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**THE AMERICAN BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, INC.  
(ABPP)**

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**OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION TO ABPP: APPLICATION  
GUIDELINES**

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

The American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) serves the public need by providing oversight in the certifying of psychologists who are competent to deliver high quality services in various specialty areas of psychology. Board certification (awarding of a Diploma in a specialty area) assures the public that specialists designated by the ABPP have successfully completed the education, training, and experience requirements of that specialty, including an examination designed to assess the competencies required to provide quality service.

The American Board of Professional Psychology was incorporated in 1947 with the support of the American Psychology Association. The ABPP is a unitary governing body of separately incorporated specialty examining boards which assures establishment, implementation, and maintenance of specialty standards and by its member boards. Through its Central Office, a wide range of administrative support services are provided to the ABPP Boards, Board Certified Specialists, and the public.

In order to qualify as a specialty board that is affiliated with the ABPP, a specialty must be represented by an independent incorporated examining board which is established, national in scope, and reflects the current development of the specialty. These standards include a thorough description of the area of practice and the pattern of competencies required therein as well as requirements for education, training, experience, research bases of the specialty, practice guidelines and a demonstrated level capacity to examine applicants for the specialty on a national level. The American Board of Forensic Psychology (ABFP) meets these standards.

In the United States, the American Board of Professional Psychology is the oldest national credentialing body for professional psychologists, credentialing specialists in psychology. ABPP oversees 11 Psychology Specialty Boards. Many states will extend full or partial reciprocity for licensing to those psychologists Board Certified by ABPP. The ABPP Diploma has been recognized by judicial decisions, regulations, and statutes in some jurisdictions as relevant to standards of professional competence in the practice of forensic psychology.

## **Purposes and Aims**

The American Board of Professional Psychology, Inc. (ABPP) was originally incorporated as the American Board of Examiners in Professional Psychology in 1947. According to its current Bylaws:

*The purposes and goals of the Corporation are: a) To serve the public and the profession by certifying that psychologists in various specialty areas of psychology have completed the educational, training, and experience requirements of a specialty, including examination designed to assess the competencies required to provide quality services in the specialty, and who maintain high ethical standards. b) To function as a unitary organization of affiliated, incorporated specialty boards through a Board of Trustees which includes representation from its Member Boards and the public. c) To establish and monitor standards of specialty board certification in psychology and through its affiliated specialty boards support the development, validation, and administration of qualifications and examinations leading to certification in a specialty area recognized by the Corporation. d) To maintain a central registry for the public dissemination of information about the board certification status of all those psychologists certified by Member Boards. e) To establish relationships with the public and the profession, particularly organizations which identify psychologists as providers of service with board certified credentials. f) To assist in improving the quality of research, education and training in specialties of professional psychology, including those approving programs designed to make information about the specialty certification process and the status of its board certified psychologists available to the public and the profession.*

The ABPP Board now awards Diplomas in eleven areas of professional practice, namely; Behavioral Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Clinical Health Psychology, Clinical Neuropsychology, Counseling Psychology, Family Psychology, Forensic Psychology, Group Psychology, Psychoanalysis in Psychology, Rehabilitation Psychology, and School Psychology. The general ABPP requirements for every specialty are as follows:

- I. To qualify as a candidate the applicant shall have successfully completed a program in professional psychology that, at the time the degree was granted, met standards as below:
  - A. Accredited by the American Psychological Association or the Canadian Psychological Association, or
  - B. A designated doctoral program listed in the publication *Doctoral Psychology Programs Meeting Designation Criteria*, or

- C. The applicant is currently listed as a health service provider in the current directory of *National Register of Health Science Providers in Psychology*, or
- D. Consistent with the ABPP doctoral degree program requirements listed below:
1. Training in professional psychology is doctoral training offered in a regionally accredited institution of higher education.
  2. The program, wherever it may be administratively housed, must be clearly identified and labeled as a psychology program. Such a program must specify in pertinent institutional catalogues and brochures its intent to educate and train professional psychologists.
  3. The psychology program must stand as a recognizable, coherent organizational entity within the institution.
  4. There must be a clear authority and primary responsibility for the core and specialty areas whether or not the program cuts across administrative areas.
  5. The program must be an integrated, organized sequence of study.
  6. There must be an identifiable body of students who are matriculated in that program for a degree.
  7. The program must include supervised practicum, internship, field or laboratory training appropriate to the practice of psychology.
  8. The curriculum shall encompass a minimum of three academic years of full-time graduate study. In addition to instruction in Scientific and Professional Ethics and Standards, Research Design and Methodology, Statistics and Psychometrics, the core program shall require each student to demonstrate competence in each of the following substantive content areas. This typically will be met by including a minimum of three or more graduate semester hours (five or more graduate quarter hours) in each of these four substantive content areas:
    - a. Biological Bases of Behavior: psychological psychology, comparative psychology, neuropsychology, sensation and perception, and psychopharmacology.
    - b. Cognitive-Affective Bases of Behavior: learning, thinking, motivation, and emotion.
    - c. Social Bases of Behavior: social psychology, group processes, organizational and systems theory.

d. Individual Differences: personality theory, human development, and abnormal psychology.

9. Requirements appropriate to a specialty as stipulated by the specialty.

II. An internship is required.

A. Internship field experience is defined as a minimum of 1500 hours of training experience in an organized psychological health service setting and must be completed within a period of two years.

B. Internships in professional psychology that are accredited by the American Psychological Association or the Canadian Psychological Association are recognized as meeting doctoral criteria. All others must meet all of the following criteria.

1. A psychology internship is an organized training program which, in contrast to supervised experience or on-the-job training, is designed to provide the intern with a planned, programmed sequence of training experiences. The primary focus and purpose is assuring breadth and quality of training.
2. The internship agency has a clearly designated doctoral level staff psychologist who is responsible for the integrity and quality of the training program, actively licensed (certified or registered) by the State Board of Examiners in the jurisdiction where the program exists, and is present at the training facility for a minimum of 20 hours a week.
3. The internship agency training staff consists of at least two full-time equivalent doctoral level psychologists who serve as primary supervisors, who are actively licensed (certified or registered) as a psychologist by the Board of Examiners in the jurisdiction where the program exists.
4. Intern supervision is provided by staff members of the internship agency or by qualified affiliates of that agency who carry clinical responsibility for the cases being supervised. At least two hours per week of regularly scheduled individual supervision are provided by one or more doctoral level licensed psychologists (regardless of whether the internship is completed in one year or two). Supervision is provided with the specific intent of dealing with psychological services rendered directly by the intern.
5. The internship provides training in a range of psychological assessment and intervention activities conducted directly with recipients of psychological services.

6. At least 25% of the trainee's time is in face-to-face psychological services to patients/clients.
  7. The internship must provide at least two hours per week in didactic activities such as case conferences, seminars, in-service training, or grand rounds.
  8. Internship training is at post-clerkship, post practicum and post externship level and precedes the granting of the doctoral degree.
  9. The internship agency has a minimum of two full-time equivalent interns at the internship level of training during any period of training.
  10. The internship level of psychology trainees have a title such as "Intern, Resident, or Fellow" or other designation of trainee status.
  11. The internship agency has a written statement or brochure which provides clear description of the nature of the training program, including the goals and content of the internship and clear expectations for quantity and quality of the trainee's work, and is made available to prospective interns.
  12. Internship programs have documented the due process procedures for interns which are given to interns at the beginning of the training period.
  13. The internship experience (minimum 1500 hours) must be completed in no less than 9 months and no more than 24 months.
  14. Internship programs are required to issue a certificate of internship completion which includes the word "Psychology" to all interns who have successfully completed the program.
- III. Present engagement in professional work in area of practice in which the applicant wishes to be examined.
- IV. Evidence of continuing education in the profession of psychology during the years of post-doctoral experience.
- V. Applicants for the ABPP Diploma should demonstrate evidence of professional commitment by membership and active participation in professional psychological organizations. Such organizations shall have identifiable purposes and policies that are congruent with those of ABPP.
- VI. The applicant must be licensed or certified as a psychologist at the independent level by the State in which the applicant practices. Active military duty psychologists and civilian psychologists in federal employment are required to be licensed in some state jurisdiction as required by each Federal agency or the Department of Defense. However, if such

psychologists also practice outside of their federal duties, they must be licensed or certified as a psychologist at the independent level by the state in which they are practicing.

## APPLICATION AND ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY

When a psychologist meets the basic requirements listed above, he or she is eligible to apply for candidacy. Upon submission of the application, the applicant must arrange for transcripts of all graduate coursework to be sent directly to the ABPP Central Office.

When all necessary documents have been received, the Executive Officer conducts whatever investigation seems necessary to provide appropriate information for review and appraisal. This includes sending an inquiry to the State Board of Examiners of Psychologists. When all credentials have been assembled, the Board will seek, on the basis of the record, clear evidence that the applicant meet its standards in accordance each of the following areas:

- A. Adequacy and extent of basic training;
- B. Amount, breadth, and quality of professional experience; and
- C. Special competence.

When the Board determines that the applicant has met its qualifying standards, he or she will be considered a Candidate and will be notified of admission to candidacy.

Note to foreign or foreign-trained applicants: The Board does not accept applications from individuals who are foreign-trained or practice outside the U.S. or Canada.

## POLICIES CONCERNING CANDIDACY AND EXAMINATION

The Board expects that the conditions of each examination will be consistent with the principles and standards stated in the examination manual. Recognizing that exceptions may occur, the Board has a procedure for appeals. If an applicant believes that the examination was not conducted in an appropriate and fair manner, he or she may request a review. Such request should be submitted within 30 days of the notice of failure. It shall include a definitive statement of factors and conditions considered by the applicant as interfering with or inconsistent with an adequate evaluation. Such a Board review may have two possible outcomes: (1) nullification of the examination; or (2) a confirmation of the No Award decision. Applicants cannot be awarded the Diploma as a result of the review.

## POLICIES CONCERNING THE RELATIONSHIP OF CANDIDATES TO THE BOARDS

In the past, both ABFP and ABPP have had some difficulties with psychologists who are not ABFP or ABPP Diplomates, but who represent their relationships to either or both Boards in ways that these Boards find unacceptable. It is the position of ABFP and ABPP that any such representation may constitute an ethical violation and may result in termination of the

Applicant's application process. The following information is presented so that Applicants and Candidates can avoid an unethical representation of their relationship to these Boards.

Neither Board recognizes any term or designation for referring to a psychologist who has merely approached the Board seeking information or requesting an application packet. Once the Board has received an application, the Board refers to that person – in internal communication only – as an Applicant. An Applicant should use that designation only when communicating with the Board. Applicants may not indicate to anyone else that they are an Applicant or a Candidate for the Diploma issued by the ABFP or ABPP, nor may they do so on a resume, C.V., or any written or oral statement of qualifications. Additionally, ABPP and ABFP do not to use, authorize, or recognize the term "Board Eligible". Applicants may not use this term to represent any relationship or status with either Board, nor may Applicants represent to any outside person or entity that they have met the minimum requirements as an Applicant of the Boards, or that they are "Board Eligible" for either Board.

Once an application has been approved, the Applicant's status – for purposes of internal communication only - is then changed to "Candidate for the Diploma". "Applicants" and "Candidates for the Diploma" do not have any formal relationship with either Board that they can use other than in communications to the Boards. After they have been notified in writing by the National Chair of Examinations that they have successfully passed the entire board certification process, they may represent themselves as a *Diplomate of the American Board of Forensic Psychology*, a *Diplomate of the American Board of Professional Psychology*, and also as a *Fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Psychology*.

To comply with these requirements, Applicants should never advertise themselves or represent themselves as having any relationship to the Board until such a time as they are notified that they have passed the entire process. Any use of the term "Board Eligible" by those who have been admitted to candidacy for the examination, or others, is inappropriate and may result in procedures to terminate the applicant's candidacy.

Should you need any further information regarding any of the information discussed above, please contact the Chief Administrative Officer of the American Board of Professional Psychology.

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION AND STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

The Board will suspend action on any applicant in whose case allegations are being investigated by the Ethics Committee of the American Psychological Association, the American Psychological Society, a state board of psychology examiners, or the ABPP Ethics Committee. It is the applicant's responsibility to notify the Board of any prior adverse ethical or licensure determinations and any pending allegations and their resolution.

The Board may initiate procedures to revoke the Diploma of an individual if it is presented with information indicating that the person may have committed misconduct subject to the Ethics Rules and Procedures of ABPP.

## THE EXAMINATION PROCESS

The examination is conducted by a committee of board certified examiners from the applicant's specialty board. Candidates should expect to be examined in their areas of practice as determined by each Specialty Board. The Examination Committee will not include any person who had substantial personal or professional contact with the candidate. ABPP Examinations are designed to judge competence at the specialist level in the candidate's professional practice. The examination will cover the following interrelated areas:

### The Effectiveness of the Candidate's Efforts Toward Constructive Intervention Based on Realistic Assessment of the Problem Presented:

The Board recognizes that professional psychologists use a variety of approaches, techniques, and theoretical orientations.

### Awareness of the Relevance of Research and Theory:

It is assumed that a professional psychologist is continually aware of scientific and scholarly developments in order to infuse his or her practice with the most valid and reliable data that the science provides.

The purpose of this aspect of the examination is to ascertain whether the candidate can represent and discuss critically the implications and applications of contemporary psychological knowledge in his or her area of practice.

### Sensitivity to the Ethical Implications of Professional Practice:

A professional psychologist is expected to be aware of: (1) the ethical principles adopted by the profession and (2) the implications of these in practice, including the responsibility of practicing in the best interest of clients and society.

## NOTIFICATION AND AWARD OF THE DIPLOMA

Applicants who successfully present their practice samples are recommended by the National Chair of Examinations to the ABFP Board of Directors and the ABPP Board of Trustees for award of the forensic diploma. Applicants who do not successfully present at their oral examinations will be given information regarding re-examination and regarding appeal of the Board's decision.

Each applicant will receive formal notification of the Board's judgment. Diplomas will either be conferred on successful candidates at a convocation held during the annual convention of the American Psychological Association or will be sent to the new Diplomate by mail within a reasonable time after the convocation. An explanation of reasons for failure will be supplied to each unsuccessful candidate in order to guide further professional development.