

Into the Unknown

**What to do when there are
no clear rules or guidelines**

Telehealth



The Standard of Care:

**What would a reasonable psychologist do
under similar circumstances?**

How do you know now?

Authorities:

- Legal restrictions
- Reviewed research
- Professional association statements
- Published and reviewed clinical guidelines
- Clinical consultation
- Other sources (ethics?)

What if it's new and unclear?

**Get comfortable with
ambiguity and risk**

The Standard of Care:

**What would a reasonable psychologist do
under similar circumstances?**

We still use the same sources

(albeit with less certainty)

- Are there legal restrictions
- Reviewed research - we are behavioral science practitioners
- Professional association statements, if any
- Published and reviewed clinical guidelines, or extrapolations from reviewed clinical guidelines
- **Clinical/Peer consultation**
- We are health care practitioners, not ethicists

The Standard of Care:

**What would a reasonable psychologist do
under similar circumstances?**

Peer/Clinical Consultation

Your ticket to documenting what's reasonable

- A clinical/peer consult can't make something illegal, lawful
- Find an experienced colleague with relevant expertise
- If the issue is truly novel, find two experienced colleagues
- Ask them focused questions; beware the good idea fairy
- Document your rationale



Peer/Clinical Consultation

Your ticket to documenting what's reasonable

(part 2)

- Document who you spoke to, the question and answer, and whether they believe the proposal is “reasonable”
- If there are risks and benefits to your patient, review informed consent and assumption of risk
- Give your consultant relevant information

If you are asked to be a consultant:

(It's a critical service to a colleague; we work alone enough as it is)

- Do not moralize; there are rarely “most ethical” answers that are helpful
- Get back to your roots; remember you are a behavioral scientist
- Remember: there are often multiple correct answers
- Answer the question you are asked; try not to become the good idea fairy unless asked for additional thoughts
- Focus on whether the proposed course of action is “reasonable”
- If asked, identify factors that might change your mind
- Don't be shy about pointing out bad ideas; a low tide sinks all boats