

Psychiatry Grand Rounds

WCM Department of Psychiatry

Psychology CE Announcement



**Weill Cornell
Medicine**
Psychiatry

**WHEN MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT AND THE LAW COLLIDE:
PRACTICING ETHICALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY**

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PSYCHIATRY –
WEILL CORNELL MEDICAL CENTER

Zoom:

<https://weillcornell.zoom.us/j/92812036154>

Meeting ID: 928 1203 6154

Password: 12345



This CE Credit fulfills an Ethics Requirement



October 15, 2025



11 AM - 12 PM



Live Online

1 CE credit available to WCM Department of Psychiatry full time and voluntary faculty Psychologists, Social Workers and LMHCs, who sign in with their full name, attend the majority of the lecture and complete a survey which will be emailed following the completion of the lecture. Note the survey must be completed within 30 days of the lecture. Please contact wcmpsychiatryce@med.cornell.edu for additional CE information

ABSTRACT

This presentation will provide an overview of the specialized field of forensic psychology, which involves applying the science and practices of psychology and psychiatry to legal questions and issues. Psychological and psychiatric testimony can offer a clinical and psychological perspective on a civil litigant or criminal defendant and their unique circumstances that led them into the courtroom, helping the judge and jury in their decision-making. The goal of this presentation is to equip mental health professionals with the skills and confidence to distinguish between the core differences of a clinical and forensic evaluation, and to understand the roles of fact witnesses versus expert witnesses. Dr. Hughes will discuss the intersection of law and psychology, which is often not seamless. Even if you are not a forensic practitioner, you will likely encounter patients who are involved in legal matters. This presentation will cover how to handle such situations in an ethical and professional manner. Attendees will learn about the differences between a fact witness (treating clinician) and an expert witness, how to respond when clients disclose legal involvement, how to release records, what constitutes professional and conscientious note-taking, and how to maintain overall ethical practice.

SPEAKER

Dawn M. Hughes, Ph.D., ABPP, is a clinical psychologist and board-certified forensic psychologist who specializes in assessing and treating interpersonal violence and traumatic stress. Dr. Hughes runs an independent practice in clinical and forensic psychology in New York City and serves as a Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical Center – New York Presbyterian Hospital. There, she participates in the psychology teaching faculty, provides clinical supervision, and conducts training sessions for interns. With 30 years of experience in traumatic stress and interpersonal violence—including intimate partner violence, rape, sexual assault, adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and other non-interpersonal traumatic events—she brings extensive expertise. She holds memberships and distinctions in numerous professional organizations and is a past-president of the Trauma Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association. Her forensic work includes comprehensive psychological evaluations, attorney consultations, and expert witness testimony in forensic psychology, interpersonal violence, and traumatic stress. Dr. Hughes has served as an expert witness in many high-profile cases and has been recognized as an expert forensic psychologist in State and Federal Courts across the country, handling civil and criminal cases involving psychological impairments, insanity, extreme emotional disturbance, intimate partner violence, rape and sexual assault, sex trafficking, childhood sexual abuse, clergy abuse, Boy Scout abuse, cult abuse, educator abuse, workplace sexual harassment, and wrongful convictions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe and identify the key features of a psychological or psychiatric evaluation used for legal purposes.
2. Identify the core differences between a clinical and forensic psychological or psychiatric evaluation.
3. Enhance awareness and skills to operate within ethical boundaries when a patient is involved in a legal matter.

This event fulfills 1 CE credit hour towards the New York State Education Department requirement of 3 CE hours in Professional Ethics for Psychologists, Social Workers and LMHCs.

REFERENCES

1. Melton, G. B., Petrila, J., Poythress, N. G., Slobogin, C., Otto, R. K., Mossman, D., & Condie, L. O. (2017d). *Psychological Evaluations for the Courts, Fourth edition: A Handbook for Mental Health Professionals and Lawyers*. Guilford Publications.
2. DeMatteo, D., & Scherr, K. C. (2023). *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Law*. Oxford University Press.
3. Greenberg, S. A., & Shuman, D. W. (1997b). Irreconcilable conflict between therapeutic and forensic roles. *Professional Psychology Research and Practice*, 28(1), 50–57. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0735-7028.28.1.50>
4. Rocchio, L. M. (2020b). Ethical and professional considerations in the forensic assessment of complex trauma and dissociation. *Psychological Injury and Law*, 13(2), 124–134. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12207-020-09384-9>
5. Neal, T. M., Martire, K. A., Johan, J. L., Mathers, E. M., & Otto, R. K. (2022b). The law meets psychological expertise: Eight Best practices to improve Forensic Psychological Assessment. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 18(1), 169–192. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-050420-010148>

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This event is hosted by the WCM Academy of Behavioral Health and Continuing Education. Information regarding CE program please visit the WCM CE website: <https://psychiatry.weill.cornell.edu/education-training/continuing-education>. For additional questions contact wcmpsychiatryce@med.cornell.edu.