

Tip Sheet

# Ethics Anyone?

## A Guide to Ethics in Social Research

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Whether you are evaluating your organization's activities in-house, commissioning an external evaluation, or working as an evaluation consultant, ethical questions are likely to be an issue. As evaluation is an interdisciplinary field, no single set of ethical standards or guidelines covers all evaluation situations and methods.

As Gail Vallance Barrington discussed on the American Evaluation Association blog, being familiar with ethical standards that pertain to your situation will prepare you to respond with more confidence that you are “doing the right thing” when confronted with ethical dilemmas. It can also help you convince others to support you in practicing these ethics.

This resource guide describes professional guidelines/publications and suggested further reading on ethics in evaluation and social research.

### Ethics in Evaluation and Social Research

Free Resources for Program Evaluation and Social Research Methods website, **“Protecting the Public in Research,”**  
<http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/protect.html>.

This website, an International Consortium for the Advancement of Academic Publication site, provides a comprehensive listing of professional guidelines and resources on protection of the public in evaluation and social research.

### Ethics in Evaluation

American Evaluation Association (AEA), ***American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles for Evaluators,***  
<http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51>.

AEA developed these Principles to guide evaluators in ethical evaluation of programs, products, personnel, and policy. Topics include a) systematic inquiry, b) competence, c) integrity/honesty, d) respect for people, and e) responsibilities for general and public welfare.

AEA, ***American Evaluation Association Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation,***  
<http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=92>.

This statement describes the significance of and AEA expectations regarding cultural competence in evaluation. This refers to engaging diverse communities to include cultural and contextual dimensions important to the evaluation, as well as respecting the cultures represented in the evaluation. The statement notes, “Cultural competence is an ethical imperative.”

Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE), *“Program Evaluation Standards Statements,”* <http://www.jcsee.org/program-evaluation-standards-statements>.

JCSEE, a coalition of professional organizations interested in ethics in evaluation, developed these standards. The webpage summarizes the standards, which are presented in full detail in a book. They include standards of 1) utility, 2) feasibility, 3) propriety, 4) accuracy, and 5) evaluation accountability.

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Posavac, Emil J. & Carey, Raymond, G. *Program Evaluation, Chapter 4, “Ethical Standards of Conducting Program Evaluations.”* Prentice Hall. (Note: Newer editions of this book are available.)

This textbook chapter discusses five ethical topics involved in evaluation that are not always mentioned in other sources: 1) ethical issues in the treatment of people, 2) role conflicts, 3) the scientific quality of evaluations, 4) recognizing the needs of all stakeholders, and 5) potential negative side effects of evaluation.

## Ethics in Consulting

Institute of Management Consultants (IMC) USA, *“Professional Ethics,”* webpage, <https://imcusa.site-ym.com/?page=ETHICS>.

IMC USA requires its members to conform to this Code of Ethics as a condition of membership. Topics include commitment to clients, commitment to fiscal integrity, and commitment to the public and the profession.

## Ethics in Authoring Research Publications

Wager, E. & Kleinert, S. (2011) *Responsible research publication: International standards for authors.* A position statement developed at the 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity, Singapore, July 22-24, 2010. Chapter 50 in: Mayer, T. & Steneck, N. (eds.) *Promoting Research Integrity in a Global Environment.* Imperial College Press/World Scientific Publishing, Singapore (pp. 309-16).

[http://publicationethics.org/files/International%20standards\\_authors\\_for%20website\\_11\\_Nov\\_2011.pdf](http://publicationethics.org/files/International%20standards_authors_for%20website_11_Nov_2011.pdf)

This document aims to establish international standards for the responsible publication of scholarly research. It was developed at the 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity in Singapore in 2010 with help from the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

If you have any questions or would like assistance, contact us at: [info@meaningfulevidence.com](mailto:info@meaningfulevidence.com). Your success is our goal!



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