

# ASPPB

## Guidelines on Practicum Experience For Licensure

Association of State and Provincial  
Psychology Boards

January 2009

## **ASPPB GUIDELINES ON PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE FOR LICENSURE**

**January 2009**

This is the final report of the ASPPB Task Force on Guidelines for Practicum Experience. The Task Force was co-chaired by Emil Rodolfa, Ph.D. and Jack Schaffer, Ph.D., staffed by Steve DeMers, Ed.D, and the members included: Jorge Torres-Saenz, Ph.D. and Ron Ross, Ph.D.

This Task Force was developed to provide guidance to ASPPB members who wish to consider the possibility of including experience gained during practicum training in their licensing regulations.

### **HISTORY:**

In 2000, the American Psychological Association (APA) held two meetings of representatives of 30 associations to examine the sequence of training leading to licensure. The following comments about the APA Commission recommendation are excerpted from the Commission's final report published in January 2001.

The Commission reviewed the process of training in relation to the twin goals of quality of education and training and relevance to the changing marketplace and emerging specialties. In essence, the Commission was charged with reviewing the current state of education and training in professional psychology for the purpose of determining at what point basic readiness for independent practice is achieved.

The Commission specifically and explicitly stated that two years of organized, sequential, supervised, professional training experience (in addition to completion of the doctorate) is necessary and sufficient for entry-level professional practice. The Commission affirmed a one-year, formal, predoctoral internship as a necessary component in the sequence of education and training, and recommended that this be added as an explicit aspect of APA policies regarding licensure. Students currently receive a substantially increased amount of supervised professional training in practica prior to internship. Provided that this pre-internship practicum experience is organized, sequential, and well supervised, the Commission believed that this experience met the need for a second year of training in addition to the internship. However, the additional year could also be obtained after the predoctoral internship and the granting of the degree, through postdoctoral experience. Thus, the Commission did

not recommend decreasing supervised experience for licensure, but rather recommended increased flexibility in the timing of these experiences.

The Commission concluded that current training of many doctoral psychologists provides them with sufficient experience to be competent for entry-level practice upon completion of the internship and doctoral degree (when they have completed two years of organized, sequential, supervised professional training experience predoctorally). At the same time, the Commission explicitly and strongly wished to affirm the value of organized, sequential, supervised postdoctoral experiences for those who wish to receive further training. Obviously, psychologists who do not receive two years of such training predoctorally should have the option of receiving it postdoctorally. In addition, for those psychologists who have received two years of training predoctorally, the Commission saw organized postdoctoral training programs, postdoctoral consultation, and postdoctoral supervision as an important mechanism for the development of advanced competency and expertise for professional practice.

After additional study and review, the APA Council of Representatives voted in 2006 to change the APA model licensing act as follows:

*The American Psychological Association recommends that for admission to licensure applicants demonstrate that they have completed two years of supervised experience, which can be completed prior or subsequent to the granting of the doctoral degree.*

Although APA is currently working to revise their model licensing act to allow practicum training to count toward the required supervised professional experience, little attention was paid to defining acceptable practicum experiences or developing guidelines for practicum hours that should count as qualified supervised experience. If hours accrued during practicum may be counted toward the experience requirement for licensure, developing clear guidelines for practicum training is essential to consumer protection.

#### **THE ASPPB PRACTICUM WORKGROUP:**

Without a common understanding about what constitutes acceptable practicum experiences, states and provinces seeking to implement the APA recommended change in licensure requirements will likely develop diverse and possibly inconsistent standards. For instance, in 2007 the State of Washington changed its law and now candidates for licensure can count practicum experience toward the supervised professional experience requirement. Utah also voted to change its licensing requirement to include hours accrued during practicum training. Although Utah has yet to promulgate final regulations, it appears unlikely that they will match Washington's standards.

If each jurisdiction develops independent regulations for practicum hours that count toward the supervised experience requirement, significant problems in consistency and mobility will result. **By organizing this Task Force, ASPPB is committed to**

**developing model regulations that provide guidance to jurisdictions that choose to modify requirements in the sequence of training leading to licensure, resulting in consistency between jurisdictions.**

Although different associations (Council of Chairs of Training Councils, Commission on Accreditation, Association of Directors of Psychology Training Clinics) have explored practicum competencies, ASPPB organized this workgroup to examine the current understanding of practicum and develop guidelines for practicum training if ASPPB member jurisdictions revise their regulations to include hours of supervised experience accrued during practicum training in lieu of the requirement for a postdoctoral year of supervised professional experience for licensure.

It is important to emphasize that ASPPB has not endorsed the APA model licensure change and this Task Force is not an endorsement of the APA Policy change. ASPPB has numerous significant reservations about this change in the APA model licensing act but wishes to support any jurisdictions that are faced with developing regulations regarding practicum training.

A primary goal of ASPPB is the development of consistent regulations across jurisdictions as a means of supporting mobility, enhancing ethical practice, and protecting the public. As a result, ASPPB believes that before additional confusion and difficulties in mobility result, the development of model regulations are essential.

To develop these guidelines, ASPPB held a meeting of the Task Force in July 2007 and also invited representatives from a variety of important stakeholder groups to attend as workgroup members. The attendees at this meeting included the five members of the ASPPB Practicum Taskforce (Drs. DeMers, Rodolfa, Ross, Torres-Saenz, Schaffer) and Drs., Jeff Baker, Karen Cohen, Kelly Ducheny, Nadya Fouad, Cathi Grus, Robert Hatcher, Steve McCutcheon, Lauren Wilson, and Shelia Woody. Also attending was Nadia Hasan, a doctoral student and APAGS Chair elect. Although these workgroup members are well known in their respective training and education associations, they were asked to attend as individuals with particular expertise in training, rather than as representatives of their associations.

The workgroup goals included:

- 1) Examine current knowledge about practicum competencies
- 2) Examine current knowledge about practicum standards
- 3) Develop recommendations for the ASPPB Practicum Task Force for the development of model regulations.

The basic purpose of this workgroup was to apply current knowledge about competency to the regulatory process. Specifically, the workgroup reviewed previous literature regarding competency and the developmental transition to independent practice (See the citations in the reference list). The workgroup made recommendations for practicum guidelines (regarding settings, services, supervision, competencies required, what hours count, assessment methodologies) to the ASPPB Practicum Task Force. These

recommendations were based on the workgroups current understanding of practicum training.

During the July meeting there were a number of presentations to provide all attendees a common understanding of the current state of practicum training. Dr. Jack Schaffer provided an overview of workgroup goals, Dr. Emil Rodolfa presented an overview of “What We Know About Practicum Training;” Dr. Catherine Grus presented the “Assessment of Competency Benchmarks Work Group;” Dr. Robert Hatcher discussed “Practicum Competencies, Definition of Practicum and Administrative Recommendations CCTC;” Dr. Steve McCutcheon explored the “APPIC Definition of Practicum Hour;” Dr. Jeff Baker summarized the APA Committee on Accreditation’s workgroup on practicum training; Dr. Karen Cohen presented the Canadian Psychological Association’s standards for practicum training and Dr. Steve DeMers summarized the ASPPB regulator’s perspective on practicum training.

After these presentations, the workgroup divided into two small groups, one to examine the content of practicum training and the other to discuss practicum guidelines. The workgroup members then met in a large group to develop a number of specific recommendations for the ASPPB Practicum Task Force.

The ASPPB Task Force discussed the feedback and developed a number of specific recommendations. These recommendations were discussed with the leadership of a number of psychology training associations and then brought before the ASPPB membership.

The Task Force has continued to seek feedback from ASPPB member jurisdictions and numerous associations to develop these guidelines. The following guidelines for practicum training leading to licensure represent ASPPB’s integration of the comments received from the many members and stakeholders participating in this process.

# **ASPPB GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE THAT IS COUNTED FOR LICENSURE**

**JANUARY, 2009**

These guidelines are developed for those licensing boards in the 54 jurisdictions of the United States that, due to changes in licensure requirements, are faced with regarding practicum experiences as meeting specific requirements for licensure. Although these guidelines are not intended as standards for training in all graduate programs, over which ASPPB has no jurisdiction, it is recognized that explicit standards for practica do not exist and these guidelines might serve as a basis for the development of standards that will be used by training programs and to credentialing or accrediting bodies in psychology.

## **1. Organized Sequence of Training**

**Practicum training is an organized, sequential series of supervised experiences of increasing complexity, serving to prepare the student for internship and partially meeting requirements for licensure. Training experiences shall follow appropriate academic preparation and shall be overseen by the graduate training program.**

### Clarification:

In order for the practicum experience to count toward meeting some of the supervised practice requirements for licensure, it is important that that experience not be haphazard or disorganized. Currently, many practicum students are placed in practicum sites based on availability of sites or willingness of sites to provide training, but not on the educational or training needs of the student. In the training models currently in place in most states and territories of the United States, the lack of organization and coordination of practicum experiences does not present a major impediment to the training necessary to prepare a student for licensure, because the internship and post-doctoral supervised experience provides for a breadth of experience and depth of supervision that is considered necessary to prepare an individual to practice psychology independently (Korman, 1976). In that model, the practicum experience provides a basic introduction to practice models and skills and does not demand the same level of organization that is necessary under an alternative model that allows for licensure at the completion of the doctoral degree. When the practicum experiences are designed to meet training requirements for licensure, it is necessary that these experiences be organized and sequential as is required of current supervised experiences necessary for licensure.

## 2. Breadth and Depth of Training

**Practicum training shall be an extension of the student's academic coursework, that is, a student shall not provide services at the practicum level that are not within the scope of the education received.**

**There shall be a written training plan between the student, the practicum training site, and the graduate training program. The training plan for each practicum experience shall describe how the trainee's time is allotted and shall assure the quality, breadth, and depth of the training experience through specification of the goals and objectives of the practicum, the methods of evaluation of the trainee's performance, and reference to jurisdictional regulations governing the supervisory experience.**

**Practicum experience plans shall also include the nature of supervision, the identities of supervisors, and the form and frequency of feedback from the agency supervisor to the training faculty. The training plan for each practicum experience shall also provide a rationale for the experience in light of previous academic preparation and previous practicum training, to ensure that the overall practicum experience is organized, sequential, and meets the training needs of the trainee and the protection of the public. This training plan may be provided to the licensing board as part of the application for licensure.**

### Clarification:

The intent of this guideline is to ensure that the practicum experience occurs in concert with the provision of the knowledge base necessary for the competent practice of psychology and that the training of the student occurs in a manner that ensures that the student's experience prepares him or her for the internship and, beyond the internship, for licensure. In that context, there should be an explicit plan developed for each student who will use the practicum experience to meet requirements for licensure that specifies the experiences necessary, within the context of the graduate training program and the student's previous experiences, to ensure competence appropriate to the level of training of the student. It is the responsibility of the graduate program to provide a rationale for the practicum training for each student, in light of previous academic preparation and previous practicum training. Insofar as this experience will be used to count toward licensure, it is important for the protection of the public that there occur adequate supervision and evaluation, as well as training not only in ethical practice, but in the legal requirements of the jurisdiction in which the training takes place. It is also important that there be coordination of training efforts between the graduate faculty and the practicum site supervisors, so that the supervisor can provide training and evaluation consistent with the student's level of educational progress. In order for the licensing board to evaluate the quality of the practicum experiences of the applicant for licensure, it is necessary that the training program provide to the licensing board the overall training plan for the various practicum

experiences, so that the organized, sequential nature of that training can be assessed by the board.

### 3. Hour Requirement

**Practicum experiences anticipated to satisfy the first year of a two-year training sequence shall be a minimum of 1500 hours of supervised professional experience. At least 50% of the total hours of supervised experience accrued shall be in service-related activities, defined as treatment/intervention, assessment, interviews, report-writing, case presentations, and consultations. At least 25% of the supervised professional experience shall be devoted to face-to-face patient/client contact. Time spent in supervision shall count toward the 1500 hour requirement.**

**EXAMPLE: A student completing a 30 week practicum placement with 16 hours (2 days) of experience in each week would need to spend at least 8 hours in service-related activities per week as noted above and 4 hours of those 8 hours must involve face-to-face client contact.**

#### Clarification:

The intent of this guideline is to ensure that the total supervised experience, including the practica and internship, shall comprise a minimum of 3000 hours. This 3000-hour requirement was chosen because it corresponds with the minimum requirement for supervised experience in many jurisdictions. Many students do not receive 1500 hours of supervised experience that will meet the requirements of these guidelines, during their practica. However, it is not necessary that students do so. Whatever portion of the 1500 hour requirement, in addition to internship, that a student does not receive pre-internship can be obtained on a **post-internship** basis, as described further below.

In the past students have counted a variety of activities as practicum experiences for purposes of application for internship (Rodolfa et al., 2007). Many of these activities are valuable educational or pre-practice experiences. However, some of the activities that have been counted in the past do not adequately meet supervised practice experience requirements for purposes of licensure. Therefore, these guidelines specify that at least 50% of the hours that can be counted must be service related activities to patients/clients and 25% of the counted hours must be in the provision of face-to-face psychological services. The example above provides hours for a common practicum experience. A graduate training program might well decide that additional educational experiences are necessary to enhance student competency. The spirit of these guidelines supports those academic decisions. However, it is recommended to the licensing jurisdictions that only the hours that meet the specifications described in these guidelines ultimately be counted toward licensure. Again, should a student have fewer than 1500 hours of supervised experience pre-internship, additional hours can be accrued after the internship.

#### 4. Supervision

**Individual face-to-face supervision shall be no less than 25% of the time spent in service-related activities; 25% of supervision hours can be in a group setting.**

**EXAMPLE: The student in the above example would be required to receive at least 2 hours of individual, face-to-face supervision each week based on 25 % of the 8 hours of direct services.**

##### Clarification:

These guidelines, based on the recommendations of the APA Model Licensure Act, assume a major change in how the practicum experience is conceptualized. Currently, as stated above, the practicum is introductory to the supervised experience necessary for licensure. In those jurisdictions that change their licensure statutes to allow for licensure after completion of the doctoral degree, the practicum experience is no longer introductory, but a critical part of the sequence of training that leads to licensure. As a result, it is necessary that there be close supervision for students who have little experience in clinical settings. Although the number of hours of supervision required by these guidelines requires a more closely supervised experience than is currently present in many practicum settings, this guideline must be viewed in light of the level of supervision required for beginning practitioners when that experience is to count toward the training required for independent practice. It is also necessary that the supervision be immediate enough that the student receives the feedback and training necessary not only to review past psychotherapy sessions, but to prepare for future sessions. As a result, supervision should allow for visual, as well as verbal, communication in real time. This is not intended to rule out supervision provided through electronic means that allow for interactive verbal and visual communication. The amount of supervision needed is related to the number of hours the student is engaged in service-related activities, as defined in guideline 3. Thus, if a student is engaged in a 16-hour per week practicum, involving eight hours per week of service-related activities, including four hours of direct, face-to-face patient/client contact hours, for the sake of public protection and effective learning, the student would be required to receive two hours of supervision.

#### 5. Supervisor Qualifications

**Although academic program faculty are accountable for the overall education and practicum experiences of their students, on site practicum supervisors play a critical role in the training of students. A licensed psychologist shall have supervisory responsibility for the entire practicum experience, but up to 25% of the time spent in supervision may be provided by a licensed allied mental health professional, or provided by a psychology intern or an individual completing postdoctoral supervised experience who is supervised by a licensed psychologist. Practicum students should have supervisors who are able to extend the student's academic education and all supervisors shall be appropriately licensed in the jurisdiction of practice and**

**be a member of the staff at the site where the supervised experience takes place.**

Clarification:

In order for the practicum experience to be more than introductory, i.e., to count toward licensure, it is essential that the supervision provided be at a high level. Therefore, these guidelines require that a licensed psychologist oversee and have primary responsibility for the quality and quantity of the practicum experience, and that the majority of the supervision is provided by a psychologist, so that the training received is primarily *psychological* in nature. It is also recognized that some diversity of supervision can provide a valuable learning experience for the student. Therefore, these guidelines provide a provision for supervision by other trained mental health professionals, under the oversight of the primary supervisor, a licensed psychologist. It is recognized that in some settings more than 25% of the supervision is provided by non-psychologists. This is considered a legitimate training decision that may well add to the experience the student receives. Training faculty should make decisions based not only on what counts toward licensure, but also on what is in the best training interests of the student. However, only that portion of that experience that meets these guidelines would be counted for purposes of licensure as a psychologist. It is also important that psychologist supervisors are employed at or affiliated with the practicum site so that they exercise clinical responsibility for the services provided as well as understand the agency dynamics, pressures, client population, intervention strategies, and site limitations. Member of the staff can mean employment or contractual arrangement.

Although these guidelines support **25%** of the supervision to be performed by a non-psychologist, many jurisdictions do not allow supervision by non-psychologists. In those situations, only those hours of practicum experience that are supervised by a licensed psychologist will count toward licensure. If a student obtained 1500 hours of supervised practicum experience but 25% of the supervision was provided by a non-psychologist, that student would need an additional 375 hours supervised by a psychologist post-doctorally to be eligible for licensure in those jurisdictions that only accept supervision by a psychologist.

## **6. Training Sequence**

**Several part-time practicum placements of appropriate scope and graded complexity over the course of the graduate training can be combined to satisfy the 1500-hour practicum experience.**

**In general, the development of professional identity and professional relationships (including peers and mentors) requires that a given practicum training placement reflect a minimum of 15 hours per week for a minimum of 30 weeks. Practicum experiences of shorter or longer duration, under the direction of the responsible graduate faculty, can serve as components of a planned, sequenced training program.**

**The graduate program training director shall provide for board of psychology review a certification of the hours accrued by the student during the total practicum experience.**

**When the 1500 hours of supervised professional experience are accrued through a combination of practicum and post-practicum practice, whether during the internship or post-internship, the post-practicum supervisor shall plan and be responsible for the scope, complexity, and duration of the post-practicum portion of the training to ensure that that portion of the training fits the needs of the trainee.**

Clarification:

The pre-internship practical experience of a student typically involves training in two or more settings. This is explicitly allowed by these guidelines, as long as each training experience is part of a comprehensive educational plan for the student, as described in guidelines 1 and 2. Adequate training generally involves a sufficiently intense level of involvement in the service setting that the student is trained not only in specific skills, but also in interpersonal skills and professional identity with colleagues and supervisors. Some flexibility in the number of hours necessary for such training is allowed, as long as the training is under the direction of the graduate faculty and part of a comprehensive training plan for the student. If a student accrues only a portion of the required 1500 hours of supervised experience during practicum experiences, the remaining hours can be accrued either during an extended internship or post-internship. However those hours are accrued, all supervised experience should be part of a plan, such that any hours of supervised experience accrued post-internship or any extra hours accrued during an internship should be designed by the supervisor of that experience specifically to meet the needs of the trainee. To allow a licensing board to conduct an adequate assessment of the training experiences of the student, the complete training plan and a certification of the specific hours accrued by the student that meet the requirements of these guidelines must be provided to the board.

## 7. Setting

**Supervised professional experience leading to licensure shall occur in psychological service settings that have as part of the organizational mission a goal of training professional psychologists. Such settings shall have an identifiable licensed psychologist who is responsible for maintaining the integrity and quality of the experience for each trainee.**

Clarification:

The intent of this guideline is that training of psychologists should be an important part of the mission of the setting in which the student functions. It is not sufficient that a student simply accrue hours in a setting where the primary purpose is to enhance the financial well-being of the supervisor or the setting. It is not expected that a multidisciplinary service setting, such as a hospital, will have a provision in its organizational mission statement; however, a written statement or contract demonstrating that the organization or some component of the organization (such as the psychology staff) is committed to

training of psychologists will be sufficient. It is necessary, however, that such a setting have a licensed psychologist who is identified as responsible for the overall training experience of each student and that the site have other resources necessary to meet the training needs of practicum students.

The term “psychological service setting” should be viewed broadly. That is, it is not necessary that the setting be restricted to the provision of psychological services. A psychological service setting is any setting in which psychological services are provided by a licensed psychologist.

## Reading List

American Psychological Association, (1987) Model act for state licensure of psychologists. *American Psychologist*, 42, 696-703.

### **PRACTICUM COMPETENCY ISSUES**

American Psychological Association Board of Educational Affairs (2007). *Assessment of Competencies Benchmark Workgroup Report*. Washington, DC: Author.

Hatcher, R. L., & Lassiter, K. D. (2007). Initial training in professional psychology: The practicum competencies outline. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 1, 49-63.

Rodolfa, E. R., Bent, R. J., Eisman, E., Nelson, P. D., Rehm, L., & Ritchie, P. (2005). A cube model for competency development: Implications for psychology educators and regulators. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 36, 347-354.

Roberts, M. C., Borden, K. A., Christiansen, M. D., & Lopez, S. J. (2005). Fostering a culture shift: Assessment of competence in the education and careers of professional psychologists. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 36, 355-361.

### **GENERAL PRACTICUM ISSUES**

Kaslow, N. J., Pate, W. E., II, & Thorn, B. (2005). Academic and internship directors' perspectives on practicum experiences: Implications. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 36, 307-317.

Ko, S., & Rodolfa, E. R. (2005) Psychology training directors' views of number of practicum hours necessary prior to internship application. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 36, 318-322.

Korman, M. (Ed.). (1976). Levels and patterns of professional training in psychology. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Lewis, B. L., Hatcher, R. L., & Pate, W. E., II. (2005). The practicum experience: A survey of practicum site coordinators. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 36, 291-298.

Rodolfa, E. R., Owen, J. J., & Clark, S. (2007). Practicum training hours: Fact and fantasy. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology, 1*, 64-73.

Rodolfa, E. R., Ko, S. F., & Petersen, L. (2004). Psychology training directors' views of trainees' readiness to practice independently. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 35*, 397-404.

### **ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCY ISSUES**

American Psychological Association (2006). *Report of the APA task force on the assessment of competence in professional psychology*. Washington DC: Author.

Kaslow, N. J. (2004). Competencies in professional psychology. *American Psychologist, 59*, 774-781.

Smith, I. L. (2006, April). *Survey of assessment methods used in professional education and credentialing: Characteristics, psychometric properties, costs to develop and maintain*. Presentation at the midyear meeting of the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards, Sandestin, FL.

### **OTHER PRACTICUM TRAINING READINGS**

American Psychological Association. (1952). Division of Counseling and Guidance, Committee on Counselor Training: The practicum training of counseling psychologists. *American Psychologist, 7*, 182-188.

Gross, S. M. (2005). Student perspectives on clinical and counseling psychology practica. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 36*, 299-306.

Hecker, J. E., Fink, C. M., Levasseur, J. B., & Parker, J. D. (1995). Perspectives on practicum: A survey of directors of accredited PhD programs and internships (or, what is a practicum hour, and how many do I need?). *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 26*, 205-210.

Lopez, S. J., & Edwardson, T. L. (1996). Quantifying practicum experience: A comment on Hecker, Fink, Levasseur, and Parker (1995). *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 27*, 514-517.

- Peterson, R. L., Peterson, D. R., Abrams, J. C., & Stricker, G. (2006). The National Council of Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology educational model. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology, 5*, 17-36.
- Talen, M. R., Fraser, J. S., & Cauley, K. (2005). Training primary care psychologists: A model for predoctoral programs. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 36*, 136-143.