Preparing for ABPP Board Certification: Choosing a Specialty Board & Application Process

Presented by

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Preparing for ABPP Board Certification: Choosing a Specialty Board and Application

Who and What is ABPP?

What is ABPP?

What we will cover

• Who/what is ABPP?
• Common misconceptions
• Specialization – what and why
• Board Certification Process
• Competency Model
• Selected References

Who and What is ABPP?

- A non-profit, unitary governing body
- Coordinates all affiliated psychology specialty examining boards
- Certifies psychologists competent to deliver high quality services in specialty areas of psychology
- Recognizes new specialties and subspecialties
- Requires self-study and comprehensive periodic site review of its member boards
- Conducts exams and certifies specialists in accordance with established professional standards, policies, and procedures
- Lists and verifies board certified specialists in its public directory
ABPP Mission Statement

- The mission of ABPP is to increase consumer protection through the examination and certification of psychologists who demonstrate competence in approved specialty areas in professional psychology

ABPP’s “CRED”

- All ABPP specialties complete a comprehensive application process and agree to organizational policies and standards
- ABPP boards develop and implement face-to-face examinations that assess the competencies required in the specialties it certifies
- All ABPP Boards undergo continuing review of examination board and related academy procedures and activities
- ABPP has a full-time, professional and office support staff
- ABPP is governed by a Board of Trustees comprised of a certified specialist Trustee (Board Member) from each of its member Specialty Boards as well as public member
- The ABPP governing board has formal procedures for selection and tenure of Trustees

A Little ABPP History

- Established in 1947
- Over its history, the number of affiliated boards has grown from 3 to 15 affiliated specialty boards
- 1 subspecialty – Pediatric Neuropsychology
- Developed the policies and procedures that maintain it’s reputation as a “Gold Standard” for certification of specialty competency

Specialty Certification in Psychology

The American Board of Examiners in Professional Psychology was established in 1947 with the support of the American Psychological Association

Three “fields of certification” were identified:

- Clinical Psychology
- Personnel–Industrial Psychology—now Organization and Business
- Personnel–Educational Psychology—now School
15 Recognized Specialties in ABPP

- Behavioral and Cognitive
- Clinical Child and Adolescent
- Clinical
- Clinical Health
- Clinical Neuropsychology
- Counseling
- Couples and Family

• CRSPPP also recognizes Sleep Psychology; Group is in process

Which Board Do I Get Certified In?

- What is your primary self-identification?
- How do you want others to see you?
- What am I?

Senior Psychologist Option

- 15 years or more post-doctoral level license experience (from date of license)
- Complete Professional Statement and Practice Sample that discuss contribution to clinical psychology (distinctive clinical practice, publications, teaching, training, program development, administration, research and other contributions to the field)
- Submit additional written materials that demonstrate distinctive practice patterns
- Video Work samples are NOT required if you submit the portfolio described above (Clinical)
- Seniors whose practice is only assessment and/or interventions MUST submit video tapes
- Not available in Clinical Neuropsychology or Forensic
Early Entry Option

- Pre-licensure: Students, Interns, Residents
- Complete an Application and submit the $25 fee (This is a $100 discount off the standard application fee-no further application fee will be due).
- No need to identify a particular specialty now, although you may.
- Access mentoring early on to facilitate your progress
- Submit your credentials to **ASPPB Credentials Bank** (FREE!) (e.g., official transcript, internship completion certificate, etc) as you complete each phase of your training. (ABPP does not “bank” credentials)

Early Entry Option

**Why Get Started with ABPP Now?**

- Career Pathway to licensure & ABPP
- Practical logistics of collecting records
- “Focus” or planning ahead
- You may be strongly encouraged or even required to!
- Internship advantage? “I’m in the ABPP pipeline...”
- Postdocs requiring it as part of the postdoc process

Early Entry Option

**Credentials Banking Options**

- Don’t *consider* banking your credentials – *DO IT*!
- Association of State & Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB)
- National Register of Health Service Psychologists (NR)
- How do I choose? Easy – ASPPB banking is now part of the ABPP Early Entry Option

ABPP Board Certification is Rapidly Growing

- The number of applications has increased significantly in recent years
- This is attributable, in large part, to the Early Entry Option
- Upwards of 3800 now
- Roughly 2500 are candidates – this is beyond applicant status
Common Misconceptions

Myth #1 Largely Academic & Elitist
- Required to be licensed
- Basis of ABPP is clinical work
- Many are in academic settings, many are not
- Competent psychologists often do set high expectations for themselves & profession; is that being elitist?
- Yet the expectation is that most can pass

Myth #2 Licensing does it all
- License is generic – are you really trained and competent in all areas?
- If you state you have a specialty does it not follow that you would aspire to demonstrate that?
- Medical staff privileges often mandate such
- FH as an example - went from denying progress notes to requiring ABPP

Myth #3 I don’t need ABPP
- Although not intended as a marketing vehicle it seems to serve as one for some
- Patients may expect it without knowing to ask
- Medical staff privileges may mandate such
- Board certification uplifts the entire profession through demonstrating professional attention to competency
### Myth #4
Taking the ABPP exam may suggest I am not competent without ABPP

- Most, if not all, experience anxiety and some trepidation
- Taking/passing the exam does not *make you competent; it demonstrates it*
- There is always a set measuring bar; aiming to get “over” that is not unlike passing the EPPP - were you more or less competent the day after you passed *that?*

### Myth #5
ABPP is only for seasoned experts

- There was a time years ago when some espoused this – “only the top 2%”
- ABPP roots, and current status, is *not* that
- Most should be able to pass +/- 3 years out
- As in medicine, the expectation is that one should complete education, training, internship and any postdoc experience and become board certified

### Myth #6
I mostly train or administrate; I don’t see many patients anymore

- Thus, no need to demonstrate competency?
- Would you, were you a student, expect different of you? *Role modeling*
- CoA and others are increasingly talking about the importance of board certification in training programs; it may become an expectation, if nor requirement in future

### Myth #7
This is not a growth trend

- Applications have tripled in about 6 years
- Nearly 50% of the applications are Early Entry
- Early Entry and Early Career tend to see the importance
- The ACA is expected to “push” the mandate
Myth #8
ABPP is “anti-science”
• ABPP relies on the scientific foundation of psychology and expects candidates to be able to demonstrate that their practices are scientifically and evidence based.

Myth #9
You can get “grandfathered in”
• Simply False

Specialization – What and Why

If your primary care doc said “You need to see a Cardiologist,” would you want to see a Board Certified Cardiologist or a Non-Board Certified Cardiologist?
Answer:
⭐ Board Certified Cardiologist
   Non-Board Certified Cardiologist
If your primary care doc said “You need to see a Psychologist,” would you want to see a Board Certified Psychologist or a Non-Board Certified Psychologist?

Answer:

- Board Certified Psychologist
- Non-Board Certified Psychologist

The General Public

- Knows that Board Certified is better than Non-Board Certified
- Does not usually know the difference between psychologists and physicians

Hallmarks of a Profession

- Practitioners provide services perceived by the public as valuable and necessary
- Services are based on a body of knowledge
- The methods, techniques, and procedures used by practitioners derive from the knowledge base

Hallmarks of a Profession

- Society recognizes the profession through legislative action and enactment of licensing or certification statutes
- The profession voluntarily develops self-regulatory mechanisms (accreditation of training programs, ethical codes, board certification of specialists)
What is Specialization?

- A distinctive mark or quality
- Something in which one specializes
- “Inevitable and necessary product of developmental processes in a discipline and profession...” (Roberts, 2006)

What is a Specialist?

- A person who specializes in a particular field of study or who is devoted to a particular occupation or branch of study or research
- A person whose practice is limited to a particular branch of “medicine,” especially one who is certified by a board of “physicians”

Professional Certification

- To certify something as genuine means a standard has been met and evidence exists to support this conclusion
- “Board certified” connotes practitioners with documented competence in defined areas of professional practice
- Certification presumes that basic knowledge and skills have already been recognized via statutory licensing
- Board certification of specialty competencies should not be confused with involuntary “certification” statutes (a weaker version of “licensing” laws)

Examples of Board Certification in Related Professions

- The National Board for Certified Counselors offers certification in mental health counseling, school counseling, and addictions counseling
- In 1998, Social Work board certification was established through the Office of Quality Assurance of NASW with certs in case management; alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs; school social work; and advanced clinical practice
Examples of Board Certification in Related Professions

- Medicine has a history of board certification dating from 1933 and the American Board of Medical Specialties has 24 affiliated specialty examining boards

- ABMS reported that 85% of licensed physicians were certified in one or more medical specialties (compared to less than 5% of psychologists in 2013)

Specialty Certification in Psychology

- A specialty is a defined area in the practice of psychology that connotes specialty competency acquired through an organized sequence of formal education, training, and experience

- The practice activities in any specialty seldom are exclusive to the specialty and most practice activities are shared with the general practice of professional psychology

The Credentialing Continuum

Specialty Certification in Psychology

- The pattern of practice activities, including limiting the scope of practice, and focusing upon more complex or unique problems or technologies is more relevant in defining a specialty together with advanced education, training, and experience
Why is Certification Necessary and Essential in Psychology?

- The exponential growth of psychological knowledge leaves no alternative but specialization
- Our work environments impel us to specialize
- Our professional context reinforces the need for specialization

Emerging System in Psychology for Recognizing Specialties

- Council of Specialties (CoS)
- Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology (CCOPP)
- Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP) (1990s)
- Recent coordination with the Commission on Accreditation (CoA) – Early to mid 2000s
- APA Taxonomy Workgroup (c. 2010)
- Relative consensus within psychology regarding key specialties

Why is Certification Necessary and Essential in Psychology?

- The generic nature of psychology licensing in North America presumes additional professional self-regulation of specialty practice
- Most important, protecting the public from charlatans and the ill-prepared requires personal and professional self-regulation

Value of ABPP

- Board Certification by ABPP provides peer and public recognition of demonstrated competence in an approved specialty area in professional psychology
- In addition, ABPP board certification provides the professional with increased opportunities for career growth, including employability, mobility, and financial compensation
Benefits of Board Certification

What’s in it for you as a psychologist?
- Benefits for practitioners
- Benefits for institutions
- Benefits for the profession
- Benefits for the public

Benefits of Board Certification

Practitioners:
- Increase pay potential – e.g., VA, DOD
- Enhance job satisfaction
- Distinguish you from other psychologists in the job market
- Improve job security and employability
- Renew emphasis on life-long learning and professional development
- Affirm your professional identity

Benefits of Board Certification

Institutions:
- Credibility factor re: staff/faculty
- Statement of focus on competence and quality (e.g., Mayo Clinic)
- Self-assurance re: staff/faculty
- Streamline credentialing processing
- Assurance for the public

Benefits of Board Certification

Practitioner:
- Increase interaction with outstanding and distinguished psychologists
- Experience greater credibility in eye of colleagues and referral sources; serve as a role model to students and others
- Gain more prestige in the profession
- Strengthen potential for meaningful contributions to the profession
- Streamline credentialing process at state licensing boards, insurance companies, professional practice networks, and medical staff
- Facilitate inter-jurisdictional license and practice mobility
Benefits of Board Certification

**Profession:**
- Set standards for competence
- Guide uniform training models for competence
- Increase breadth and depth of knowledge base, skills, and attitudes of practitioners
- Ensure intra-professional regulation
- Allow for public recognition of a brand name

**Public:**
- Protect consumers
- Assure quality
- Reduce confusion
- Increase likelihood of being viewed by consumers, professionals, employers, insurers, credentialing organizations, legal systems, and licensing boards as highly competent

10 Reasons to Specialize in the Current Healthcare Climate

1. Consumers want it and/or expect it
2. Healthcare systems expect it and/or require it
3. Policy calls for it and this is anticipated to increase
4. Quality improvement programs demand it
5. Pay is linked to quality
6. The workforce needs us
7. Integrated health care teams respect us
8. Health care homes have a place for us
9. Parity is in our favor
10. Access for all in need for all of services
11. Your boss (Dr. "Smith") told you to

ABPP Board Certification Process
The Typical ABPP Process

- Credential Review
  - Generic Review – same requirements all boards
  - Specialty Specific Review – per Specialty Board
- Written Examination
  - ABCN, ABFP, ABPPSP (in development)
- Practice Samples
  - Audio/Video; Written cases; Self-Statement; Pubs
- Oral Examination
  - 2 models – one on one; group

Competency Focused Throughout the Process

- Competency Focus throughout...
  - Credential Review, Written Exam, Practice Sample, Oral Examination

- Foundational Competencies

- Functional Competencies

Competency Model
Foundational and Functional Competencies

**Foundational Competency Domains**

- Assessment/Diagnosis/Consultation
- Intervention
- Consultation
- Research/Evaluation
- Supervision/Teaching
- Management/Administration

**Functional Competency Domains**

**Stages of Professional Development**

- Within each professional stage, the ways in which specialty education becomes relevant can be visualized through the parameters of practice, differentiate specialization, namely:
  - Teams addressed
  - Procedures of theoretical orientation
  - Settings

**Why Should We Measure Competence?**

- Competence as the outcome of education and training is valued and increasingly addressed by healthcare professions
- Competence in healthcare providers is increasingly demanded by consumers, expected and certified by regulators, and lauded by policy makers
- The assessment of competence fosters learning, evaluates progress, assists in determining curriculum and training program effectiveness, advances the field, and protects the public

**Competency-Based Approach**

- Definition - “Capability and demonstrated ability to comprehend and perform certain tasks appropriately and effectively, consistent with the expectations of an individual qualified by education, training, skills and credentialing in a specialty area, in a manner that serves the public well” (Kaslow & Ingram, 2009)

- Ethical practice dictates that psychologists practice within the limits of their competence (American Psychological Association, 2002)

**Competence in Psychology**

- "That test was hard. Did you answer the first two questions?"
- "What about "superboy"?
- "That was the simplest one of all.
- "Superboy" is an advanced "American"
- Psychological conditions will never come as easy to me as they do to you, anyway!
- I also wasn't sure about "psychopath"
- "It's the way you'd rate your IQ through this house?"
- "You're incredible, what about "Thor?"
- "That was the "God of Thunder" and a cape.
- You've seen the movie, have you?"

**15**
Overview of Organizational Efforts

- APPIC/APA 2002 Competence
- APA spearheaded inter-organizational efforts including the Competency Benchmarks Workgroup
- NCSPP Developmental Achievement Levels (DALs)
- International efforts toward defining psychology competency - International Project on Competence in Psychology (IPCP); 2013 - present

APA Task Force

- APA Task Force on the Assessment of Competence in Professional Psychology
  - Final Report, 2006
  - Kaslow et al., 2007; Hatcher et al., 2013
- These materials are integrated into the ABPP Specialty Examination Competency Model
- The components of the ABPP Specialty Examination Competency Model include a Specialty Definition and Competencies
- Dr. Nadine Kaslow was Chair of that Task Force

Competency-Based Approach

- The competencies are categorized into foundational and functional competencies that are applicable to ALL specialties and specialty practice
- **Foundational competencies** are inter-woven with and integrated into varying degrees into functional competencies
- **Functional competencies** are those competencies that are daily practice activities provided at the specialty level of practice
Competency-Based Approach

- The foundational and functional competencies constructs are applicable to all specialties and specialty practice
- They run throughout the ABPP board certification process
- They are widely accepted in the profession

Previous Competencies

1. Science Base and Application –

   *Provide evidence for ways you use or contribute to the current science base by either: (a) evidence base that informs your practice, or (b) own clinical-research*

2. Assessment
3. Intervention
4. Consultation
5. Supervision/Teaching/Management
6. Interdisciplinary Interactions
7. Individual and Cultural Diversity
8. Ethical and Legal Foundations
9. Professional Identification

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<th>FOUNDATIONAL/ FUNCTIONAL</th>
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<th>CURRENT COMPETENCIES</th>
<th>SAME/DIFFERENT/SIMILAR BUT NOT IDENTICAL</th>
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**Current Competencies**

**Foundational:**
- Relationships
- Individual and Cultural Diversity
- Ethics and Legal Standards/Policy
- Professionalism
- Reflective Practice/Self-Assessment/Self-Care
- Scientific Knowledge and Methods
- Interdisciplinary Systems
- Evidence-based Practice

**Foundational Competencies**

**Relationships**
- Ability to relate effectively and meaningfully with individuals, groups, and/or communities

**Interdisciplinary Systems**
- Effectiveness in interdisciplinary systems (interdisciplinary systems)

**Foundational Competencies**

**Individual and Cultural Diversity**
- Awareness and sensitivity in working professionally with diverse individuals, groups, and communities who represent various cultural and personal background and characteristics

**Foundational Competencies**

**Ethics and Legal Standards/Policy**
- The awareness and application of appropriate ethical and legal requirements of practice
Foundational Competencies

**Professionalism**
- Professional Identity is a component of what is now termed professionalism
- Practice conducted within the boundaries of competence
- Involvement in the profession and in the specialty in particular
- Commitment to lifelong learning and continuing development as a specialist
- Advocacy for the profession

**Reflective Practice/Self-Assessment/Self-Care**
- Reflective during and after professional activity
- Accurately self-assesses competence
- Integrates self-assessment into practice
- Self-monitors issues re: self-care and acts accordingly
- Independently seeks supervision

Foundational Competencies

**Science Knowledge and Methods**

**Evidence-based Practice**
- Producing or consuming scientific theory and knowledge relevant to areas of professional practice
- The empirical base or practice

Current Competencies

**Functional:**
- Assessment
- Intervention
- Consultation
- Research and/or Evaluation*
- Supervision*
- Teaching*
- Management/Administration*
- Advocacy*
Functional Competencies

Assessment
- Defining, diagnosing, and conceptualizing problems and issues associated with individuals, groups, and/or organizations

Functional Competencies

Intervention
- Developing, implementing, and evaluating interventions designed to produce positive change

Functional Competencies

Consultation
- Providing expert guidance or professional assistance to a consultee’s needs or goals

Functional Competencies

Research
Supervision
Management
Teaching
Advocacy
- These competencies may be essential to the specialist’s practice depending on the nature of the psychologist’s practice
Maintenance of Competence

• Professional knowledge half-life issues
  (Neimeyer, Taylor, Rozensky & Cox, 2014)
• Once every 10 years; eligible in 8th year
• Consistent with similar efforts such as
  jurisdictional CE requirements and
  ASPPB MOCAL (maintenance of
  competence and licensure)

Where Do You Go From Here?

- Download the Examination Manual from the website for your specialty (www.abpp.org)
- Get a mentor – We can facilitate this process
- Talk to ABPPs

ABPP Resources

- American Board of Professional Psychology
  www.abpp.org
- Nezu and Nezu Oxford book series

The Expected...not the Exceptional

It is not the exceptional specialist who should be board certified, but the specialist who is not board certified who should be the exception

Russ Bent, PhD, ABPP
Closing

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Selected References
BOARD CERTIFICATION IN PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY: PROMOTING COMPETENCY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

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Board certification in psychology provides an opportunity for increased assessment and demonstration of competence in the profession. In addition to serving as a means of consumer protection, it can serve the professional psychologist by providing the opportunity for increased income, professional satisfaction, facilitated mobility, and professional development. Jurisdictional and organizational recognition of the importance of board certification is increasing. This article was the model and experience of the American Board of Professional Psychology, with particular attention to the American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology and the American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology, to illustrate these benefits. Recent developments regarding board certification are described, as well as how to become involved in the process.

Keywords: Board certification; Specialization; Neuropsychology.

In the present study, we examined the factors that contribute to ongoing professional competence. Our results suggest that ongoing professional competence is significantly related to the following variables: number of years in practice, level of education, and the number of continuing education credits earned. These findings highlight the importance of ongoing professional development in maintaining competence.

On Hope and Possibility: Does Continuing Professional Development Contribute to Ongoing Professional Competence?

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The Diminishing Durability of Knowledge in Professional Psychology: A Delphi Poll of Specialties and Proficiencies

Greg J. Neimeyer, Jennifer M. Taylor, and Ronald H. Resnekov
University of Florida

How will the accelerating pace of knowledge affect the durability of knowledge in the various specialties and professions in the field of professional psychology? A Delphi Poll was conducted to examine the current and future "half-life" of professional knowledge. Results indicate that the half-life of knowledge is expected to decrease within the next 10 years, with some specialties and professions expected to see a more rapid decline. These findings have implications for the field of professional psychology, as they suggest the need for ongoing professional development and education.

Keywords: half-life, specialties, continuing education, professional development, competence.
The Diminishing Durability of Knowledge in Professional Psychology: A Second Look at Specializations

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Ronald H. Reznovsky
University of Florida

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The need for increased information about the psychology workforce is related to the history of the organizational practice of psychology and how that data must be used to plan for the supply of psychologists required to meet the service demands of the changing health care system. Several key points in psychology are offered, along with steps that must be taken by the profession to prepare for increased institutionally based health care services in the future.

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