

BOARD CERTIFICATION IN PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY: PROMOTING COMPETENCY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

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Board certification in psychology provides an opportunity for increased assessment of 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 uses 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.

INTRODUCTION

Competency, and the assessment thereof, has been the focus of several psychological organizations as well as national and international conferences in recent years. Board certification through ABPP has historically been one method of measuring competency in professional psychology. As the field continues to mature, the conceptualization and measurement of competency is an ongoing and evolving process. The ABPP specialty board in neuropsychology is the American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology (ABCN). This article is intended—by way of using the ABPP and ABCN boards as illustrative—to present board certification as a natural stage of professional development for the individual psychologist and the profession as a whole. Psychology is becoming more specialized. Board certification is a mechanism for defining and measuring competency. Board certification is beneficial for the profession, individual psychologists, and the consumers of psychological services.

The American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP), established in 1947 through sponsorship of the American Psychological Association (APA), provides board certification through credentials review and competency-based examination

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processes for psychologists in multiple specialty areas within psychology, including clinical neuropsychology. The purpose and process of board certification through ABPP is reviewed here, as well as recent developments in the area of credentialing and board certification of psychologists and the benefits thereof.

As psychology has grown, efforts to regulate the profession and provide for consumer protection have led to the establishment of licensure, which in most jurisdictions is generic in nature. In most of the jurisdictions within North America licensure is based on assessment of *knowledge* (as opposed to competency) through the Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (EPPP), is *generic*, and does not identify a *specialty* area of practice, much less provide for assessment of *competence* within that area.

As areas of specialty have emerged, professionals and consumers have sought to be better able to identify competent psychologists within specialty areas. Rodolfa et al. (2005) identify public accountability and a public demand for identification of specialty competence as fundamental reasons for the need to define competency and specialty. Psychological *specialty* practice has been defined by the APA (1995), the Council of Specialties in Professional Psychology (CoS), and ABPP, yet only ABPP (as the only credentialing body among them) uses the term *competency* in its definition (Rodolfa et al.).

Competence is often a core expectation within a profession. Many professions (among them medicine, law, psychology) have established methods to recognize competence. The APA *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (2002) addresses consumer protection and states one should practice within one's area of *competence*.

Board certification is an outgrowth of this attention to competency and consumer protection. It serves as one method for addressing competency to provide services in a specialty area. As a way of serving the public and the profession, one of ABPP's primary purposes is certifying specialists through competency-based examinations.

Recent developments related to board certification

Board certification developments are ongoing that affect individual psychologists, the profession of psychology, and the general consumer public. Recent developments include implicit encouragement to become board certified (e.g., salary increases for ABPP board certified psychologists), limitations on who can describe themselves as board certified, and consideration of the issues around licensure and board certification (e.g., ASPPB).

Department of Veteran's Affairs recognition. The Department of Veteran's Affairs has recently enacted policy that provides for potential salary increases based on a psychologist becoming board certified through ABPP. The Special Advancement for Achievement criteria of the Hybrid Title 38 within the DVA allows for a one step increase within GS level for becoming ABPP (it also permits that increase for existing ABPP specialists as the program initiates).

US Department of Defense recognition. On October 14, 2008, President Bush signed into law Senate Bill 3001, the "Duncan Hunter National Defense

Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009". This legislation, recognizing a need for competent and qualified psychologists within the US Armed Forces, approved a significant accession bonus (up to \$400,000 payable in increments of up to \$100,000 per year over 4 years) for psychologists targeting for employment those who are board certified through the American Board of Professional Psychology.

Florida Legislation and Board of Psychology rules/regulations. The State of Florida recently enacted limitations on when a psychologist can identify themselves as board certified. The *legislative language* of F.S. 490.0149 is provided in Table 1; the Board of Psychology *rule language* is in Table 2. The legislative language has direct impact on individual psychologists, whereas the board rule has direct impact on credentialing organizations.

In January 2008 the Florida Board of Psychology reviewed the petitions submitted for recognition as a board-certifying organization. The American Board of Professional Psychology was among those approved. The ABPP was recognized in its entirety as an organization with several psychology specialty boards under its governance, thereby granting recognition to all psychology specialties within the ABPP.

Council of Specialties in Professional Psychology (CoS). Recognizing that the public may become confused by the variety of labels that different groups use, concerns about the use of the label "board certified" and activities of non-psychologists has led the Council of Specialties (CoS) to address the issue of board certification within psychology. Among the concerns expressed by CoS was the proliferation of individuals, many of whom are reportedly non-doctoral-level and non-licensed individuals, engaging in behavior analysis and indicating some sort of

Table 1 Florida legislative language about psychology board certification 490.0149 specialties

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- (1) As used in this section, the term "certified psychology specialist," "board-certified psychology specialist," or "psychology diplomate" means a psychologist with recognized special competency acquired through an organized sequence of formal education, training, experience, and professional standing that is recognized by a certifying body approved by the board pursuant to criteria adopted under subsection (3).
 - (2) A person licensed as a psychologist may not hold himself or herself out as a certified psychology specialist, board-certified psychology specialist, or psychology diplomate unless the person has received formal recognition from an approved certifying body.
 - (3) The board shall adopt rules to establish criteria for approval of certifying bodies that provide certification for specialties in psychology as provided in subsection (1). The criteria shall include that a certifying body:
 - (a) Be national in scope, incorporate standards of the profession, and collaborate closely with organizations related to specialization in psychology.
 - (b) Have clearly described purposes, bylaws, policies, and procedures.
 - (c) Have established standards for specialized practice of psychology.
 - (d) Provide assessments that include the development and implementation of an examination designed to measure the competencies required to provide services that are characteristic of the specialty area.
 - (4) A person licensed as a psychologist under this chapter may indicate the services he or she offers and may indicate that his or her practice is limited to one or more types of services when this accurately reflects his or her scope of practice.
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Table 2 Florida Board of Psychology Rule

64B19-18.008 Board Approval of Specialty Certifying Bodies.

To obtain Board approval as a certifying body, eligible to grant formal recognition declaring a licensed psychologist to be a “certified psychology specialist,” board-certified psychology specialist,” or a “psychology diplomate,” pursuant to Section 490.0149, F.S., an applicant shall file a petition demonstrating that it:

- (1) Is an independent body, national in scope, that incorporates standards of the profession, collaborates closely with organizations related to specialization in psychology, and only certifies doctoral-level, licensed psychologists as having advanced qualifications in a particular psychological specialty through demonstrations of competence in the specialty being recognized;
- (2) Has clearly described purposes, bylaws, policies, and procedures, that include an internal review and budgetary practices, to ensure effective utilization of resources with an administrative staff, housed in dedicated office space that is appropriate for the certifying body’s program and sufficient for responding to consumer or regulatory inquiries;
- (3) Has established standards for specialized practice of psychology and adopts the American Psychological Association (APA) “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct,” effective June 1, 2003, to guide the practice of its members. The code is incorporated by reference and available for inspection at the Board office as well as at: www.apa.org/ethics/code2002.html; and
- (4) Has implemented and documented a comprehensive assessment procedure, designed to measure the competencies required to provide services characteristic of the specialty area, that describes security and grading standards, and consists of an oral examination and peer-review of practice samples and may include a written examination.

Specific Authority 490.0149, 490.004(4) FS. Law Implemented 490.0149 FS. History—New 11-1-07.

board certification. CoS has indicated that it recognizes the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) as the only national organization of specialty boards to certify specialists in professional psychology, and believes that licensed psychologists who wish to identify themselves as board certified should be board certified by the American Board of Professional Psychology (CoS, 2006, 2007).

ABPP Early Entry Program: Encouraging certification and diversity. ABPP has recognized that students, interns, and residents are increasingly interested in the board certification process. In an effort to assist in increasing awareness of the process of board certification, and the competency models in education, training, and experience that lead to possible board certification, and in an effort to facilitate a cultural change within psychology toward board certification as the *expected* rather than the *exception*, ABPP initiated the ABPP Early Entry Program. This program also has a goal of increasing diversity with the ranks of board certified specialists. The program has been met with widespread enthusiasm, and many training institutions are sponsoring students in the process. Essentially, the program permits students, interns, and post-doctoral residents to initiate filing credentials with ABPP earlier in their professional training. This program does not grant any exception to the credentials review or examination process, and all requirements for successful attainment of ABPP board certification remain the same.

The opportunity to establish board certification as one of the goals of professional training, and incorporate identified areas of competency throughout

the education and training experience fits well with the models and suggestions of the Competencies Conference (Kaslow et al., 2004) and the Assessment of Competency Benchmarks Work Group (American Psychological Association, 2007). Identification of competencies, with benchmarks for attainment of them within professional development is one of the aims of those working in this area.

Benefits related to board certification

Potential for higher income. As reviewed above, the Department of Veteran's Affairs has recently enacted policy that provides for potential salary increases, and the Department of Defense offers an accession bonus, targeting for employment those psychologists that are board certified through ABPP. As a specialty board within ABPP, ABCN is the neuropsychology board certifying entity recognized by a variety of organizations including the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense, Public Health Service, and others for potential salary increases and promotions. Similarly, some academic settings offer incentives to become board certified. Sweet, Nelson, and Moberg (2006) found that neuropsychologists board certified through ABCN reported greater psychology income (likely due to a variety of factors such as seniority and more forensic consultation, for example) than did neuropsychologists not board certified through ABCN.

Decreased malpractice liability costs. Some malpractice insurance carriers offer a discount to psychologists who are board certified through ABPP. For example, the American Professional Agency provides a 20% discount to such individuals.

Streamlined licensing. Over 35 states recognize ABPP in some fashion with respect to licensing of individual psychologists. Often the usual paperwork and forms necessary for licensure are reduced for a psychologist already board certified by ABPP. Many states continue to require a jurisprudence examination covering that jurisdiction's laws, rules, and regulations. Some states recognize ABPP explicitly in law (i.e., the licensing act for psychology), while others may recognize ABPP in rule. For example, Florida law (State of Florida, 2007) indicates that the Board of Psychology shall license an individual who demonstrates to the board that s/he is "... a diplomate in good standing with the American Board of Professional Psychology, Inc." (F.S. 490.006 (1)(b)).

Increased practice mobility. The ASPPB, a membership organization comprised of state, provincial, and territorial psychology licensing boards, accepts ABPP board certification as evidence that the essential criteria for education, training, and experience have been met. The ASPPB Certificate of Professional Qualification in Psychology (CPQ) process, used as a means of inter-jurisdictional mobility, is simplified for psychologists credentialed by ABPP.

A way for programs to demonstrate credibility. The Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) indicates that one necessary criterion for member programs is that the program director "...has expertise in an area of postdoctoral training offered and has credentials of excellence

such as the American Board of Professional Psychology diploma . . .” (Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers, 2006, p. 1).

Increased job satisfaction and marketability. As indicated in part above, and likely due to a number of factors in addition to board certification, a survey of neuropsychologists found that respondents who are board certified through ABCN reported having greater psychology income, greater job satisfaction, and greater income satisfaction than did those not certified through ABCN (Sweet et al., 2006). In addition, many institutions hiring neuropsychologists are requesting that the psychologist be board certified, or attain board certification through ABPP as of a certain date. A recent review of employment opportunity ads for clinical neuropsychology positions revealed that 31% specified that ABPP-ABCN board certification was expected or desired (Lee, personal communication, December 6, 2007).

Helping to reduce public confusion. As more and more practitioners become board certified, the public can look to board certified practitioners as a way of determining that psychologists have obtained the required training and undergone evaluation by peers.

Consolidation of skills learned throughout the career. Studying for the ABPP-CN provides a good opportunity for the practitioner to consolidate and refresh information learned throughout their career. It encourages a breadth of knowledge in multiple areas.

Focused goal of this article

The focused goal of this article is to present board certification as a natural stage in the professional development of the individual psychologist and the field as a whole. The benefits of board certification to the individual psychologist, the field, and the consumer will be reviewed.

PREVIOUS AND CONTINUING EFFORTS

Establishment of the American Board of Professional Psychology

The American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) was established in 1947, originally as the American Board of Professional Examiners in Psychology (ABEPP) following recognition of such a need by the American Psychological Association (APA) (Bent, Packard, & Goldberg, 1999). As continues to be true, membership in a division of the APA is identified as an expression of *interest* in the subject area, as opposed to a measure of *competency* in that subject area (APA, 1946). Funding for the establishment of ABPP was provided through a loan from APA and early expenses (in the 1950s) were met through APA’s continued financial support. Bent et al. (1999) provide a history of the development and growth of ABPP up through the late 1990s, covering the first 50 years of the organization’s existence. That article documents the organizational evolution of ABPP, characterizing and describing several developmental phases through which the organization has grown.

Table 3 Specialty boards of the American Board of Professional Psychology

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| American Board of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology |
| American Board of Clinical Health Psychology |
| American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology |
| American Board of Clinical Psychology |
| American Board of Cognitive and Behavioral Psychology |
| American Board of Counseling Psychology |
| American Board of Couple and Family Psychology |
| American Board of Forensic Psychology |
| American Board of Group Psychology |
| American Board of Organizational and Business Consulting Psychology |
| American Board of Psychoanalysis in Psychology |
| American Board of Rehabilitation Psychology |
| American Board of School Psychology |

Current structure and function of ABPP

Having grown from an initial field of two specialty areas (Clinical Psychology and Counseling Psychology), ABPP presently recognizes 13 specialty boards (listed alphabetically in Table 3). Each specialty board has its own governance and operates as a member board of the ABPP. The specialty boards are charged with defining the specialty, determining its competencies, reviewing applicants, and examining candidates. Many of the ABPP specialty boards have developed an affiliated academy, an independent organizational entity that may engage in activities such as providing continuing education, information about its specialty board certification process, and other such specialty-specific activities. The specialty academies have established the Council of Presidents of Psychology Specialty Academies (CPPSA) to facilitate inter-academy communication and activities.

The ABPP Board of Trustees (BOT) is responsible for the activity of the overarching activities of ABPP. The ABPP BOT is comprised of the ABPP Executive Committee (comprised of elected officials: President, Past-President, President-elect, Secretary, and Treasurer; and the non-voting Executive Officer), a representative from each specialty board, the president of the CPPSA, and a public member (non-psychologist). The BOT operates as do most corporate boards, overseeing operations, budgets, and the like. The BOT has established a number of committees that oversee issues including standards, affiliation, ethics, and other areas. Ultimately it is the Executive Committee and BOT that are the structures through which organizational change proposals pass; for example, including review of liaison relationships and consideration of applications for affiliation. If a new specialty area is proposed, for example, it is the BOT that considers the proposals (following review by the Affiliation Committee) and takes action.

Participation with other organizations in professional psychology

Recognition of a board-certifying organization by other entities and organizations involved in professional psychology is an important aspect of establishing and maintaining credibility. Ongoing inter-organizational activities

help maintain relative consistency in expectations and standards, and facilitate advancement of the profession as well as protection of the public. Such inter-organizational interaction can be used to improve an organization's own processes and ongoing quality improvement efforts.

ABPP participates as a formal liaison and/or observer in many activities within APA and other organizations. Examples of committees with which ABPP interacts within APA are the Committee for the Advancement of Professional Psychology (CAPP), Board of Professional Affairs (BPA), Board of Educational Affairs (BEA), and the Taxonomy Work Group. ABPP has a liaison position with the ASPPB, and serves as a member organization of the Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology (CCOPP). In addition, ABPP is actively involved with the Trilateral Psychology Executive Roundtable (TPER), comprised of executives from psychological organizations in the Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

This interaction with other professional psychology organizations works to increase ABPP's ability to incorporate current thinking and policies developing throughout professional psychology into its own activities and structure, facilitating its internal quality improvement efforts. ABPP's multiple boards are each individually subject to comparison with other ABPP and non-ABPP boards that may exist. Quality and standards are reviewed within and across the ABPP boards on a regular basis through a process called Periodic Comprehensive Review (PCR). The ABCN has recently (ABCN, 2007b) undergone such review. This process ensures an ongoing intra- and inter-board review of processes, materials, and performance of each of the boards. That ABPP has multiple boards, is national in scope, maintains active relationships with other professional psychology organizations, and is widely recognized within the profession of psychology has been a factor in recognition of ABPP by other various entities leading to some of the benefits of obtaining board certification.

Engaging in these types of ongoing inter-organizational professional activities is considered a vital part of ABPP's commitment to improving professional psychology and consumer protection. Over the years, much of the inter-organizational focus has had to do with the issues of *competency* and *competency assessment*.

Competency and assessment of competency

The APA Task Force on Competency Assessment in Professional Psychology (American Psychological Association, 2006) identified organizations involved in addressing the issues of competency and specialty within psychology. It identified a historical backdrop within society indicating a desire for review of provision of healthcare services in general, as well as the providers of those services. Historically, organizations such as the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB), the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology (NRHSPP), the Council of Credentialing Organizations in Professional Psychology (CCOPP), Committee for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP), National Council for Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology (NCSPP), Council of Specialties (CoS),

APA, ABPP, and others have cooperatively and collaboratively worked on issues that affect professional psychologists and consumers with regard to licensure, recognition as a health service provider, specialty definition, and board certification.

Competency is not a static state; it is developed over the course of a professional's education, training, and experience. The Competencies Conference, 2002: Future Directions in Education and Credentialing in Professional Psychology was convened with sponsorship, support and participation of the APA, the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC), and roughly 30 other groups. It provided a forum for inter-organizational discussion of the needs of the profession with respect to competencies (Kaslow et al., 2004).

That conference led to a model of understanding the developmental nature of competency across the professional life-span: a cube model of *foundational* (knowledge, skills, and attitudes foundational to competence) and *functional* (what competent psychologists are expected to do) domains of competency (Rodolfa et al., 2005). One axis of the cube includes foundational competency domains: reflective practices/self-assessment, scientific knowledge and methods, relationships, ethical and legal standards/policy issues, individual and cultural diversity, interdisciplinary systems. Another axis includes the functional competency domains: assessment/diagnosis/conceptualization, intervention, consultation, research/evaluation, supervision/teaching, management/administration. The final axis is comprised of stages of professional development: doctoral education, internship/residency, postdoctoral residency, and continuing competency.

The APA Task Force on Assessment of Competency in Professional Psychology (American Psychological Association, 2006) report provides a significant contribution to current thinking about competency in psychology. Models within other healthcare professions were reviewed, citing strengths and weaknesses. It is reported that healthcare professions have largely set in place four systems in an attempt to produce competent providers: (1) entry-level education and training, (2) licensure and practice regulation; (3) continuing professional education; and (4) specialty certification. The latter are programs recognizing competencies in specialty areas that reach beyond those basic standards required for licensure. Four models of assessment were described: (1) measures of knowledge, (2) measures of professional decision making, (3) measures of practice performance including professional attributes, and (4) integrated assessments of practice-based skills and tasks.

Within psychology, all four methods of assessment are used at one or more points during professional development. Measures of practice performance and practice-based skills and tasks are integrated into professional development through education, training, and supervision. The EPPP may be considered as fitting into the "measures of knowledge" category. ABPP has long used case examples that fit into the "measures of professional decision making" model. The APA Task Force (American Psychological Association, 2006, p. 46) wrote: "The practice sample and oral examination used by the ABPP specialty boards to assess competence in a given specialty area may reflect higher fidelity approaches than those used elsewhere in the profession. In other words, these assessment strategies may tap competence in a manner that reflects actual practice."

Overview of board certification through ABPP

The ABPP board certification process includes several phases: credentials review, submission of practice samples, and oral examination. These aspects of the process are similar for each ABPP specialty board. At the discretion of the specialty board, a written examination (e.g., multiple choice) may also be included in the process. Presently, Forensic Psychology and Clinical Neuropsychology include such exams.

All specialty boards of the ABPP have *generic* requirements, yet different specialty-specific requirements. Criteria for the boards can be reviewed at www.abpp.org. Applicants who meet the generic criteria are advanced to specialty board review. Specialty boards define the education and training required of candidates as well as the areas of competence that are expected. The ABCN has adopted The Houston Conference Guidelines (Hannay et al., 1998) for graduates of programs as of 2005, for example (see www.theabcn.org).

Upon approval of applicant's credentials, a practice sample is requested. The nature of the practice sample most often requires two case presentations or a similar sample of professional work. Particulars of the practice samples required are beyond the scope of this article and the reader is referred to the specialty board materials for details (e.g., www.theabcn.org for ABCN, or www.abpp.org).

The clinical neuropsychology example

ABCN formally affiliated with ABPP in 1983. ABCN (www.theabcn.org) has board certified 680 neuropsychologists. Relative to the number of potential candidates for board certification, this is quite likely the largest percentage of any specialty board. This number continues to grow and the specialty of neuropsychology has clearly led the way in promoting a "culture change" toward board certification as an expectation, largely through the efforts of ABCN and AACN.

Affiliation with ABPP as of 1983, following its initial incorporation in 1981, has been mutually valuable. ABCN became formally associated with the larger "umbrella organization" of ABPP and thereby benefited from the recognition already provided to ABPP. ABPP has benefited from the association through the increased interest in ABPP, in part due the growing interest in the field of neuropsychology and the relative success of ABCN as a specialty board. ABCN established the American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology (AACN; www.theaacn.org) in 1996. The AACN has served to provide educational opportunities within the profession and provide guidance regarding consumer protection/education and contributes input into public policy through various publications. Basic standards and aspirational guidelines for providing quality neuropsychological services to the public may be found in *Practice guidelines for neuropsychological assessment and consultation* (AACN, 2007a). AACN joined with APA Divisions 22 and 40 and the National Academy of Neuropsychology (NAN) to develop the *Official position of the Military TBI Task Force on the role of neuropsychology and rehabilitation psychology in the evaluation, management and research of military veterans with traumatic brain injury* (McCrea et al., 2008).

The AACN has arguably been the most active of any ABPP affiliated academies and has instituted numerous professional benefits available to its members and others. A group has formed to help educate psychologists about how to become ABCN board certified (BRAIN: Be Ready for ABPP in Clinical Neuropsychology) and out of those and AACN efforts there is a book on board certification in clinical neuropsychology (Armstrong, Beebe, Hilsabeck, & Kirkwood, 2008). The academy has an excellent website with useful resources including practice guidelines and position statements, and has adopted *The Clinical Neuropsychologist* as the official journal of AACN. The AACN has been an incredibly strong advocate of the board certification process, and has helped ABCN become the fastest-growing ABPP specialty board. Sweet (2008) reports that 97% of ABCN board certified psychologists are also members of AACN. An annual conference established by the AACN has continuously grown in size and been given high marks for quality from attendees. The recently formed ABPP Board–Academy Relations Committee specifically sought to have a representative from clinical neuropsychology due to the significant achievements arising out of the ABCN/AACN relationship. Combined, the AACN and ABCN set forth an exemplary relationship of academy and board from which other ABPP boards and academies can learn much.

FUTURE EFFORTS

Psychology continues to define itself and its practitioners as it grows. As with other fields, continued growth is likely to lead to continued distinctions between practices and practitioners within the field. The emergence of subspecialties is an anticipated result of these growing areas. Indeed, ABCN has been actively reviewing this in conjunction with ABPP, examining whether separate subspecialty designations might be appropriate and if so, how they might be adopted. This is an issue that all specialty boards are likely to face, as other areas of possible subspecialty designation are likely to arise in the future.

As part of those efforts, the ABPP Board of Trustees recently agreed in concept on a mechanism for possible implementation of a subspecialty. In short, individuals already board certified through ABPP would be able to propose to a specialty board that subspecialty designation was warranted. An ABPP specialty board could choose to “sponsor” an application for recognition of a subspecialty, and all ABPP specialty boards would have the opportunity to be involved in the review of such an application. The application, which would have to arise from within ABPP, would be procedurally reviewed in a process akin to an application for affiliation of a new specialty board—requiring vetting by a variety of ABPP committees and all specialty boards within ABPP.

Another area in which psychologists will likely encounter issues related to board certification is that of hospital bylaws. Some hospitals already require that psychologists on staff be board certified just as are physicians on staff. The culture of some institutions are built on expectation of high standards; for the past 10 to 15 years, the Department of Psychiatry and Psychology of the Mayo Clinic has informally made the expectation clear that any psychologist hired is expected to

obtain an ABPP in their chosen field of expertise (Rohe, personal communication, January 10, 2008).

The issue of maintenance of certification is one that is beginning to gain attention. Other than an annual attestation that the board certified psychologist is licensed and free of disciplinary action and ethical violations, ABPP has not yet established criteria for demonstrating continuing competence.

Florida has set an example of the type of legislation and rule that may well exist in many states in years to come. Specialization within psychology can be expected to be subject to similar rule and regulation as other jurisdictions review the effects of the Florida action on the profession as well as the consumers of psychological services.

HOW TO BECOME INVOLVED

Being an interested and informed educator, training director, or supervisor can provide valuable growth experiences to the students, interns, and supervisees with whom we interact. Defining board certification as a natural step in professional development and setting in place a culture of competency as a developmental process within professional growth can be instrumental for young psychologists. In these roles we serve as mentors, teaching important lessons in professional psychology in a way that sets the tone for the future of the profession of psychology. Certainly, becoming board certified oneself serves to convey a message of interest in competency within the profession and to those with whom we interact.

Participation by psychologists in their professional groups, board certification organizations, and related academies, as well as in consumer groups, is essential. Local, state, and national organizations interested in the profession of psychology are often much more active in legislative activities than many psychologists are aware. Although most involvement in these organizations comes at the cost of volunteering time and effort, over the long haul the cost of not being involved may well exceed that of volunteering.

Although many psychologists seem reluctant to engage in issues related to politics, public policy, health insurance issues, and such, these are areas that inevitably impact the practice of psychology. As public policy forms and reforms, involved psychologists will be the ones who set the stage for the direction of the profession within such policy.

RESOURCES

Information regarding neuropsychology board certification and related issues may be found through:

- The American Board of Professional Psychology www.abpp.org
- The American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology www.theabcn.org
- The American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology www.theaacn.org
- BRAIN (Be Ready for ABPP in Clinical Neuropsychology) <http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/svc/alpha/n/neurobehavioral/brain/>

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