



About This Statement

Psychologists can advertise in Aotearoa New Zealand to create awareness of their services and expertise in particular areas. It is important that psychologists advertise in a way that is lawful, ethical and responsible.

This statement sets out the expectations for advertisements that psychologists use to promote their services. It is expected that psychologists will comply with the guidance provided in this statement. This statement may be used by Te Poari Kaimātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa | New Zealand Psychologists Board, the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal, and the Health and Disability Commissioner as a standard to assess conduct associated with advertising.

Advertising in Aotearoa New Zealand

In Aotearoa New Zealand there are approximately 50 different pieces of legislation that restrict advertising in some way. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is an industry organisation that promotes the self-regulation of advertising alongside the statutory framework. It is set up to promote the maintenance of standards in advertising. It authors advertising codes that set out the rules advertisements must comply with to ensure they are advertising responsibly.

The ASA's definition of advertising is surprisingly broad:

Advertising and Advertisement(s) are any message, the content of which is controlled directly or indirectly by the advertiser, expressed in any language and communicated in any medium with the intent to influence the choice, opinion or behaviour of those to whom it is addressed.

Health Services Have a Specific Code for Advertising

The ASA have developed a specific code to ensure that advertisers maintain rigorous standards when advertising therapeutic and health services – [the Therapeutic and Health Advertising Code](#). They have also issued a guidance note on [advertising health services](#) to provide further help and information to health professionals. We encourage you to thoroughly read these two documents.

Expectations for advertisements Used by Psychologists

In addition to legal requirements, there are also ethical considerations when advertising psychological services to the public. Broadly, these ethical principles are social responsibility, integrity and truthful presentation. Psychologists would be expected to carefully attend to the following principles when developing and publishing any form of advertisement.

Ensure the information in your advertisement is truthful and balanced.

Clear and accurate information about services that psychologists provide helps the people with whom we work make informed choices. There is an inherent power and knowledge imbalance between a psychologist and the general public. The general public are inclined to implicitly trust what a psychologist communicates, including via advertisement. False or misleading advertisements can create unrealistic expectations or unduly influence. You must ensure that any information you include in any advertisement is true, accurate and presents a balanced picture of the services you provide (e.g., you must not unduly pressure people to use psychological services or create unfounded fear about their mental health).

Under the Fair Trading Act 1986 it is an offence to make a claim in an advertisement without reasonable grounds. If you are including scientific information in advertising the content should be evidence-based and substantiated, clear and easy to understand and be from a reputable and verifiable source (e.g., a peer reviewed journal).

Your advertisement must not damage the trust and confidence that the general public have in psychologists.

Titles, names, qualifications and memberships should be clear and accurate

Using titles, qualifications and membership information in advertisements can be helpful in providing relevant information to the general public. You must not include information about your qualifications that could be misleading or confusing. When advertising qualifications you may only advertise those that appear on the New Zealand Psychologists Board

register or have been conferred or awarded by a recognised professional association. Any advertisement must include your true, full name that is on the Board's register and the address of your business premises.

You are responsible for the content of the advertisement

You are responsible for all the content of your advertisement, even if a third party assisted in any way with the development and/or publication of the advertisement. You cannot delegate this responsibility on to an administrator or any other person or say that you were not aware of the content of your advertisement. If you are concerned about whether your advertisement meets legal requirements, we recommend you seek legal advice or use an advertising pre-vetting service.

Advertising In Māori Media

There are several Iwi and Kaupapa Māori media outlets by which advertisements reach Māori. It would be prudent to gain advice and support from an appropriate Māori person, company, hapu, iwi if advertising specially for Māori. In most instances you should recognise whether there is a Māori cultural element to the purpose of the advertisement. Ensure that the advertisement wording is culturally sensitive, inoffensive and mana enhancing. Correct use of kupu Māori and accurate pronunciations is proper.

The Use of Client Testimonials is Limited

You must not encourage or allow client testimonials to be published in any form of advertising for your services that discuss treatment outcomes (as per The Medicines Act 1981 s 58). This means that an advertisement cannot include or imply that a client with a condition has taken a medication, used a medical device or had a treatment method (including any form of psychological treatment) and benefited from it. The ASA guidelines state that, where permitted by relevant professional bodies, clients can provide **limited** testimonials in advertisements about their **experience** of the service that does not relate to a therapeutic treatment outcome (e.g., "she was reliable and polite; her office rooms were nicely decorated"). Some Regulatory Authorities have prohibited any form of client testimonial or endorsement in advertising of health services. This includes the Medical Council of New Zealand and the New Zealand Chiropractic Board. Psychologists can include limited client testimonials in their advertisements but must not explicitly solicit these.

Review

This statement was published in February 2025. It is scheduled for review in 2029, or sooner if there are changes to relevant legislation prior to this date.