
 - Should the member try to circumvent this sanction by asking another member to post



on his/her behalf, the member will have their access to the OPA Community platform restricted on an extended basis.

- Should a third violation occur within a one- year period, the members' access to the OPA Community platform will be suspended on an extended or permanent basis.
 - Should any breach of the rules be particularly egregious, on a recommendation from the moderator, the above steps may be circumvented, and the member will be suspended immediately from having access to the OPA Community platform for an indefinite amount of time or permanently.
3. A suspended member may appeal to the Board President, President-Elect or the Chief Executive Officer for reinstatement following the issuing of a suspension of an indefinite or permanent suspension. The Executive Committee of the Board of Directors will review the posting, the moderator's reasons for the sanction, conduct a hearing with the member to provide rationale for re-instatement. The decision of the Executive Committee regarding re-instatement will final except where the recommendation is for expulsion from the OPA. Any recommendation to expel a member must be voted on by the Board.
 4. Any member who is the recipient of a posting that they feel is in violation of the Community platform policy or rules may bring their concerns forward to the moderator for consideration of disciplinary action.

7.0 Disclaimers

To protect the OPA and its members, the following disclaimers apply to this policy and procedure:

1. In providing the OPA Community platform as a communication vehicle for our members, the information is on the Community platform may or may not be checked for accuracy. Neither the OPA, nor its Board and staff members nor any contributor can be held liable in any way for any information and/or data made available to members on the OPA Community platform. Similarly, none of the so named parties should be held liable for any information that is omitted from the information provided on the Community platform.
2. In subscribing to the OPA Community platform, members must agree to hold OPA harmless against any and all claims arising out of the use of the Community platform, regardless of the causes, effects or fault.
3. Members also agreed to hold contributors who abide by the rules of the OPA Community platform harmless for all claims arising out of the use of the Community platform, regardless of the causes, effects or fault.
4. The OPA does not provide explicit or implied endorsement of the psychologists who accept referrals made through the Community platform.
5. Any recommendations for resources or products posted on the OPA Community platform are for information only and do not represent an explicit or implied endorsement or recommendation from the OPA.
6. All members whose membership has lapsed for more than 60 days will be removed from the OPA Community platform