

police & public safety psychology } defined:

The American Board of Police & Public Safety Psychology (ABPPSP) affiliated in 2011 as a member board of the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP). ABPPSP was established by the three major police and public safety membership organizations in the U.S.—the American Psychological Association Division 18 Police & Public Safety Section, the Society for Police and Criminal Psychology, and the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Police Psychological Services Section—and represents the specialty for purposes of defining and evaluating qualifications and competencies leading to certification as a specialist.

Police & Public Safety Psychology is concerned with assisting law enforcement and other public safety personnel and agencies (i.e., corrections, military, national security) in carrying out their missions and societal functions with optimal effectiveness, safety, health, and conformity to laws and ethics. It consists of the application of the science and profession of psychology in four primary domains of practice: assessment, clinical intervention, operational support, and organizational consulting. Police & Public Safety Psychology requires, at a minimum, distinctive knowledge of the following: essential functions of police and public safety personnel, working conditions unique to their respective positions, common and novel stressors inherent in public safety work, normal and abnormal adaptation to occupational stress and trauma, research pertinent to resilience and recovery in public safety personnel, and the unique aspects of confidentiality and testimonial privilege when providing services to public safety personnel and/or agencies. Specialized knowledge beyond this foundation is needed for practice within each of the four domains.

Board Certification in Police & Public Safety Psychology

Board certification assures the public and the profession that the ABPPSP specialist has successfully completed the educational, training, and experience requirements of the specialty, including an examination designed to assess the competencies required to provide quality services in this area of expertise. For the aspiring specialist, the process also provides an opportunity to consolidate professional knowledge, to receive feedback about practices, and to improve the quality of services.

ABPP Central Office

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Requirements for Board Certification

In addition to meeting generic and specialty specific eligibility requirements as a condition of advancement to candidacy, the ABPPSP candidate must prepare and submit for review a comprehensive written Professional Self-Study Statement and Work Samples. Upon successful evaluation of the written phase of examination, the candidate must pass a three-hour oral examination. Both the written and oral components are designed to assess the following sets of professional competency.

Foundational Competencies

Regardless of their primary domain(s) of practice, all ABPPSP candidates are evaluated against a uniform set of knowledge and practice standards expected of all police and public safety psychology specialists. These include professionalism; reflective practice; scientific knowledge; relationships; individual and cultural diversity; ethical standards and legal knowledge; interdisciplinary systems; evidence-based practice; and knowledge of client milieu.

Functional Competencies

All candidates are expected to demonstrate conversant knowledge relevant to each of the specialty's four domains of practice, and to demonstrate depth of knowledge in the domains and activities in which the candidate practices (e.g., preemployment psychological screening, fitness-for-duty evaluations, post-shooting interventions, hostage negotiation, police management development). The expectations for demonstration of competent practice in each domain and related activities are detailed in the ABPPSP examination manual (available for download at www.abppsp.org).

Specialty Specific Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must have completed no fewer than 100 hours of formal education and supervision in police and public safety psychology, and no less than 3,000 hours of experience in the specialty, to be eligible for board certification (for details, download the examination manual). These include professionalism; reflective practice; scientific knowledge; relationships; individual and cultural diversity; ethical standards and legal knowledge; interdisciplinary systems; evidence-based practice; and knowledge of client milieu.

"Although board certification benefits psychologists in all specialties, it is especially vital for specialists engaged in work that exposes them, personally or vicariously, to a high incidence of trauma. Known as 'practice in extremis,' these specialties require a high level of competence, but they also involve a heightened potential for erosion of competence through the same kinds of emotional and psychological mechanisms that affect [public safety personnel] (e.g., posttraumatic reactions, vicarious traumatization, compassion fatigue, burnout, empathy failure)."

D. M. Corey, M. J. Cuttler, D. R. Cox, & J. Brower. (2011). Board certification in police psychology. The Police Chief, 78(8), 100-104.

Fees

\$125 fee for application and credential review to establish candidacy.
\$250 fee for the practice sample review and establishment of the oral examination team.
\$450 for the oral examination.

These fees are due sequentially over the time span necessary to complete all of the candidacy and examination steps. Upon granting Board certification a yearly fee of \$185 is assessed to support the many services of the ABPP and the representation of the organization to the public and the profession.