**Tip sheet: Psychological Report Writing**

**What is a psychological report?**

* It is a written document produced at the end of a psychological assessment.
* It integrates the data from the case history, behavioural observations, tests scores and any other assessment finding in order to answer the specific referral question.
* Types of reports include: Reports to referral sources, Reports outlining recommended treatment or case conceptualisation and reports to be used in legal proceedings

**Guidelines for writing reports:**

* Write the report with an awareness of who its readers are likely to be, their level of expertise and how they will use the report
* Understand the referral question i.e. why are you being asked to write this report
* Plan your assessment process: To answer the referral question, what data will you collect and how?
* Style and language: clear, objective and well structured
* Brenner (2003) identified the following issues for the relevance of psychological assessments: (a) eliminate jargon, (b) focus on referral question, (c) individualize assessment reports, (d) emphasise client strengths, and (e) write concrete recommendations.

**General Report Structure:**

**1. Identifying Information:** Should include a the following information

Name:

Date of Birth:

Date of Assessment:

Name of person conducting assessment:

Reason for Referral:

Referral Source:

Presenting problem:

**2. Background Information:**

What is included will depend on its relevance to the purpose of the report. Could include:

History of the problem

Family background

Personal History

Occupational History

Legal History

Medical History

**3. Behavioural observations:**

These are observations can be related to the clients appearance, general behaviour, degree of cooperativeness during the assessment and interaction with the assessor.

**4. Assessment Procedure:** Outline of the assessment methods used, including the full name of any tests used.

**5. Test Results:** Reporting on the results of any tests used. The level of detail given will depend on the report purpose and audience.

**6. Main body of the report:** impressions and interpretations

All hypotheses and inferences must be based on an integration of the assessment data i.e. test results, history, behavioural observations and any other available data.

**7. Summary of Key Conclusions**

**8. Recommendations:**

Practical steps to address the referral question – helpful if these are specific and concrete

**Ethical considerations when writing a report (Michaels, 2006)**

1.What impact does the release of the report or interpretive information have on the client? This includes the release to others as well as to the client directly. Consider labeling/release of test results.

2. Does knowledge that a client will read a report change the content included?

3. How do you take confidentiality into account when deciding to incorporate specific conclusions or use specific wording in reports?

4. Who else will read the report in the future?

**References:**

Brenner, E. (2003). Consumer-Focused Psychological Assessment. **Professional Psychology: Research and Practice**, 34(3),240–247.

Michaels, M. H. (2006). Ethical considerations in writing psychological assessment reports. **Journal Of Clinical Psychology**, 62, 47-58.

Lukas, S. (1993). Where to Start and What to Ask: An Assessment Handbook.

New York: Norton and Company