

## Avoid Risks When Using a List Serve

List Serves provide the opportunity for members to keep abreast of current issues in their professional communities. The College does not monitor the professional association list serves, however, from time to time College members contact the College to clarify the College's position with respect to information posted by their peers. In this way the College has learned that members have turned to each other for ethical and legal advice and that occasionally members have unknowingly provided inappropriate advice to one another potentially putting clients, themselves or their colleagues at risk.

Resolving tricky ethical issues can be very challenging. Members are encouraged to review the College's Standards of Professional Conduct and the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, published by the Canadian Psychological Association, from time to time in order to maintain awareness of the guidance provided in these documents. The preamble to the Code of Ethics contains a particularly helpful section entitled "The Ethical Decision Making Process". The College provides a telephone practice advisory service for members who wish to obtain additional and specific advice and we encourage members to use it when having difficulty making decisions about professional ethics.

The issues with seeking and obtaining advice become more complex when the interpretation of legislation is not easily apparent. Some examples of when this may occur are when members are faced with unusual situations involving consent, confidentiality, capacity, child protection or any other areas in which conduct is dictated by statute. Any advice involving the interpretation of legislation is legal advice and should only be sought from and given by a qualified legal professional. Fortunately, many members have the benefit of pro bono legal advice as a feature of their professional liability insurance coverage.

Finally, use of a List Serve to facilitate referrals can be a risky activity. Given the potentially large number of individuals reading a posting, it is possible that enough information is provided to allow a participant to identify the person in need of services. Members of a List Serve are not within a client's circle of care and should not be provided with information which could make them identifiable. The more information provided about things like location, health, familial, professional or other situations, the greater the risk of someone identifying the individual as someone in need of psychological services.

We encourage all members to consider this information when posting or considering responding to a List Serve.