

EXPANDING AREA OF PRACTICE VERSUS ENTERING A NEW AREA OF PRACTICE: WHY WE NEED TO BE FAMILIAR WITH THIS DISTINCTION

During the past few years, NSBEP has had a significant number of new applicants checking areas in the section of the application asking about intended areas of practice for which they have not had an integrated and organized sequence of formal study. For example, we have had applicants trained in clinical psychology indicating their intent to practice school psychology and conversely and we have received applications from those trained in counselling psychology indicating intent to practice school or clinical psychology. We have also received applications from individuals who do not have an applied degree wanting to practice in applied areas.

In addition to this, NSBEP has received numerous requests from candidates to expand their practice into other practice areas. Also, largely through the complaint process, NSBEP has recognized that some registrants, who have completed their candidacy within an appropriately identified practice area, have later expanded their practice to include those areas for which they did not receive sufficient formal training.

NSBEP recognizes there are areas of overlap in the education and training of psychologists. However, there is also a significant body of theory and knowledge regarding practice that is unique to the different practice areas. When an applicant applies for registration, it is made clear to them that their degree must reflect an integrated and organized sequence of study. When a registrant wants to move to a new area of practice, this same standard applies. While they may already have a large number of foundational courses, it is also the requirement that they have an integrated and organized sequence of studies directly related to the new practice area that they wish to enter.

Some of the confusion appears to involve a failure on the part of some registrants to recognize the distinction between expanding within an area of practice and entering a new area of practice. The following is offered to help clarify this important distinction.

Having achieved an integrated and organized sequence of study within a practice area, the psychologist may decide to expand the population they are working with or learn other new skills related to that practice area. Doing this would be governed by Standard **IV.1** as outlined below.

Moving to a new practice area without having the integrated and organized sequence of study required for others working in the area, however, would very likely be considered a violation of Standard **IV.3**.

From the Standards for Providers of Psychological Services

Standard **IV.1** Psychologists shall limit their delivery of services to those areas of competence as defined by verifiable training and experience.

Interpretation: In the event that a psychologist chooses to **expand** services beyond the range of those usually delivered, the psychologist shall obtain pertinent training and/or appropriate professional supervision

Standard **IV.3** Psychologists who wish to **change** their service specialty or to **add** an additional area of specialization must meet the same requirements with respect to subject matter and professional skills that apply to a post-graduate training in the new specialty.

Interpretation: Training psychologists to qualify them for change in specialty will be under the auspices of appropriate institutions that offer post-graduate training in that specialty. Such training should be individualized, due credit being given for relevant course work or requirements that have previously been satisfied. For example, merely taking an internship or acquiring experience in a practicum setting is not considered adequate preparation for becoming a clinical, counselling, industrial-organizational or school psychologist when prior training has not been in the relevant area. Fulfillment of such an individualized training program may be attested by the award of a certificate by the supervising department or professional school indicating the successful completion of preparation in the particular specialty.

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