



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 11, 2019

Contact: Antonette Sorrick
(916) 574-7720

STATE BOARD INFORMS CONSUMERS, THERAPISTS, THERAPY NEVER INCLUDES SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

*Sponsored legislation, updated guide booklet helps consumers, psychology programs,
and training settings to reinforce appropriate therapeutic behavior.*

SACRAMENTO – If you're a client of a therapist, you have rights that protect you from inappropriate behavior, chief among them: the right to be treated with dignity and respect in a safe environment, free from sexual, physical, and emotional abuse.

If you're a therapist, you have a responsibility to ensure sexual behavior with a patient does not occur.

From the State Capitol to the therapist's office, the California Board of Psychology (Board) is taking steps to help consumers and therapists navigate these rights and responsibilities in the current climate.

The Board, in conjunction with the Board of Behavioral Sciences, Medical Board of California, and Osteopathic Medical Board of California, has issued an update to the booklet *Therapy Never Includes Sexual Behavior* to inform clients – and warn therapists – that sexual conduct has no place in professional therapy.

The booklet, available for free download at the Board's website <https://www.psychology.ca.gov/>, guides clients through the process of filing a complaint and offers suggestions to support the process of selecting a therapist. Terminology and warning signs have also been updated to more accurately reflect modern-day methods of communication. Sexting, out-of-session communication via text, and social media contacts are specifically addressed.

In addition, the Board is sponsoring legislation to update the definition of sexual misconduct, and increase the penalties for therapists who engage in sexual behavior with or directed toward clients. Currently, engaging in phone sex or trading nude photos are acts that are not punishable by license revocation. Senate Bill 275 would change that.

“It is the Board of Psychology’s unyielding position that psychologists must never engage in egregious sexual behavior directed toward a client,” said Dr. Stephen Phillips, president of the Board. “Sponsoring this bill to allow the Board to suspend or revoke the licenses of sexual predators who prey on vulnerable consumers of psychological services underscores the board’s unwavering commitment to consumer protection. Although the vast majority of psychologists would never consider engaging in such untoward conduct, it is the Board’s responsibility to protect the public from those who would abuse the trust reposed in them by their clients.”

If you are a consumer and believe you have experienced inappropriate behavior by a therapist or medical professional, please contact the appropriate licensing board to file a complaint.

###