

On the need to secure psychological test materials (Feb 5, 2008)

Psychologists play a leading role in developing and using psychological tests that serve the public and professions. Psychologists also are committed to maintaining the integrity and security of test materials and other assessment methods, knowing that their unauthorized release to the public jeopardizes test integrity, results in test use by unqualified persons, and thus harms the public.

Many professional associations are committed to this principle as reflected in their ethics codes. For example, the International Test Commission Guidelines for Test Use reflect this widely accepted commitment to maintain test security:

Standard 1.4.3. Protect the integrity of the test by not coaching individuals on actual test materials or other practice materials that might unfairly influence their test performance.

Standard 1.4.4. Ensure that test techniques are not described publicly in such a way that their usefulness is impaired.

In contrast to the need to maintain test security, some psychologists are selling tests through unauthorized sources to the general public. For example, the International Test Commission learned recently that tests are being sold on eBay. Such sales jeopardize test integrity, harm the public, and violate accepted practice.

The International Test Commission urges psychologists to become aware of this possible practice in their countries and to take steps to stop such unauthorized sales. We encourage national psychological associations to inform their members of this problem and to take preventative measures, including the revision of their ethics codes to help prevent this and similar unauthorized releases of tests to others. National psychological associations also are encouraged to develop standards that promote the safe disposal of outdated tests.

We also urge eBay and other companies to establish and maintain standards that prevent the unauthorized sale of tests and other professionally protected materials.

Jacques Grégoire, President

Thomas Oakland, Council member