**Background on the Continuing Education Initiative**

In mid-September 2017, select members of *Society of Clinical Psychology* (Division 12, APA; SCP) and the *Society for a Science of Clinical Psychology (Section 3, Division 12 APA; SSCP)* held a collaborative *Summit on* *Issues in Professional Psychology Continuing Education* at Emory University. As part of that meeting, attendees considered our organizations’ roles in collaboratively facilitating the science-base of APA Continuing Education (CE) programs. Accordingly, we generated several strategies and recommendations for policy and procedures to address CE programs that fail to fully meet APA’s *Standards and Criteria for Approval of Sponsors of Continuing Education for Psychologists (*<https://www.apa.org/ed/sponsor/resources/approval-standards.pdf>), despite the sponsor of the CE programs having APA approval.

One strategy is to increase the reporting of specific CE programs that fail to meet APA’s standards and criteria. To facilitate this process, SSCP/SCP Summit members developed an approach to rapidly report scientifically egregious CE offerings from APA-approved sponsors. By 'egregious,' we mean offerings that are grounded in grossly inadequate scientific evidence (see below for specific criteria).

**How you can help:**

1. Notify the SSCP Continuing Education Task Force by sending a link, a photo, or a PDF of the suspect CE offering to [sscp.ce.taskforce@gmail.com](mailto:sscp.ce.taskforce@gmail.com). The SSCP CE Task Force will review the CE offering, determine if a complaint should be made, and file a complaint directly to the APA Office of CE Sponsor Approval.

or

1. File a complaint yourself to the APA CE Sponsor Approval (CESA) office (<http://www.apa.org/ed/sponsor/resources/complaint-form.aspx>) using the procedures outlined below (it is very straightforward!)

To assist with reviewing CE offerings and to facilitate SSCP/SCP members making their own complaints independent of the Task Force, we have developed the *CE Program Claim Evaluation Form*, which is attached as the final page of this document. Although the *CE Program Claim Evaluation Form* focuses on APA’s Standard D (curriculum content), Standard A (e.g., relevance to psychology, improving services to the public) may also be relevant, and useful excerpts appear below (see <https://www.apa.org/ed/sponsor/resources/approval-standards.pdf> for full description of all standards and criteria; note, emphases added):

Standard A: Continuing education (CE) in psychology is an ongoing process consisting of formal learning activities that (1) are relevant to psychological practice, education and science, (2) enable psychologists to keep pace with emerging issues and technologies, and (3) **allow psychologists to maintain, develop, and increase competencies in order to improve services to the public and enhance contributions to the profession.**

Standard D: Sponsors must document that the content of each CE program meets **one of the following**:

1.1 Program content focuses on application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that have **overall consistent and credible empirical support in the contemporary peer reviewed scientific literature beyond those publications and other types of communications devoted primarily to the promotion of the approach**;

1.2 Program content focuses on ethical, legal, statutory or regulatory policies, guidelines, and standards that impact psychological practice, education, or research;

1.3 Program content focuses on topics related to **psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures**.

2. Sponsors are required to ensure that instructors, during each CE presentation, include **statements that describe the accuracy and utility of the materials presented, the empirical basis of such statements, the limitations of the content being taught, and the severe and the most common risks.**

Two features are central to the evaluation process: (1) The degree of empirical evidence relative to the claims for efficacy/utility, and (2) the degree to which claims or the rationale for procedures taught in the program run counter to well established psychological and other sciences. That is, the empirical basis of claims of efficacy/utility are evaluated relative to the scientific testing of the procedures, as well as relative to the degree to which the rationale for the procedures relies on mechanisms that are consistent with -- or counter to -- known science.

**Making your own complaint.** We cannot emphasize enough that completing the *CE Claim Evaluation Form* (attached below) and the CESA Complaint Process takes very little time to complete. To make a complaint yourself:

MAKE SURE THAT THE ACTIVITY STATES THAT IT IS APA APPROVED

1. Go to <http://www.apa.org/ed/sponsor/resources/complaint-form.aspx>
2. Enter your identifying information (name, email address, phone number)
3. Enter the name of the CE Program Sponsor (Sponsor, not the speaker), the title of the CE program, and the date and time the program is to be/was offered.
4. Indicate if the CE program is a “homestudy” and if you attended the program. If you did not attend the program, simply note that the complaint is based on the advertising of the program. **You do NOT need to be an attendee of the CE program or an APA member to file a complaint**.
5. Indicate if you attempted to resolve the issue with the sponsoring organization. **Please note that you are NOT required to attempt to resolve the issue with the sponsoring organization**.
6. Identify the CESA standards that are violated; Standard A and D are most likely.
7. Provide a short (1000 characters maximum) narrative of your complaint, using the *CE Claim Evaluation Form* as a guide*.*
8. Press *Next*, review the content you provided, and then submit.

Easy peasy and tremendously useful for the field! APA CESA is eager to work with us on this issue, but they need us to complete the complaint process in order for them to proceed.

We hope you will join us in this important process by using the new Task Force email ([sscp.ce.taskforce@gmail.com](mailto:sscp.ce.taskforce@gmail.com)) or by completing a *CE Claim Evaluation Form* and APA CESA Complaint yourself. The form is provided on the following page.

Sincerely,

Jason Washburn (Summit Chair)

Jonathan Weinand (Summit Co-Chair)

On behalf of the *SSCP/SCPSCCAP Summit on Issues in Professional Psychology Continuing Education* members, Scott Lilienfeld, Michael Otto, Gerald Davison, Brandon Gaudiano, Steven Hollon, Jennifer Kim Penberthy, Gerald Rosen, & Kenneth Sher, Tara Peris.

**Continuing Education Claim Evaluation Form**

**CE Provider:**

**CE Title:**

**Date of Presentation (if multiple, most recent):**

**Presenter:**

**Is This Activity Claiming to be APA Approved?** Yes No[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Intervention(s) and/or Assessment:**

**Disorder(s)/Condition/Problem Area**:

**Basis for Complaint**

1. Claims for applicability to conditions well beyond the scope of demonstrated effectiveness/efficacy/validity (Standard D.1.1; Standard D.2)
2. Claims lack adequate evidence for intervention(s) and/or assessment procedures with specified disorder(s)/condition(s)/problem(s) (Standard D.1.1; Standard D.2)
   1. Lack of legitimate peer-review
   2. Lack of replication by independent research teams
   3. Use of anecdotal evidence as probative (“proving efficacy”) rather than illustrative
   4. Reliance on authority in the absence of adequate evidence
3. Failure to adequately acknowledge disconfirming evidence and/or alternative explanations (Standard D.2)
4. Inconsistent with established scientific knowledge (Standard A; Standard D.1.1; Standard D.2)
   1. Implausible theoretical rationale/explanation that runs counter to basic science
   2. Use of technical jargon that creates a false sense of scientific credibility
5. Advertising lacks information for the consumer to determine if the offering is consistent with CESA Standards. (Standard D.2)
   1. Consider full review of offering

Narrative Summary of above Items for Complaint Submission (1000 character limit):

1. CE Provider must claim to be an APA-Approved sponsor if complaint is to be made to APA’s Offices of CE Sponsor Approval (<http://www.apa.org/ed/sponsor/resources/complaint-process.aspx>) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)