Ethical Documentation of Adjustments to Standardized Evaluation Administration Procedures

In the age of the COVID-19 pandemic, school psychologists are faced with the question of how to obtain complete comprehensive individual student assessments that provide valid and reliable results while also protecting the health and safety of the students and themselves. While new alternative approaches for collecting evaluation data are emerging, school psychologists will continue to rely on the administration of individual standardized assessments. To promote health and safety, school psychologists may determine that adjustments to standardized administration procedures are required for many of the assessments they are asked to complete.

The NASP Ethics and Professional Practices Board (EPPB) is charged with protecting the public and those who receive school psychological services by sensitizing school psychologists to the ethical aspects of their work, educating them about appropriate conduct, helping them monitor their own behavior, and providing standards to be used in the resolution of complaints of unethical conduct. This guidance statement addresses how school psychologists should document adjustments to standardized administration procedures, including those made to reduce the chance for transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

NASP Ethical Standard II.3.3 on Instrument Selection notes:

School psychologists select assessment instruments and strategies that are reliable and valid for the examinee and the purpose of the assessment. When using standardized measures, school psychologists adhere to the procedures for administration of the instrument that are provided by the author or publisher of the instrument. If modifications are made in the administration procedures for standardized tests or other instruments, such modifications are identified and discussed in the interpretation of the results. (NASP, 2020, p. 46)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this standard is critical for school psychologists to consider as we determine needed adjustments to standardized administration practices and write reports of our psychoeducational evaluations.

Potential adjustments to standardized administration procedures could include, but are not limited to, wearing of face masks and face shields by the evaluator and student, separation from the student with a transparent divider, changes to the order of subtests, or administration of evaluations via remote technology instead of in person. Note, this guidance document is not intended to indicate support or encouragement of any specific adjustment strategy. School psychologists should continue to rely on research-based strategies where available and select adjustments that adhere as closely as possible to the standardized procedures for each specific assessment.

When school psychologists choose to adjust standardized administration procedures, these adjustments should be documented clearly in the written report for that assessment. This documentation should include the reason adjustments were made, such as to reduce the risk of COVID-19 virus transmission, as well as a description of the adjustments, and a statement on their potential impact on assessment results. This information should also be addressed during verbal presentations of results to families and school teams. Leaving out the identification and discussion of adjustments to standardized administration procedures can lead to misinterpretation of assessment results and inaccurate comparisons of assessment results over time.

If a school psychologist receives a report from another evaluator that does not address adjustments made to the standardized administration procedures and their potential impact on scores and assessment interpretation, then the school psychologist should seek clarification from the other evaluator. If the other evaluator is unwilling or unable to
provide such clarification, the school psychologist should consider steps to inform the family, student (when appropriate), and school team of concerns they may have with the assessment. Resources for ethical decision making are available on the NASP website, [https://www.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/professional-ethics](https://www.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/professional-ethics).

**REFERENCE**


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