American Board of Clinical Health Psychology

Examination Manual
NOTE: For easy access to the key procedural steps, including fee, registration, and application forms, go to www.abpp.org, the Certification Process, to the Clinical Health Psychology specialty, click on appropriate step.

INTRODUCTION

Specialty certification in Clinical Health Psychology by the American Board of Clinical Health Psychology (ABHP), a member specialty board of the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP), is a process which verifies the education, training, and experience requisite to the specialty. Having met these requirements, the candidate must pass an examination administered by the ABHP designed to allow the psychologist to demonstrate the defining competencies required to practice the specialty.

Definition of the Specialty

Clinical Health Psychology is the specialty that applies scientific knowledge of the inter-relationships among behavioral emotional, cognitive, social and biological components in health and disease to the promotion and maintenance of health; the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of illness and disability; and the improvement of the health care system. It is dedicated to the development of knowledge regarding the interface between behavior and health, and to the delivery of high quality services based on that knowledge to individuals, families, and health care systems.

The specialty, as defined, serves as the basis for the examination, the practice sample submission and review, and the oral examination. The specialty definition is further elaborated through the competencies characteristic of the specialty, and serve as the basis for the evaluation of the candidate’s performance in the oral examination. The competency domains are:

- **Assessment and Intervention**

  The assessment and intervention competencies related to the practice of clinical health psychology are fundamental aspects of the examination. Two samples of the candidate’s practice are submitted and reviewed together with the candidate's pattern of practice through his/her professional statement.

- **Science Base and Application**

  The science or discipline base of the specialty is the appropriate application of that base to the contemporary practice of clinical health psychology, including the applicant’s awareness of theory and research pertaining to issues of cultural, diversity, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. Also necessary is familiarity with the fundamentals of physical illness and the professional techniques and systems providing treatment for them.

- **Ethics and Legal Foundations**
The candidate should be aware and appropriately exercise ethical and legal standards. This includes the APA Ethical Principles and current statutory provisions and case law precedents applicable for the protection of the interests of individuals, groups, organizations, the profession, and society.

- **Professional Identification**

  The candidate is expected to demonstrate meaningful involvement with the profession in general and the specialty in particular.

- **Consultation and Supervision**

  These competency areas have emerged as significant of practice for many specialties. They are often included in the specialist’s regular professional functioning.
Certification Process

Briefly, the certification process consists of the following stages:

I. Application: Eligibility for Candidacy
   II. Practice Sample Preparation, Submission, Review
   III. Oral Examination

I. Application: Form, Fee, and Submission

The Application Form for Clinical Health Psychology is available from the ABPP Web site or by request as hard copy from the ABPP Central Office. To obtain the Web site download, go to www.abpp.org, then to Certification Process, scroll down to Clinical Health, then click on Application.

The Application Form should be completed in full (do not cite a vita) and sent to Central Office with the fee of $125. Any endorsements should be included with the application form. A copy of the applicant’s doctoral transcript should be arranged to be sent directly to the CO. The CO shall verify licensure and professional standing (disciplinary status).

The application provides the base of information by which candidacy for the examination is determined. The generic requirements are reviewed for compliance at the CO by the Executive Officer. Applicants meeting the generic requirements are then reviewed by the specialty board for compliance with the specialty’s specific doctoral level and post-doctoral education, training, and experience requirements.

Applicants meeting the generic and specialty requirements become Candidates qualified to complete the examination process. Applicants are informed of the results of the eligibility review by the Executive Officer upon final recommendation of the Specialty Board.

Generic Degree and Program Criteria

a. A doctoral degree from a program in professional psychology which, at the time the degree was granted, was accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA) or the Canadian Psychology Association (CPA, or

b. A doctoral degree which, at the time the degree was granted was from a program listed in the publication, Doctoral Psychology Programs Meeting Designated Criteria, or

c. The applicant is credentialed as a health service provider in the current Directory of the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology, or the current Canadian Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology, or

d. Holds a current Certificate of Professional Qualifications in Psychology (CPQ) from the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB), or

e. Holds a doctoral degree in psychology and has subsequently been certified as completing the requirements of a formal, doctoral level, professional
program which meets the APA accreditation requirements in clinical, counseling, or school psychology.

f. Individualized exception reviews are available for degrees granted outside the U.S. or Canada, doctoral degrees granted prior to 1983, or for applicants claiming equivalent doctoral degree and program requirements. Such exceptions are coordinated through the ABPP Executive Officer and the appropriate specialty board.

**Specialty Specific Program Criteria**

The applicant must have two years of acceptable qualifying experience, at least one year of which has been supervised (although six months may be credited for a documented pre-doctoral specialty rotation in health psychology). This supervised experience must include clinical health psychology assessment and intervention. Applicants may also apply for certification after the successful completion of a post-doctoral internship in clinical health psychology that has been accredited by the American Psychological Association. The Board recognizes that an applicant may not have been engaged full-time in the clinical health practice of health psychology. Activities such as teaching, research, and administration may qualify if they are in the area of clinical health psychology, and provided the applicant devotes a significant amount of time to professional practice in this area.

Experience in independent private practice will be accepted only if preceded by three years of experience under professional supervision. The requirements are that the first year of supervision should have been under the direction of a psychologist. It is preferred that psychologists supervise the second and third years as well. Appropriate prepractice experience is defined as work in a setting where systematic direct supervision is provided by a qualified person and the candidate’s total work subject to review. Group practice in which the members band together merely to share a suite of offices does not satisfy this experience requirement.

Applicants should be presently engaged in professional work in clinical health psychology and have evidence of continuing education in the profession of psychology during the years of post-doctoral experience. They should demonstrate professional commitment as evidenced by membership and active participation in professional psychological organizations having identifiable purposes and policies congruent with those of ABPP. Finally, applicants must be licensed or certified at the independent practice level.

**Licensure**

a. The applicant must be licensed or certified as a psychologist at the independent practice level by the State, Province, or Territory of the US or Canada in which the psychologist practices.

b. Exceptions for the above are recognized for active duty uniformed service psychologists when practicing in those roles or for Organizational and Business Consulting specialists (I/O) if that specialty’s scope of practice is excluded from statutory licensure or certification.
II. PRACTICE SAMPLE

The Practice Samples demonstrate the candidate’s practice at the specialty level and are reviewed by the specialty board to ensure that level is met and to serve as an important part of the oral examination.
OVERVIEW

The clinical health psychologist uses his/her specialty skills in a variety of ways for effecting change. The client may be an individual, a group, or an institution. Ordinarily, the nature of the psychologist's intervention is based on a realistic assessment of the problem presented. In other words, he/she "sizes up" the problem and uses professional skills to effect constructive change. Samples of such professional functioning are required to aid the examiners in establishing a candidate's level of competence.

Practice samples should reflect the fact that the psychologist possesses an explicit and coherent rationale for what he/she does. Implicitly or explicitly, the practice samples should also reflect awareness of ethics as well as a thorough awareness of relevant theory and research. If either of the practice samples does not meet these criteria, it will be deemed unacceptable and the candidate will be invited to submit a revised practice sample.

SUBJECT MATTER OF THE PRACTICE SAMPLES

The practice samples should represent a relevant problem in two different areas of clinical health psychology. Each should be sufficiently comprehensive to demonstrate breadth of competency and should incorporate a question or set of questions appropriate for practice by a clinical health psychologist. Candidates should identify the relevant characteristics of the problem, background information provided by previous psychological, medical and other examiners, salient aspects of problem, and other relevant material obtained. Describe the evaluative procedures and the intervention, consultation, or supervision competencies used (if these are part of the practice sample) and the rationale for employing them. Be explicit about any opinions, conclusions, or recommendations. Practice samples should include copies of original reports, case notes, referral notes, and other relevant material. Often these data will be most appropriately found in appendices to the practice sample. It is through the inclusion of these data, that the practice sample becomes much more than just a story about a patient or program.

QUALITY OF PRACTICE SAMPLES SUBMITTED

The practice samples should reflect that the candidate is practicing clinical health psychology at the specialist level of competency. Health psychology is the aggregate of the specific educational, scientific, and professional contributions of the discipline of psychology to the promotion and maintenance of health, the prevention and treatment of illness, the identification of etiologic and diagnostic correlates of health, illness, and related dysfunction, and the analysis and improvement of the health care system and health policy formation (Matarazzo, 1980).

The specialty requires a biopsychosocial understanding of human behavior. Candidates are expected to be familiar with and comfortable in medical settings, skilled in a wide variety of diagnostic techniques, capable of providing treatment for a broad range of conditions, knowledgeable of and experienced in disease prevention/health
promotion strategies, competent in consultation, and committed to interdisciplinary collaboration. It is expected that they will be aware of psychological presentations of organic disease, psychological conditions which may occur secondarily to organic diseases, somatic presentations of psychological dysfunction, and somatic complications of psychological dysfunction.

Candidate's practice samples should demonstrate the integrated application of the broad range of psychological and allied clinical and research literature and concepts required to the advanced practitioner in the field. If applicable, practice samples should demonstrate understanding of biological and social bases of behavior, individual differences, human anatomy and physiology, pathophysiology, psychological and neuropsychological assessment, applied pharmacology, social systems theory, human development, social and psychological bases of health and disease, psychopathology, intervention techniques (to include short-term psychotherapy, behavior therapy, family therapy, and specific interventions for specific problems), epidemiologic and prospective research, health assessment and intervention, health policy, health care organizations, and ethics and professional responsibility. The practice samples should demonstrate that the candidate possesses an explicit and coherent rationale for his/her work. Additionally, they must be in compliance with APA ethical and professional standards.

EVALUATION OF PRACTICE SAMPLES

The practice samples will be reviewed by three ABPP Diplomates designated by the Board. Each applicant is given the opportunity to submit two different sets of practice samples. That is, if the first practice samples are not satisfactory, then a second set may be submitted as part of one application. To have practice samples accepted so that one may proceed to the oral phase of the examination it is necessary for two separate reviewers to accept each practice sample. If the second set of practice samples is not accepted by the Board, the candidate reverts to applicant status. His/her application will be reviewed again by the Board at that time and he/she will be given specific instructions following that review. In most cases of practice sample failure, the Board will require additional training and, following that training, reapplication for the diploma.

Please Note: Candidates have one year to submit satisfactory practice samples. After one year, the application will be considered to have lapsed, and any further action will require a new set of application materials to be submitted, including all relevant fees in effect at that time. ABPP reviewers who rate a practice sample as unsatisfactory are required to send to the Examination Committee of the Board a list of suggestions to help the candidate with subsequent submissions. It is appropriate for candidates to review their practice samples with an ABPP Diplomate prior to formal submission.

Candidates whose practice samples are rated satisfactory by at least two of three reviewers will be so informed. As soon as possible after that they will be invited to sit for the examination.
INSTRUCTIONS: Part I Candidates; Part II Senior Candidates

For All Submissions

1. Prepare four copies of all written material on 8½" x 11" white paper, typed, double-spaced with one inch margins all around. All copies should be clear photocopies.

2. Send to the Examination Coordinator of the ABHP four copies of all materials, including any tapes being submitted. Each copy should be bound separately. All copies will be retained by the Board, along with your application and other data submitted. Send the fee/registration Practice Sample form to the ABPP Central Office.

Part I. Candidates:

3. Practice samples should be developed from current (within the last two years) professional activities and should be prepared specifically for the purposes of your examination. If psychological test reports are submitted, the raw data on which the reports are based should be submitted as an appendix to the practice sample.

4. While the length of each practice sample is left to the discretion of the candidate, it should be of sufficient length to satisfy the specific criteria listed in these guidelines. Each practice sample should be concise and thorough. Psychological test data should be appended as supporting materials, including a Summary Data Sheet for each work sample on which all relevant scores are reported in an organized, readily understandable format.
5. In providing case materials it is important that you "dummy" the text and supporting materials so that you have properly protected the identity of those involved.

6. The practice samples should include copies of your original reports, case notes, referral notes, and other relevant material. Often these data will be most appropriately found in appendices to the practice sample. It is through the inclusion of these data, that the practice sample becomes much more than just a story about a patient or program.

7. Please put your name, address and phone number on the materials you send.

8. Materials not conforming to these guidelines will not be accepted.

Part II. Senior Candidates:

A clinical evaluation and intervention sample is not required for the examination of the Senior Health Psychologist. Instead, submission of a professional portfolio serves to replace this requirement. This portfolio should include a recent curriculum vita and a statement describing the applicant’s contribution to health psychology. This statement should serve as an elaboration of the facts provided in the initial application form. It may describe the applicant’s clinical practice, or it may be a copy of a professional publication or description of teaching, training, or clinical research project which relates to the practice of health psychology.

The Board recommends three to five double spaced typewritten pages regarding commitment and involvement to address this assignment. The CV and portfolio should provide the candidate with the opportunity to communicate with the committee about who she or he is as a health psychologist, and serve as a basis for the discussion in the opening portion of the oral examination. The statement should represent the typical professional functioning of the applicant, such that he or she can discuss it in depth with the examiners, rather than reflecting a unique experience that is less representative. The information given by the candidate regarding orientation and expertise should be congruent with the candidate’s actions throughout the examination process. The portfolio should also include a description of the full scope of the candidate’s professional activities beyond his or her employment.

The portfolio is sent to the exam chair. This is considered an integral second stage of the examination process and will be reviewed by the committee. The chair sends the portfolio to two exam committee members to review independently, and votes on acceptability only if the two members disagree. If they are found to meet criteria, the candidate then proceeds to the oral portion
STAGE THREE of the examination. If it does not, it will be returned to the applicant with specific details about ways it does not meet criteria, and the current exam process is terminated at that point. In such an event, the applicant may re-apply for the senior exam from the beginning of the SECOND STAGE after six months.

**EXTENSION OF TIME FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PRACTICE SAMPLES**

Should a candidate encounter special difficulties in completing submission of the practice samples within the time limit allowed, he/she may request an extension by communicating with the Board in writing. The request should explain the circumstances upon which the request is based and indicate the candidate's plans for completing the submission of the practice samples.
CRITERIA FOR JUDGING THE ADEQUACY OF PRACTICE SAMPLES

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1. The purpose of the service provided is clearly described.
2. The conceptual basis/rationale for selection of procedures is clearly evident.
3. Evaluative procedures are accurately reported and presented in a clear, well-organized format.
4. Conclusions/recommendations are supported by the data and by literature citations, if appropriate.
5. Relevant risk factors are identified and integrated in the practice sample.
6. Emotional/psychopathological factors are appropriately assessed and incorporated.
7. The practice sample demonstrates appreciation of biomedical factors, including, where relevant, anatomy and physiology, pharmacology and relevant medical procedures.
8. The practice sample demonstrates a specialty level of competence (diagnostic or treatment complexity, ability to address the patient as an individual vs. a "cookie cutter" approach, or exercise of judgment and maturity in handling difficult clinical issues).
9. The practice sample demonstrates skill with a variety of diagnostic techniques.
10. The materials show an ability to communicate clearly and professionally with other health care providers and to work in interdisciplinary collaboration with other members of a health care team.
11. The practice sample conforms to ethical standards and reflects an awareness of those standards.
12. Recommendations are substantive, well founded, and given in sufficient detail to foster their implementation.

Decision:

1. Fully Satisfactory
   A. Practice Sample #1 represents a different area of Health Psychology from practice sample #2.
   B. Each practice sample successfully addresses all 12 stated criteria.

2. Basically Satisfactory (At applicant's discretion may resubmit work sample to correct noted deficiencies.)
A. Practice sample #1 represents a different area of Health Psychology from work sample #2.
B. Each work sample successfully addresses most of the 12 stated criteria.

3. Unsatisfactory (Applicant must develop a new, independent work sample for resubmission.)

COMMENTS:

EVALUATOR: ____________________________

III. THE ORAL EXAMINATION

The oral examination must be completed within one year of the notification of acceptance of the practice samples with registration/fee form (with $450) to be sent to the ABPP Central Office. Upon receipt of the registration/fee form the candidate shall be contacted in order to schedule the oral examination date and location.

The oral examination encompasses a 3 to 4 hour schedule of time during which the information and products submitted by the candidate are reviewed by an examining team of 3 certified clinical health psychology specialists. The examination addresses the following interrelated domains of competencies characteristic of the specialty described under the definition of clinical health psychology.

To organize the oral examination, “the Examination Coordinator of the specialty board appoints a chairperson for the candidate’s oral examining committee. The chair works directly with the candidate until the conclusion of the examination. The chair will try to select examiners whose areas of theoretical orientation, practice and professional interests are similar to those of the candidate as set forth in his/her professional statement. The chair and two other examiners review all documentation and samples submitted by the candidate in preparation for the examination. The oral examination format consists of several areas of focus. The candidates “professional statement” serves as a base from which to review the candidate’s pattern of practice, including the theoretical and empirical bases of that practice. The candidates practice samples provide a similar opportunity to explore the approach, rationale, and issues related to those samples. Some candidates use audio or video to clarify the discussion of their sample. The candidate proceeds through exam stations focused on the practice sample, fact finding by use of a clinical vignette, and discussions of ethics and professional issues affecting the practice of clinical health psychology. Involvement with continuing professional education and activities, which enhance and maintain professional growth is expected. While thorough, the oral exam is collegial and designed to allow the candidate to demonstrate knowledge and skill in an environment that is as low stress as possible. Candidates are reminded that the Board ascribes no greater importance to one theoretical orientation than another and that the candidate is examined within his/her theoretical orientation. Mentors or Board Members are quite willing to discuss suggested preparation for the examination in advance. The results of
the examination are forwarded to the Executive Officer for notification to the Candidate. Successful candidates are forwarded the Diploma by mail soon after the oral examination.

**Appeal of Negative Decision**

For procedural reasons at the Practice Sample or Oral Examination components of the examination may be made by contacting the specialty board and requesting the formal appeal procedures.