

Ethics Code Task Force (ECTF) Meeting Summary – May 29-30, 2025

The Ethics Code Task Force (ECTF) held a multi-day, in-person meeting on May 29–30, 2025. Over the past several years, the ECTF has met virtually twice a month to advance its work on revising the APA Ethics Code. During the May 2025 meeting, the Task Force had the opportunity to discuss public comments received on the recent posting of the revised Code, review and edit specific sections of the revised Code, and plan next steps for the process that will be used by the ECTF in reviewing and determining which sections will be revised and edited.

Introduction:

The Task Force was charged with developing a draft Ethics Code that is both visionary and transformational, while remaining a leading practical resource for ethical guidance in psychological science, education, and practice. The revised Code is intended to preserve elements of the current Ethics Code that protect the public and support the discipline and profession. It is designed to serve both the profession and the broader field of psychology, addressing the wide range of roles and responsibilities psychologists hold in working with individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and systems. The new draft also reflects scientific and technological advances, the growth of psychology as a field, and the central importance of diversity, culture, and social justice.

Timeline for the Comment Period and Revision Process:

During December 2024, the ECTF completed its work on a revised version of the Code that was posted for public comment beginning on December 19, 2024. The ECTF sought public comments on the revised draft Ethics Code for a 90-day period. The deadline for submitting comments was March 19, 2025. The ECTF was particularly interested in comments concerning the relevance and adequacy of the proposed draft in different areas of work of psychologists.

Public comment was collected through the APA comment website. Individuals submitting comments were asked to provide their name, email address, and indicate whether they were commenting in a personal capacity or on behalf of a group or organization (which they were asked to identify). Respondents were also asked to indicate whether they were members of the public, non-psychologist mental health professionals, other mental health professionals, graduate students, or psychologists, and if a psychologist, psychologists were additionally asked to identify their workplace setting.

In addition, individuals were asked to provide comments in the following comment areas: (a) General Comments; (b) Specific Comments related to the Introduction; (c) paragraphs that reflect the Relationship Between the Principles and Standards; (d) each of the specific Principles; and (e) each of the Standard sections. The ECTF received more than 2,650 specific comments. However, because many individuals submitted feedback on particular sections within the General Comments, it is estimated that over 3,000 comments were received pertaining to specific sections of the Code.

May 29-30, 2025 Meeting:

To open the meeting, Drs. Arthur Evans and Maysa Akbar joined the Task Force and emphasized the importance of the APA continuing to uphold its core values. These include a strong foundation in psychological science and ethics, helping the public better understand the field, and developing a clear framework for addressing AI, ethics, and related issues. Members also discussed the current policy landscape at the state and federal levels, highlighting the need for the revised Code to be specific enough to guide licensing boards while remaining broad enough to stay relevant over time.

Following their discussion with Drs. Evans and Akbar, Task Force members discussed the number of comments received, the individuals and groups who provided the comments, and the process to be used by the task force for reviewing the comments. It is important to note, that all ECTF members had access to review every comment submitted.

In preparation for the May 2025 meeting, the Task Force Chairs reviewed the comments related to the Principles and identified specific areas for the full Task Force to discuss during the in-person meeting. During the review of the Principles, several key issues were considered, including: (a) the number of Principles to include; (b) whether any Principles should be combined; (c) the wording used to describe the Principles; and (d) relevant APA documents to consult related to the revised Code.

Among the issues discussed and decisions made by ECTF members were the following:

- The Principles *Justice* and *Social Justice* would be combined under the title *Justice*; however, the term “social justice” would remain part of the Principle’s definition.
- The Principle of *Maleficence* would no longer include the word “professional” in its definition.
- The Principle of *Scientific Mindedness* was updated to include specific language suggested by various groups.
- The Principles of *Integrity and Trustworthiness* and *Recognition of Social Systems and the Natural Environment* were revised to include language clarifying the concepts addressed in each Principle.

Following their discussion of the Principles, Task Force members reviewed the paragraphs in the document labeled “Relationship Between the Principles and Standards.” They discussed the concepts, language, and structure of these paragraphs. It was decided that the discussion would continue at the next virtual meeting. In preparation, members were asked to review the related public comments and consider various options for how these paragraphs should be presented in the document.

Review of the Task Force Meeting Discussions with Liaisons:

Whenever the ECTF has met for a full day meeting, whether in-person or virtually, it sets aside one hour at the end of the day to provide updates on its discussions and receive input from representatives of APA boards and committees, divisions, state associations, and other stakeholder groups. As in past full-day meetings, liaisons from various groups joined the Task Force for a discussion hour at the conclusion of the May 29, 2025, meeting.

Appointed liaisons were invited to register in advance to participate in the open meeting discussion held from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. (eastern time). During this session, task force members provided an update on progress related to the revised Ethics Code, including: (a) a brief summary of the public comments received, and (b) discussions and decisions concerning the Principles addressed during the current meeting. In addition, Task Force members responded to several questions and concerns raised by the liaisons, which focused on: (a) the possibility of additional comment periods, and (b) the process for presenting a revised Code to the Council of Representatives.