

# Primum non nocere – First Do No Harm

By Janet E. Wall

In the medical field, First Do No Harm is a precept that is part of the basic ethical principles by which competent professionals operate. It recognizes that sometimes it is better to do nothing than employ an action that might cause harm to the patient. Often this idea is not transferred to other professions – like career development – particularly as it relates to the use of assessments.

Regardless of your title, career advisor, career navigator, career counselor, work workforce development professional, etc., you are likely to employ some career assessments from your tool kit to help individuals move forward in their career choice and development. There are so many assessments now available, both in paper-pencil and online formats, that it is easy to forget to take proper care to use quality assessments with your students, customers, and clients. Using a poor quality instrument, one without strong technical characteristics or using an instrument in which you are not trained, can cause harm to your clients despite your genuine intent to do otherwise.

Recently the National Career Development Association (NCDA) and the Association for Assessment in Counseling and Education (AACE) worked together to develop and agree on the competencies that are important for career development professionals to have when using assessment instruments. The competencies are designed to provide a description of the knowledge and skills that career counselors and practitioners must demonstrate in the areas of assessment and evaluation in order to be a competent user of assessments. These competencies are critical for career counselor practice and service to students, clients, and other customers.

The **Career Counselor Assessment and Evaluation Competencies** (<http://tinyurl.com/2b85cq2>) were recently endorsed by both organizations. They describe the behaviors of competent career counselors in each of the following eight areas. (Competency 1 includes an example of a few specific behaviors.)

## **Competency 1:** Choosing assessment strategies.

Competent career counselors ...

...can describe the nature and use of different types of formal and informal assessments, including questionnaires, checklists, interviews, inventories, tests, observations, surveys, and performance assessments, and they work with individuals skilled in clinical assessment.

...can specify the types of information most readily obtained from different assessment approaches.

...can identify the type of information needed to assist the client and select the assessment strategy accordingly.

...are familiar with resources for critically evaluating each type of assessment and can use the resources to choose appropriate assessment strategies.

**Competency 2:** Identifying, accessing, and evaluating the most commonly used assessment instruments.

**Competency 3:** Using the techniques of administration and methods of scoring assessment instruments.

**Competency 4:** Interpreting and reporting assessment results.

**Competency 5:** Using assessment results in decision-making.

**Competency 6:** Producing, interpreting, and presenting statistical information about assessment results.

**Competency 7:** Engaging in professionally responsible assessment and evaluation practices.

**Competency 8:** Using assessment results and other data to evaluate career programs and interventions.

These competencies can be employed by career professionals as a basis for the development and evaluation of workshops, in-service, and other continuing education opportunities. They can act as a springboard for reflection and self-evaluation of our own capabilities leading to participation in professional development opportunities to upgrade our skills. Counselor educators can use the competencies and associated behaviors

as a guide in the development and evaluation of career counselor preparation programs and assessment courses. Certainly Career Development Facilitator Instructors can use the competencies as part of the assessment module of the training program to emphasize the importance of competent assessment practices.

These competencies compliment and supplement the Career Counseling Competencies ([http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/asset\\_manager/get\\_file/3397/counselingcompetencies.pdf](http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/3397/counselingcompetencies.pdf) ) approved by NCDA in 1997 and the Ethical Standards for Global Career Development Facilitators (<http://www.cce-global.org/extras/cce-global/pdfs/gcdfcodeofethics.pdf>). Other standards and guidelines that are pertinent to career development and assessment include:

The Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education (<http://www.apa.org/science/programs/testing/fair-testing.pdf>) prepared by the Joint Committee on Testing Practices.

Responsibilities of Users of Standardized Tests prepared by the Association for Assessment in Counseling and Education. (<http://www.theaaceonline.com/rust.pdf>)

Standards for the Qualification of Tests Users prepared by the American Counseling Association (<http://www.theaaceonline.com/standards.pdf>).

Rights and Responsibilities of Test Takers: Guidelines and Expectations (<http://www.apa.org/science/programs/testing/rights.aspx>) prepared by the Joint Committee on Testing Practices.

These various documents form the foundation for quality assessment practice.

If you are looking for a resource that is a one-stop shop for pertinent documents and information on assessment, go to Assessment Resources ([www.assessmentresources.pbworks.com](http://www.assessmentresources.pbworks.com)). There you will find many useful documents in the following areas:

- Assessment Related Associations**
- Assessment Related Organizations**
- Ethics, Position, and Policy Statements**
- General Assessment Resources**
- Evaluation Resources**
- Other Organizations and Committees**
- Online Journals, Reports, and Newsletters**
- Major Assessment Companies**
- Articles on Assessment and Career Development**
- Book Resources**
- Training Opportunities**
- Parent Resources**
- Personnel and Workforce Assessment**

After reviewing the site, if you have assessment information that should be considered for inclusion as part of this compilation, please make the suggestions and recommendations to the author.

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