

LACPA Listserv Rules and Guidelines

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Overview

Welcome, LACPA Members! We're excited to have you join the Los Angeles County Psychological Association listserv, a vital resource designed to foster connection, collaboration, and professional growth within our vibrant community. This platform is a member benefit strictly for the use of current LACPA members and offers a valuable opportunity to engage with colleagues, share insights, ask questions, and stay informed on the latest developments in the field of psychology.

The current 2025 LACPA Listserv Guidelines replace those last updated on February 20, 2020, and serve as the foundational set of policies governing the association's email-based communication tool.

The American Psychological Association (APA) has established a set of rules for the use of its listservs to ensure legal compliance, maintain its tax-exempt status as a 501(c) (3) organization, and promote a respectful and professional environment for its members. As the LACPA Listserv utilizes digital resources provided by the American Psychological Association (APA), it is required to adhere to these rules.

This document will help you identify and understand key policies and recommendations regarding appropriate listserv use and avoid misuse, focusing on acceptable content, professional conduct, privacy considerations, and rules for posting. A listserv moderator will contact individuals who do not follow the listserv rules. Those who repeatedly violate these rules will receive a warning letter, followed by temporary suspension for continued noncompliance, or, in the case of more flagrant violations, permanent suspension of some or all of their listserv privileges.

To ensure this digital platform remains productive, respectful, and aligned with ethical and legal standards, **by using this listserv, you acknowledge that you have read and agree to follow these rules and guidelines.**

Notice of Disclaimer for User-Generated Content

Please remember that the views and opinions shared on this listserv are those of individual members and do not necessarily represent the official stance or endorsement of LACPA or APA.

APA/LACPA Listserv Rules Overview

APA Listserv Rules, detailed below, include avoiding illegal content (e.g., posting copyrighted materials, avoiding hate speech or discriminatory content), using the listserv for commercial advertising (some exceptions exist, e.g., for 501(c)(3) organizations that may be of broad interest to LACPA members), personal financial promotion, and antitrust discussions (avoiding any mention of fees, not posting messages that support or oppose any candidate for public office or promote political actions like boycotts.). Brief quotes or links to published works are permitted, provided they are not behind a paywall. Members should use diplomacy, be concise, include signature tags, and send personal replies to individuals (backchannel) rather than to the entire list.

APA/LACPA Listserv Rules Details

Rule 1

Do not use the forum for illegal purposes, including but not limited to defamation, violation of intellectual property laws, violation of antitrust or unfair competition laws, racism, antisemitism, other forms of discrimination, or violation of criminal laws.

a. Copyright - Referring to an article or news item with typical reference citations, providing a brief quote, or offering a link to legitimately published online content is permissible; list members should not post a full-text version of published material to the listserv. Not infrequently, a list member wants to tell others about an article or news item related to the issues discussed on the list. However, sending the entire article to the list, without the permission of the author or publisher, results in a prima facie case of copyright violation. While there can be defenses to a claim of copyright infringement where the purpose of copying is clearly not for commercial purposes (e.g., "fair use" or academic teaching exceptions), those defenses are complicated, have been construed differently in different jurisdictions, and are not necessarily applicable to listserv distribution.

b. Defamation and libel - In exchanges on the listserv and when referring to others, avoid personal attacks and characterizations that question a person's motives or qualifications. Sometimes, a robust debate about ideas spills over into attacks on the proponents or opponents of the ideas. List members need to be reminded that a false statement that harms someone's reputation can be actionable as libel. There is a substantial difference between disagreeing with how someone did their research or treated a patient and accusing the person of fraud or incompetence. Because negative statements that impugn someone's professional qualifications can cause substantial economic and emotional harm, this is an area for careful scrutiny. Keeping criticism on an objective basis that is factually verifiable and skipping personal commentary about character, competence, or motive minimizes legal risk.

c. Racism, antisemitism, and other discrimination - All participants on APA-hosted listservs are expected to maintain civility, demonstrate respect, and strive to uphold the psychological safety of all members. Posts must reflect APA's commitment to our core values of human dignity, equity, diversity, and inclusion, and should foster a welcoming environment for all. Hate speech or discriminatory content – including racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, transphobia, Islamophobia, misogyny, ableism, or prejudice based on age, religion, nationality, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or any other group circumstances —is prohibited. Derogatory language, harmful stereotypes, and statements that demean or target individuals or communities based on protected characteristics are not permitted. **Members are encouraged to engage in dialogue based on psychology and psychological science that values a diversity of perspectives and experiences.** Even during difficult or controversial topics, it is essential to uphold the association's principles of justice, human rights, fairness, and dignity, and ensure that all participants feel safe and respected.

d. Antitrust concerns - APA, by its nature, is subject to antitrust issues. Discussions about rates charged, efforts to exert collective pressure on payors, terms of contracts with insurance companies, internship salaries, etc., are all prohibited. The antitrust laws are broad and complex, but on a very basic level, they operate to prohibit and even, in some cases, criminalize certain anticompetitive agreements between competitors. A professional association like APA is, by definition, a group of competitors that has come together to pursue common interests. Where those common interests involve agreements on such terms of competition as rates charged, salaries paid, standards applicable to members of the profession, and other issues of the marketplace, the antitrust laws apply. Listservs provide a written record of statements that can create an antitrust risk even when there is no anti-competitive intent.

Rule 2

Do not intentionally interfere with or disrupt other forum members, network services, or network equipment. This includes the distribution of unsolicited advertisements or chain letters, propagation of computer worms and viruses, and use of the network to make unauthorized entry to any other machine accessible via the forum.

Rule 3

Do not use the forum for commercial purposes. "Commercial" as used for purposes of evaluating listserv messages means communications whose primary purpose is to advance the business or financial interests of any person or entity, or otherwise to promote a financial transaction for the benefit of the author directly or indirectly. Examples of prohibited communications include advertisements for products or services, notices regarding rental of office space, or direct solicitations of listserv members to purchase products or services.

a. Permitted Communications - Examples of messages that may be of financial benefit to listserv members but are not prohibited because they do not primarily benefit the author include:

- News of job listings or position openings
- Discussion of professionally related products or services where the listserv member is not in the business of selling them
- Announcements providing useful professional information with only incidental commercial benefit (e.g., an author who is a list member merely advising the list of publication of a professional book)

b. Tax Exemption Considerations - The ban on commercial use is based on legal requirements related to APA's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. This status requires that:

- APA activities focus on tax-exempt purposes
- APA assets be used for tax-exempt purposes
- APA not provide financial support to non-501(c)(3) organizations

Rule 4

Do not use this forum for any communication that could be construed in any way as support for or opposition to any candidate for a federal, state or local public office. The Federal law providing for the American Psychological Association's tax-exempt status absolutely forbids the use of APA resources or facilities, including this forum, in any way that would even appear to support or oppose such a political candidate.

a. Political statements affecting tax exemption – Listserv exchanges must avoid electioneering or endorsing a candidate for federal, state, or local political office.

Using the list to endorse political candidates can jeopardize APA's tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. To maintain this status, APA cannot be involved in or support electioneering or endorse candidates for political office. APA must ensure its activities focus on the scientific, educational, and charitable purposes for which it gained tax-exempt status.

b. Lobbying Elected Officials Advocacy on substantive issues is separate from electioneering for candidates. While electioneering is absolutely prohibited, advocacy on legislative issues is not part of this prohibition. However, for APA Divisions, "calls to action" asking listserv members to contact their elected officials to express a view on legislation are considered a statement of the Division under [APA Rule](#)

[100-1.4](#), and are subject to the mandatory review and disclaimer requirements therein. Such statements may not be included on the listserv unless and until they have received such review and, where appropriate, have included required disclaimer language.

LACPA Listserv Guidelines

In addition to following APA's 501(c) (3) rules, LACPA must follow specific rules to maintain its 501(c)(6) tax-exempt status as a membership organization. The following recommendations are designed to help you more fully benefit from participating in the listserv community while avoiding common pitfalls that trigger posting rejections.

1. Professional Conduct And Tone

It is expected that posts will avoid any form of personal attack, remembering to critique ideas rather than individuals. When offering feedback or disagreeing, maintain a respectful tone. Consider how slang, overly casual language, or excessive use of emojis will be perceived before using.

2. Avoid Self-Promotion

That means offering free talks, posting newsletters that link to advertising, and soliciting services are all prohibited.

3. Subject Line Clarity

It is important to use clear and concise subject headings so members can easily identify relevant topics.

4. Posting Referrals

It is a common practice on the listserv to seek clinicians who can provide professional services. You may also post referral opportunities on behalf of nonmembers. When doing so, please be mindful of the critical importance of preserving client confidentiality. Focus on the type of services you are seeking rather than providing a detailed client description. This is one of the most common reasons listserv posts are rejected, which further delays the process. If the client needs to use a specific type of insurance, include that in your message.

- a. Avoid mentioning specific ages. Instead, consider using ranges (e.g., "preschooler," "young adult," "a client in their 50s).
- b. Avoid other specific details (e.g., generally mention they recently experienced a traumatizing incident rather than saying what occurred). Do not disclose the specific ages of the children when seeking services. All of this can be revealed through direct communication rather than posting via the listserv.
- c. Focus on where clients will travel for services, unless seeking telehealth services, rather than stating their geographic location.

5. Responding To Referrals

When responding to a request for services, do not send your reply to the listserv, but rather to the person who made the post (known as backchanneling).

6. Responding/Contributing To Email Threads

When replying to a message from the digest or a long thread, members are encouraged to delete the long string of quoted messages to reduce volume and focus on directly quoting the material to which they are replying for context. Please do not change the subject heading when responding.

7. Office Space

You may post requests seeking office space. However, you may not advertise available space on the listserv (Consider placing a commercial space ad on the LACPA website).

8. Employment Opportunities (Special Rules for Pre-Licensed Members)

You may post for open employment positions, including on behalf of non-members, as the LACPA membership may benefit from learning about these opportunities. You may not post seeking employment, with the exception of pre-licensed members. If you are seeking supervision hours, practicum hours, or post-doc hours, you may post this request on this listserv once every three months. However, only LACPA student members may make these posts as a member benefit. You may not post on behalf of a non-member.

9. New Members: Please Introduce Yourself

This is your opportunity to let others become acquainted with who you are, your professional interests, office location, and other pertinent information. Please be mindful to distinguish between describing yourself professionally (allowed) and promoting your service (not allowed).

10. Signature Lines

When writing to the listserv, at a minimum, please include your name and degree and a direct email address (not a generic email address, e.g., "info@myemail.com"). Other information, e.g., office address, affiliation, is optional. However, please note that there is a "no commercial advertising" policy in place. You may list your specialties, which some posters include; however, do not include solicitations for client referrals or other information advertising your services. It may be helpful to have a more generic signature for posts. Google, Outlook, and other email platforms allow you to store more than one email signature.

11.Off-Topic Posts

While it isn't a hard and fast rule, discussions should generally stay relevant to the practice of psychology and topics relevant to mental health.

12.Sharing Listserv Emails

Sharing listserv emails with non-LACPA members is prohibited, including forwarding, printing, copying, or allowing visual access, with exceptions for permission from all authors.

13.Research Requests

APA prohibits requesting participation in research through postings. This is allowed on the LACPA listserv. However, individuals should be aware of the limitations and biases of this approach when recruiting subjects. An exception exists if individuals are specifically seeking input from LACPA members or members of other listserv divisions.

14.Using LACPA, LinkedIn or Facebook Pages

We also maintain pages on LinkedIn and Facebook. You can use these outlets to inform others about free or paid courses, announcements, employment seeking, practice specialties, and other topics that are not permitted on the LACPA listserv.

15.Professional Communications With LACPA Staff

Just as LACPA listserv members are expected to communicate with colleagues using a professional and respectful tone, the same applies to communications to the LACPA office. Concerns and criticisms about moderators should be directed to the current LACPA Technology Chair. Concerns about the Technology Chair should be directed to the LACPA President.

Reporting Listserv Violations

If you feel that a posting is inconsistent with APA or LACPA guidelines, you may contact the moderators by email at lacpalacpals@gmail.com. State your concerns and what rules you feel may have been violated. Your report will be investigated and handled discreetly. You will be informed once the situation is resolved, but you may not be provided with specific details.

LACPA Listserv Moderation Process

If your post is rejected, you will be contacted and given an explanation as to why this occurred. In most cases, you will be encouraged to re-post with minor changes. However, if a member continues to submit posts including the same prohibited content, a warning letter from the LACPA Technology Chair or Listserv Administrator will be sent. If additional

posts are submitted following the letter with the same violation, the member is subject to a listserv suspension of up to 4 months. This decision requires input from a minimum of two LACPA Chairs or Board Members. The individual will not be able to post but will continue to receive listserv messages during this time. In the case of more flagrant violations, all listserv privileges will be suspended for up to four months. If the same violation occurs again after that period ends, the suspension will be increased to one year.

Members may appeal suspensions by writing to lacpalacpals@gmail.com and indicating why they feel the suspension is unwarranted. This will be reviewed by the LACPA President, who, in consultation with Board Members and other relevant parties as needed, will make the final decision regarding the suspension.