



Guidelines for Service Provision and the Use of Title and Protected Psychology-Related Terms by Mental Performance Consultants (MPCs)

The CSPA promotes on its website (www.cspa-acps.com) that “The CSPA continuously strives to ensure that members have adequate knowledge, skills, and experience to deliver mental performance services in Canada.” As an organization that advocates on behalf of professionals working in this realm, we would like to educate CSPA members and the public on the use of the term “psychology” and its derivatives, and the title of psychologist. This is important as it ensures both the protection of the membership and also the people with whom the membership works. You will notice on the website that CSPA recognizes two titles and types of professional members: Mental Performance Consultant (MPC) and Registered Psychologist. Only those members who meet licensing requirements from a regulatory body are able to use the term “psychologist”. It is important that all individuals fully understand the implications of this law, which is described below.

Provincial laws establish the rules for use of a professional title. Any professional who is not a registered psychologist but who uses the professional title of “sport psychologist” or “sport psychology consultant” does so in violation of professional psychology licensing regulations across Canada as mandated by a Province’s Health Professions Act or by general Provincial legislation that specifically licenses the practice of psychology. Quick *Google* searches reveal that it is not uncommon for Mental Performance Consultants to use the title “sport psychology consultant” or “performance psychology specialist” without sufficient attention to laws that stipulate restrictions for the use of the term “psychology” when referring to one’s professional title or to one’s professional practice. Very simply, any use of the term psychology or its derivatives (e.g., psychological) within a description of one’s professional practice is unlawful, misleading, and unethical. And so, it is important for all members to abide by these laws and scope of practice.

Using Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Alberta as random examples, Section 24(1) of the 1997 Psychologists Act in Saskatchewan stipulates: *Subject to subsection (3), no person other than a member shall use the title “psychologist” or any word, title or designation, abbreviated or otherwise, to imply that the person is a member.* In Ontario the Act reads: *“Right to Title. Subject to an exception for those employed by a university, only registered members may use the title “psychologist” or “psychological associate” (or a variation, abbreviation, or equivalent in another language).* And, in Alberta, the provision of psychology-related services is regulated by the College of Alberta Psychologists under the Health Professions Act. The Standards of Practice state: *“psychologist means a person who has been issued a certificate of registration under the Health Professions Act and who holds a practice permit as a member of the College of Alberta Psychologists.* Nearly identical wording is found in every Canadian province’s professional practice regulations.

To provide some historical context, the CSPA created the two titles of Mental Performance Consultant (MPC) and Registered Psychologist in 2008, following exchanges with the College of Psychologists of Ontario. The College requested that CSPA differentiate between practitioners who meet CSPA's requirements¹ and Registered Psychologists who meet CSPA's requirements and are also clinically trained to diagnose and treat mental health issues, based on their graduate training and scope of practice.

Following were the perceived benefits and rationale for creating the title Mental Performance Consultant (MPC):

- (1) The term "**Mental**" captures the essence of what practitioners in the field of sport psychology do without infringing upon legally protected "psychology" terms (e.g., psychology, psychological, psychologist).
- (2) The term "**Performance**" captures the necessity of addressing performance when working in the field of sport psychology. Registered psychologists who do not have any training or experience in the area of sport sciences to be able to attend to performance elements cannot be a CSPA Professional Member, as they do not meet this critical requirement to effectively work in various sport contexts with athletes and coaches.
- (3) The term "**Consultant**" captures the nature of the relationship and collaborative work between practitioners and clients in this field. In consultation with sport coaches, the CSPA intentionally selected the term "Consultant" rather than other terms such as "Coach" or "Trainer" so as to not muddle or encroach on the role of other members of integrated support teams/staff in sport including head and assistant coaches, strength trainers, etc.

Of note, some laws stipulate that Mental Performance Consultants working in a university setting may refer to their practice as "sport psychology" if this is deemed appropriate by their institution. A sport center, on the other hand, is not considered equivalent to a university and a center may not, therefore, promote or sanction the use of the term "psychology" by an unlicensed employee. It is thus outside of academia, beyond the bounds of a college or university employment, that the distinctions are critical.

So, in conclusion, there are very good reasons why CSPA promotes the use of two titles and encourages Mental Performance Consultants to utilize and refer to this well-known, accepted title in the sport domain. It is important for the credibility and unity of our profession. Members must strive to unambiguously and lawfully represent themselves and the profession, and respect the two types of service providers. These reasons are dictated by legislation but they are also grounded in a common concern that everyone practice within the scope of their training, and educate and protect the clients they serve.

¹ CSPA Professional Membership requirements: Master's degree in sport psychology or related field; graduate training in foundational disciplines of Human Kinetics/Kinesiology, Psychology, and Counselling; extensive consulting/hands-on experience in sport; favorable supervisor and client evaluations