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**THE AMERICAN BOARD OF FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY, INC.  
(ABFP)**

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**OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION TO ABFP**

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**THE AMERICAN BOARD OF FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY, INC.**

*Board Certification in Forensic Psychology*

The American Board of Forensic Psychology (ABFP) originated from a Specialty Certification Study Committee of the American Psychology-Law society. Established in 1978 to protect the consumer of forensic psychological services, ABFP (also referred to as the “Forensic Board”) awards the Diploma in Forensic Psychology to those psychologists who satisfactorily complete the requirements for achieving Specialty Board Certification in forensic psychology. The Forensic Board operates as an affiliated member of ABPP, an organization of specialty boards recognized by the profession.

Organizations other than ABFP/ABPP also have been known to offer “Board Certification” or some related designation in the specialty of Forensic Psychology. It is the position of ABFP, however, that certain substantive and procedural elements are necessary to maintain integrity and quality control in a legitimate certification process in a psychological specialty.

Those elements include:

- The status of the certifying body is an established entity recognized and accepted by judicial bodies and major psychological organizations.
- The specialized knowledge, competence, and Practice Samples of all who receive certification have been subjected to review by Board Certified Examiners. No psychologist is “grandparented” without this level of scrutiny.
- Consistent with standards for Board Certification in other professions such as medicine and law, the certifying body should be one that restricts itself only to credentialing psychologists, not members of other disciplines.

- The certifying body requires a thorough and verified credentialing process, including:
  - Strict requirements for education, licensing, supervision, and experience;
  - Verification of stated credentials;
  - Ethics review by contacting state psychological associations and licensing boards;
  - The submission of Practice Samples for review by Board Certified Examiners; and
  - Successful completion of an Oral Examination conducted by a committee of Board Certified Examiners.

Psychologists seeking Board Certification should make informed decisions before dedicating their time, energy, and money towards completing the credentialing process. At any given time, there may be several organizations offering Board Certification. Some questions to ask include:

- Is the certifying body an established entity recognized and accepted by judicial bodies and major psychological organizations?
- Has the certifying body “grandfathered” an excessive number of psychologists as being “Board Certified”?
- Does the certifying body restrict itself to credentialing psychologists?
- Does the certifying body require a thorough and verified credentialing process which includes:
  - Strict requirements for education, licensing, supervision, and experience?
  - Verification of credentials?
  - Ethics review by contacting state psychological associations and licensing boards?
  - The submission of Practice Samples for review by Board Certified Examiners?
  - The passing of an Oral Examination conducted by a committee of Board Certified Examiners?
  - Association with a recognized certifying organization of multiple specialty boards which oversees other specialties within the field of psychology?

The ABFP certification process meets all of these requirements.

### ***Description of the Practice of Forensic Psychology***

Forensic Psychology is a distinct specialty pertaining to the interface of various psychology disciplines and the law. ABFP defines the specialty broadly as the application of the science and profession of psychology to the questions and issues relating to the law and to the legal system.

Some practice areas include, but are not limited to: Clinical Examination, Treatment/Direct Services, Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Arbitration and Mediation Services, Consultation, Litigation Support, Research in Forensic Psychology and Teaching in Forensic Psychology.

### ***Specialized Professional Experience & Supervision***

Applicants must have accumulated one thousand (1000) hours of qualifying experience in forensic psychology over a minimum of a four year period. An earned LL.B. or J.D. degree may be substituted for two of the four years of experience; however, the requirement of a thousand hours of experience must still be met. An applicant may also petition to have successful completion of a qualifying formal post-doctoral fellowship in forensic psychology substitute for the three of the four years experience that must be post-doctoral; however, the requirement of a thousand hours of experience must still be met. Granting of such petition is at the discretion of the Board on a case by case basis as per the ABFP's current policy regarding such waiver.

### ***Specialized Training***

ABFP requires one hundred (100) hours of qualifying specialized training in forensic psychology. This may consist of direct supervision by a qualified forensic professional, continuing education activities, and/or relevant classroom activities at a graduate or post-graduate level. Workshops presented by the American Academy of Forensic Psychology (AAFP) count on a two-for-one basis toward the required 100 hours. That is, each hour of attendance at AAFP workshops counts for two hours towards the training requirement. Once the applicant has completed the credential review and paid the appropriate fees, he or she is considered a *candidate* for the ABFP Diploma.

### ***Rationale of the Examination Procedure***

ABFP conducts an examination process, the purpose of which is to provide answers to two broad questions:

- 1) Does the candidate possess a sufficient depth and breadth of core knowledge in the specialty of forensic psychology?
- 2) Does the candidate apply psycholegal knowledge at a sufficient level of competence, proficiency, and professionalism?

To obtain the answers to these questions, the candidate must complete a written examination and an oral examination. The written examination surveys the candidate's breadth of knowledge pertaining to forensic psychology, broadly conceived. The oral examination assesses the candidate's depth of knowledge in the candidate's two primary areas of forensic practice and in forensic ethics.

### ***Introduction to the Written Examination***

For information about and scheduling of the written examination, candidates should contact the ABFP Corresponding Secretary. The written examination provides a uniform method for assessing the candidate's breadth of forensic knowledge. The examination consists of two hundred (200) multiple choice questions focusing primarily upon the following eight (8) forensic areas:

- Ethics, Guidelines, and Professional Issues
- Law, Precedents, Court Rules, and Civil and Criminal Procedure
- Testing and Assessment, Judgment and Bias, and Examination Issues
- Individual Rights and Liberties, Civil Competence
- Juvenile, Parenting, and Family/Matrimonial Matters
- Personal Injury, Civil Damages, Disability, and Workers Compensation
- Criminal Competence
- Criminal Responsibility

Candidates who pass the written examination are invited to submit written Practice Samples, and if their Practice Samples are deemed acceptable, to sit for the oral examination.

### ***Introduction to the Oral Examination***

The oral examination process begins with the candidate submitting to the ABFP Executive Director two Practice Samples in the candidate's two primary areas of forensic practice. Each of the Practice Samples should demonstrate the candidate's competence in a separate and distinct area of forensic psychology. The Practice Samples assist ABFP in its attempts to ensure that the Candidate possesses a high level of professional competence and maturity, with the ability to articulate an explicit and coherent rationale for his or her work in forensic psychology. The choice of Practice Sample areas will define the primary areas in which the candidate is further evaluated during the oral examination.

Practice Samples provide examples of the candidate's forensic work. Practice Samples include this formal work product, as well as supporting documentation (such as psychological test data, the most relevant third party documentation, relevant state or federal statutes and case law, and identification of the published research, ethical principles, and/or legal citations most relevant to the Practice Sample). The majority of candidates will submit as Practice Samples two reports and associated documentation from two separate forensic examinations they have conducted.

It is impossible to anticipate all of the many types of Practice Samples that might be submitted for consideration; however, for all candidates:

- (1) Each practice sample must represent one of two distinct and separate areas of forensic psycholegal knowledge and practice; and

- (2) The two distinct psycholegal areas in question should reflect different legal standards, different case law applications, and different methodologies.

Examples of sufficiently distinct practice areas would include (sample 1) sanity/mental state at the time of the offense and (sample 2) competence to stand trial, or (sample 1) worker's compensation and (sample 2) guardianship. An example of forensic activities that are *not* sufficiently distinct would be a (sample 1) parenting/child custody examination involving a relocation issue and a (sample 2) parenting child custody examination involving allegations of sexual abuse. Another example of activities that are not sufficiently distinct would be (sample 1) personal injury examinations and (sample 2) workers compensation examinations.

The ABFP Corresponding Secretary is available for consultation to help the candidate clarify selection of Practice Samples.

If, based on preliminary screening, either of the Practice Samples is deemed inappropriate for oral examination, the candidate will be contacted in this regard; otherwise, the next contact received by the candidate will be from the ABFP National Chair of Examinations, who will request additional copies of the Practice Samples, as well as the completion of various ethical certification forms by the candidate and by state and national psychological associations and licensure/certification entities.

The ABFP National Chair of Examinations will ultimately distribute the Practice Samples to three ABFP Diplomates who will serve as the candidate's oral examination committee. The oral examination focuses upon the candidate's two primary areas of forensic practice as exemplified by the Practice Samples, and further focuses in a more general fashion upon forensic ethics. For each Practice Sample, the candidate is examined with regard to his or her forensic work product, the supporting documentation her or she has submitted, and a range of associated and relevant legal, ethical, research, and practice issues.

Contact information for persons currently serving as the various officers and committee chairs of ABFP can be found at [WWW.ABFP.COM](http://WWW.ABFP.COM).