



The American Board of
Clinical Neuropsychology



american board
of professional psychology

Myths about ABPP/ABCN Board Certification and reasons why **you** should become board certified in clinical neuropsychology

1. **ABCN is a “clique” neuropsychology group ... FALSE.**

One of the most widely perpetuated myths is that you have to be part of an in-crowd to become ABPP/ABCN certified. Not true – over 1,000 neuropsychologists from diverse backgrounds are now board certified. About half are women and half men. Built-in redundancies prevent bias of any kind from influencing the certification process. The written and practice sample stages are blinded entirely, and the oral examination is structured to ensure that objective assessment of competencies determines outcome, not one’s personal or professional relationships. Many complete the process within two to three years of completing their postdoctoral fellowships.

2. **ABCN is not for pediatric neuropsychologists ... FALSE.**

None of the ABPP/ABCN examination procedures are biased against either child or adult neuropsychology. It is absolutely fine if your neuropsychology credentials focus on pediatric work, your practice samples are comprised of pediatric cases, and you choose a pediatric case during the fact-finding portion of your oral examination. Many of the profession’s best known and respected pediatric neuropsychologists hold the ABCN certificate. In fact, ABCN led the charge to develop a process for creating subspecialty designations within ABPP, which was successful. Since 2014, ABCN board certified neuropsychologists have been able to pursue subspecialty certification within pediatric clinical neuropsychology.

3. **The ABCN written test is all “adult” stuff you don't need to know ... FALSE.**

The written exam content is described in the ABCN Candidate’s Manual. Competent neuropsychologists need to possess broad-based knowledge of brain-behavior relationships, as well as basic neuropsychological principles that are fundamental to practice across the lifespan. The exam spans the age range, from child to geriatric.

4. **The credentials review is too stringent ... FALSE.**

The criteria for credentials are very clearly stated on the ABCN website, and correspond to what is now standard training in our field. If your training is nontraditional, yep, there might be some questions asked – but be aware there are folks with ABCN certificates who trained in other countries, in non-clinical programs, and in a variety of ways – if, like theirs, your training is solid enough to stand up to scrutiny, you don't need to be concerned about the credential review.

5. **The ABCN written test is way too hard ... FALSE.** Our statistics for the 5-year time period from 2011 to 2015 are 65-79% for the Written Exam and 73-85% for the Oral Exam.



6. Getting tripped up on one step will be held against you ... FALSE.

You are allowed three attempts at both the written and oral exams within the 7-year window. After you pass the initial credential review, there is no limit to the number of times you can submit practice samples within your 7-year window. Your oral examiners do not know if you failed a step along the way – this information is kept confidential. And, once you pass a step, you pass the step, regardless of how many times you have attempted it. Kudos to you!

7. Not passing a step in the ABCN process means you are incompetent to practice neuropsychology or be board certified ... FALSE.

This myth may have roots in the insecurity of individual applicants but is patently untrue. Some get too anxious. Some just don't test well. Most people willing to commit to taking the exam end up demonstrating those essential competencies. And guess what? Whether they work with kids or adults, the competencies that are most important are essentially the same. You become a better neuropsychologist.

8. The only reason to do ABCN is so you can impress attorneys and get on lots of IME lists ... FALSE.


Well, that could be one reason. Board certification is essential to protect the public, particularly the most vulnerable populations (children and the elderly). Board certification is a statement of your commitment to your profession and willingness to maintain your competence as a practitioner. Rigorous examination under peer review is critical to the profession and is a standard by which any medical professional is judged. Earning the ABCN certificate is a serious personal accomplishment with tremendous intrinsic value – well beyond any potential tangible gain.

9. You need to be in the field for a long time OR Board certification is only for new grads ... FALSE.

There is no practice length requirement for ABPP/ABCN. New grads may have a fresher academic knowledge but may not have a natural flow in their clinical interviews and case conceptualizations. Mature clinicians may have sophisticated clinical acumen, but may need to refresh their knowledge in areas with which they are less familiar.

10. There is no reason for neuropsychologists to bother "getting boarded" ... FALSE.

In fact, there are **AT LEAST** 15 great reasons to pursue board certification:

<p>Benefits to the Practitioner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better pay and job satisfaction• Job security• Streamlined credentialing process at state licensing boards, insurance companies, professional practice networks, and medical staff• Interstate license and practice mobility• Prestige within the profession• Credibility in the eyes of colleagues and referral sources• Renewed emphasis on learning• Professional affirmation	<p>Benefits to the Profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set standards for competence• Uniform training models for competence• Increased breadth & depth of knowledge base of practitioners• Intra-professional regulation <p>Benefits to the Public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced confusion• Quality assurance <p>Thanks to Dr. Wills, Armstrong, Beebe, Hilsabeck, & Kirkwood</p> 
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