

Public Notice: Modifications of Specialty Practice Areas and Accreditation Meeting Procedures

The *Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology* (SoA) outline training requirements for doctoral, doctoral internship, and postdoctoral residency programs to be accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA). Correspondent to the SoA are the Implementing Regulations (IRs), which are official policy documents that “elucidate, interpret and operationally define” the APA Commission on Accreditation’s (CoA) policies and procedures. IRs are divided into several different sections (A through E), which are subject to regular review and revision by the CoA. Through this iterative process, opportunities for clarification have arisen regarding IRs in Section C, which relate specifically to the SoA, and IRs in Section E, which address Self-Governance and Regulation.

Postdoctoral Residency Specialty Practice Areas

Via I.A.1.b of the SoA, the CoA requires specialty practice areas in health service psychology to meet at least two of the following requirements:

- i. *The specialty is recognized by the Commission on the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP) of the American Psychological Association or by the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP).*
- ii. *The specialty is recognized by and holds membership on the Council of Specialties (CoS).*
- iii. *The specialty has provided the Commission on Accreditation with specialty-specific postdoctoral educational and training guidelines endorsed by the Council of Specialties.*

Following a period of public comment and review, the CoA has added two specialty areas to the current list of recognized specialty areas. The specialty areas, Group Psychology/Group Psychotherapy and Police and Public Safety Psychology are thereby added to Implementing Regulation C-5 P, Postdoctoral Residency Specialty Practice Areas, which lists the specialty areas in which the CoA awards postdoctoral accreditation.

Commission on Accreditation Meeting Procedures

After using a virtual format for some meetings, the CoA has clarified its policy on Commissioner attendance via IR E.2-1(4). The new IR includes attendance guidelines for a virtual/hybrid CoA meeting in addition to those meetings that are held in-person.

In accordance with the APA “Policies for Accreditation Governance” and the US Department of Education regulations for notice and comment, the CoA is providing additional information and is making the changes available for a thirty (30) day period of public notice starting on March 1, 2022. On behalf of the CoA, thank you in advance for your review.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation

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C-5 P. Postdoctoral Residency Specialty Practice Areas

(formerly C-11(b); Commission on Accreditation, July 2001; revised February 2005; April 2010; July 2013; November 2015; September 2021; [revised for public notice February 2022](#))

The *Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology* (SoA) include provisions for accreditation of postdoctoral residency training programs providing education and training in preparation for entering professional practice at an advanced level of competency in one of the substantive major areas of training (clinical, counseling school psychology, or other developed practice area) or in a specialty practice area. In defining the meaning of “specialty practice areas” for the purposes of the accreditation of **postdoctoral residency training programs only**, the Commission on Accreditation employs the criteria that follow.

The substantive specialty practice area is one that has been endorsed as follows:

- a. *Specialty practice areas in health service psychology. If accreditation is sought in a recognized specialty practice area, the specialty practice area must meet at least two of the following requirements:*
 - i. *The specialty is recognized by the Commission on the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP) of the American Psychological Association or by the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP).*
 - ii. *The specialty is recognized by and holds membership on the Council of Specialties (CoS).*
 - iii. *The specialty has provided the Commission on Accreditation with specialty-specific postdoctoral educational and training guidelines endorsed by the Council of Specialties.*

The following areas currently meet the provisions above:

- Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology
- Clinical Child Psychology
- Clinical Health Psychology
- Clinical Neuropsychology
- Couple and Family Psychology
- Forensic Psychology
- Geropsychology
- Rehabilitation Psychology
- Serious Mental Illness Psychology
- [Group Psychology/Group Psychotherapy](#)
- [Police and Public Safety Psychology](#)

The above list will be updated as new areas meeting the criteria are added.

NOTE: The CoA reviews and makes accreditation decisions about programs that have identified specialty practice areas based on the program’s compliance with the SoA.

E.2-1. Commission on Accreditation Meeting Procedures

(Commission on Accreditation, originally adopted May 1987; revised July 2000, July 2002, March 2003, November 2003, January 2006, April 2006, October 2006, October 2011, July 2018, revised for public notice February 2022)

1. CLOSED SESSION. Due to the confidential nature of program review, the CoA will conduct this portion of its business in closed session. Closed sessions include only CoA members, relevant program review consultants, if any, APA Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation staff, legal counsel (when necessary), and the officially designated liaisons to the CoA from the BEA and the APA Board of Directors. When appropriate, CoA might invite certain people to attend, such as—observers from agencies that recognize accrediting bodies (i.e., U.S. Department of Education, Council of Higher Education Accreditation). The CoA is authorized to conduct specific business in executive session if necessary. Executive session includes only CoA members and the liaisons appointed by the BEA and the Board of Directors. In such instances the CoA chair will confer with senior staff liaisons on the matter of whom else shall attend.

2. OPEN SESSION. The CoA is authorized to conduct business in a specifically designated open session on certain occasions when information from other sources within or outside of APA would be of benefit to CoA members or on those occasions in which the CoA wishes to provide information to other individuals or groups. Open sessions include any individual who requests admittance, invited guests, and any APA members as well as APA staff. In general most CoA deliberations other than program accreditation reviews are conducted in open session, unless CoA determines that a closed session is necessary

3. MEETING TIMES. Meeting times will be arranged by the full CoA with decisions determined by majority vote. Changes in meeting times or arrangements for additional meetings will be arranged by Executive Committee in consultation with APA Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation staff. Issues relevant to these arrangements will be budget, CoA member availability, and factors related to availability of meeting facilities.

4. ATTENDANCE. Members are expected to be present at attend all scheduled meetings of the CoA in their entirety whether in person and/or virtually. Presence at a virtual meeting is defined as being technologically available for the duration of the meeting. A member who is absent for one entire meeting will be contacted by the Chair of the CoA to determine whether the absent CoA member can attend future meetings regularly. Failure to attend be present at a second meeting during the members' term of service will constitute resignation from the CoA. Any Commission member missing more not present for more than a half a day of a meeting will be deemed to have missed the entire meeting. Extenuating circumstances will be considered by the CoA. Whenever possible, advance notice of an anticipated absence for any portion of the meeting is expected.

5. QUORUM. In accordance with the *Accreditation Operating Procedures*, two-thirds of the members shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of making a decision on a program. When a CoA member has withdrawn from a portion of the meeting (e.g., as in a real or perceived conflict of interest situation), that position will not be counted in determining a quorum. The vote of the majority of the CoA members at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be required to make a program decision.

6. LIAISON. The role of the BEA and the Board of Directors liaisons is to (a) share with the CoA the perspectives of their respective boards on educational and training issues, generally, as facilitators of communication with the CoA. Liaisons do not serve to direct or determine CoA policy recommendations nor speak for the CoA; (b) observe the operations of the CoA in the context of its procedures; (c) function only as observers, without voice, during sessions in which accreditation reviews and decisions are being

made about specific programs and (d) share with the BEA and Board of Directors, respectively, general policy issues of concern to the CoA.

7. AGENDA. Agenda items cover areas of CoA responsibility as outlined in “Policies for Accreditation Governance” (section 2). No formal action will be taken on any matter of business that is not an official part of the CoA agenda at a particular meeting. Agenda items of the highest priority will be those pertaining to program accreditation decisions and such other matters as may affect the status of accredited programs.

8. AGENDA ITEMS PRESENTERS. In consultation with the CoA Chair, APA Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation staff assign primary responsibility for study and presentation of particular agenda items to individual CoA member(s) by means of written notification in the regular agenda mailing, with the exception of program review. These items will be assigned by the Associate Chair for Program Review. All assignments are subject to change, should a CoA member be in conflict of interest with the program being considered.

9. AVOIDANCE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST.

a. CoA members. Should a member of the CoA be in a real or perceived possible conflict of interest with respect to any program scheduled for review by the CoA at any particular meeting, that member will be excused during discussion and decision on that program. Further, the CoA may determine that a member is in possible conflict of interest and ask that member to abstain or be recused from discussion and decision on a particular program. CoA members shall adhere to their published conflict of interest policy [see Section E3-1 of this regulations document].

b. BEA/Board of Directors liaisons. Should one of the CoA’s BEA/Board of Directors liaisons be in a real or perceived possible conflict of interest with respect to any program scheduled for review by the CoA at any particular meeting, that liaison will be excused during discussion and decision on that program. Further, the CoA may determine that a liaison is in possible conflict of interest and ask that liaison to be recused from discussion and decision on a particular program. CoA liaisons shall adhere to their published conflict of interest policy [see Section E3-4 of this regulations document].

c. Program Review Consultants. Should a program review consultant be in a real or perceived possible conflict of interest with respect to any program scheduled for review by the CoA at any particular meeting, that individual will be excused during any discussion and decision on that program. Further, the CoA may determine that a consultant is in possible conflict of interest and ask that consultant to abstain or be recused from any discussion and decision on a particular program. Program review consultants shall adhere to their published conflict of interest policy [see Section E3-5 of this regulations document].

10. CoA ACTIONS. CoA actions on any agenda item are not considered final until the adjournment of a regularly scheduled meeting. CoA decisions regarding program review are made in accordance with the *Standards of Accreditation in Health Service Psychology* and the *Accreditation Operating Procedures*.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY. CoA members, Program Review Consultants and the BEA and Board of Directors liaisons will maintain the confidentiality of the program review materials presented at each meeting, the discussions of programs and related materials by CoA members, and the decisions reached regarding any program in the accreditation process with the following exceptions: (a) a list of all accredited doctoral programs, internship training programs, and postdoctoral residency programs shall be published in the *American Psychologist* and CoA decisions will be available on the APA website; (b) disclosure shall be made in those instances when the APA is legally required to disclose such information; (c) at the request of the chief executive officer of the institution where a doctoral program is housed or the administrative head of an internship or postdoctoral residency program, or with his or her consent, information on a specific program may be made available upon request to other accrediting agencies by which the institution has been accredited or whose accreditation it is seeking; (d) as necessary to represent CoA in the accreditation appeal process or related legal proceedings or (e) as otherwise provided in the CoA

Implementing Regulations. The confidentiality requirements of this provision are permanent and continue after service with CoA has ended.

12. DUE DILIGENCE. CoA members must exercise reasonable care in the performance of their duties and must maintain the confidentiality of information relating to the accreditation process and deliberations. If a member fails to do so, and this cannot appropriately be addressed through training, additional actions may be taken by the CoA Chair with the advice and consent of the Executive Committee.

13. CoA MEMBER SITE VISIT.

a. Regular site visits. CoA members shall be removed from the regular pool of site visitors during their tenure on the CoA. In special circumstances (e.g., for unusual or extremely difficult accreditation decisions or for CoA members' training purposes), this rule may be temporarily suspended and a CoA member may serve as a site visitor in a specific instance. Such members may not be an official member of the site team and shall not participate or vote on the CoA's review and action on the program. Program review consultants shall also be removed from the regular pool of site visitors while consulting with the CoA.

b. Special site visits. The CoA may conduct special site visits either in the investigation of formal complaints or of specific SoA-related concerns that require further review. The CoA may appoint one or more of its members to conduct these site visits. These site visitors will produce a detailed written report including any issues that arose during the visit. They also may make themselves available to answer any questions that the primary/secondary reviewers and the review panel may have in formulating a recommendation for the full CoA. Members on special site visits are not required to be recused from participating on the CoA's decision regarding the program in question.

14. CONSULTATION SERVICES. During the term of his/her appointment to the CoA, and for a period of one year thereafter, no CoA member shall offer consultation services to programs (reimbursed or non-reimbursed) for the purpose of assisting them to seek or maintain their accreditation status. The liaisons to the CoA appointed by the BEA and Board of Directors, as well as any program review consultants, shall follow the same procedure. When consulting with a program after the one-year period, the Permanent confidentiality provisions of Section 11 remain in effect. By serving on CoA, members are precluded from testifying in an adversarial proceeding against CoA or APA on behalf of any program that was reviewed during the period the member served on CoA until the program begins its next review cycle. Program review consultants are similarly precluded from testifying.

15. AVOIDANCE OF ANTITRUST LIABILITY. Each CoA member shall be familiar with and adhere to "Guidelines for Board/Commission Members on Avoiding Antitrust Liability." Program review consultants, although not members of the CoA, shall also be familiar with and adhere to such Guidelines.

16. ANNUAL REPORT. The CoA, with assistance of Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation staff, shall prepare a non-confidential annual report of its activities for the BEA, the APA governance, and the general public.