



OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

ATTORNEY GENERAL OPINION
2016-446A

Teanne Rose, Executive Officer
State Board of Examiners of Psychologists
421 N.W. 13th Street, Ste. 180
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73103

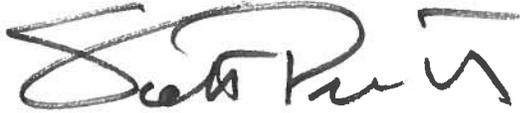
August 1, 2016

Dear Executive Officer Rose:

This office has received your request for a written Attorney General Opinion regarding agency action that the State Board of Examiners of Psychologists intends to take with respect to Board case RFI 16-6. The proposed action is to dismiss formal proceedings and send an educational letter to the licensee recommending additional education regarding the psychologist's ethical obligation to avoid multiple relationships with clients. The Board received a complaint asserting the licensee made a small loan to a client.

The Psychologists Licensing Act, 59 O.S.2011 & Supp.2015, §§ 1351–1376, authorizes the Board to investigate complaints against licensees and hold hearings, 59 O.S.2011, §1352.1, and to discipline licensees who engage in unprofessional conduct or violate the Board's code of ethics, 59 O.S.Supp.2015, § 1370(B)(2), (15). The Board's administrative rules incorporate the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct ("Principles and Code"). OAC 575:10-1-10(a). The Principles and Code prohibit psychologists from entering "multiple relationships" with clients such that the psychologist takes on both a professional role and another role with the same client, which may impair the psychologist's objectivity and professional effectiveness. Principles and Code 3.05. Likewise, psychologists are to avoid conflicts of interest, including financial conflicts that could impair a professional role. *Id.* 3.06. Administrative rules permit the Board to resolve some complaints informally. OAC 575:1-1-3(b)(9). The action seeks to educate a licensee about how ethical conflicts of interest may be avoided in the future. The Board may reasonably believe that dismissing the complaint, while at the same time recommending further ethical education, will successfully ensure the licensee does not repeat similar mistakes.

It is, therefore, the official opinion of the Attorney General that the State Board of Examiners of Psychologists has adequate support for the conclusion that this action advances the State of Oklahoma's policy that psychologists avoid conflicts of interest that may impair their ability to assist clients.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Scott Pruitt". The signature is stylized with a large initial "E" and a prominent horizontal stroke at the end.

E. SCOTT PRUITT
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF OKLAHOMA