

# Standards of Accreditation in Health Service Psychology: Doctoral Internship

## I. Institutional and Program Context

### A. Type of Program

1. **Location.** This is the setting at which internship education and training in health service psychology takes place (e.g., hospital, counseling center, or VA). Programs can be single-site or multiple-site.
2. **Program**
  - a. The program is sponsored by an institution or agency that provides service to a population sufficient in number and variability to give interns adequate experiential exposure to meet training purposes, aims, and competencies.
  - b. Accredited internships may be structured as full-time or part-time.
  - c. The program may admit interns from any accredited doctoral program (single-entity internship) or from a specific accredited doctoral program (exclusively affiliated internship). Alternatively, the program may admit a portion of its interns from a specific accredited doctoral program (partially affiliated internship). Internship programs may also have consortium agreements.
  - d. The program requires interns to have the equivalent of 1 year of full-time training to be completed in no fewer than 12 months (or 10 months for school psychology internships), or the equivalent of half-time training to be completed within 24 months. The sponsoring doctoral program, internship program, and intern must have a clear understanding of the intern's plan if internship time is to be divided among two or more agencies for half-time training.

### B. Institutional and Program Setting and Resources

1. **Internship program setting descriptions must include:**
  - a. a description of the sponsoring institution/agency;
  - b. a description of the training setting and how it is appropriate for the aims/purposes of the training program;
  - c. a description of how the setting functions primarily as a service provider.
2. **Service Population.** The program has a service population sufficient in number and variability to give interns adequate experiential exposure to meet training purposes, aims, and competencies.

## C. Administrative Structure and Resources

### 1. Administrative Structure

- a. The program offers internship education and training in psychology that prepares students for the practice of health service psychology.
- b. The program is an integral part of the mission of the institution in which it resides.
- c. The administrative structure and process systematically coordinate, control, direct, and organize the training activity and resources.

2. **Administrative Responsibilities.** The program recognizes the importance of cultural and individual differences and diversity in the training of psychologists. The program has made systematic, coherent, and long-term efforts to attract and retain interns and faculty from diverse backgrounds into the program. Consistent with such efforts, it acts to ensure a supportive and encouraging learning environment appropriate for the training of diverse individuals and the provision of training opportunities for a broad spectrum of individuals. Further, the program avoids any actions that would restrict program access on grounds that are irrelevant to success in graduate training, either directly or by imposing significant and disproportionate burdens on the basis of the personal and demographic characteristics set forth in the definition of cultural diversity. Because of the United States' diverse higher-education landscape, training can take place in both secular and faith-based settings. Thus programs with a religious affiliation or purpose may utilize admissions and employment policies that grant a preference to individuals sharing the institution's religious affiliation or purpose, to the extent afforded by the U.S. Constitution. Such policies may not otherwise be used to preclude the admission or employment of individuals based on the personal and demographic characteristics set forth under the definition of cultural diversity. Programs must provide public notice to applicants, interns, faculty, and staff of policies that impact admissions or employment before their application to or affiliation with the program. Regardless of a program's setting, the program may not constrain academic freedom or otherwise alter the requirements of these standards. Finally, compelling pedagogical interests require that the program prepare graduates to navigate cultural and individual differences in research and practice, including those that may produce value conflicts or other tensions arising from the intersection of different areas of diversity.

### 3. Funding and Budget

- a. Interns must be funded so as to lend tangible value to the intern's service contribution and communicate a valid and dignified standing with the professional/trainee community. All interns should be financially supported at a level that is representative and fair in relationship to both the geographic location and clinical setting of the training site. Funding should be reasonable in comparison to other accredited internship programs in the local area. Wherever possible, basic support for health/medical insurance should be in place to protect the welfare of interns and their families.
  - b. The program must have financial support for staff and sufficient and dependable training activities for the duration of the year of the match.
  - c. Funding for the program should be represented in the institution's operating budget and plans in a manner that enables the program to achieve its training aims.
4. **Educational Resources.** The program must demonstrate adequacy of its educational and training resources, including:
- a. clerical, technical, and electronic support sufficient to meet the program's needs;
  - b. training materials, equipment, and access to the current knowledge base in the profession, including access to appropriate technology and resources to stay current with the scholarly literature;
  - c. physical facilities that are appropriate for confidential interactions, including facilities that are compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).

### D. Program Policies and Procedures

1. **Policies.** Policies, including those that also impact other staff, must be relevant to interns in the program. Policy areas include:
  - a. recruitment and selection;
  - b. educational preparation;
  - c. requirements for successful internship completion;
  - d. intern performance evaluation, feedback, retention, and termination decisions;
  - e. due process and grievance procedures;

- f. documentation of nondiscrimination policies and operating conditions and avoidance of any actions that would restrict program access or completion on grounds that are irrelevant to success in graduate training or the profession.
2. **Policies Developed at Another Level.** The program must demonstrate how it implements departmental and institutional policies at the program level. All policies and procedures used by the program must be consistent with the profession's current ethics code and must adhere to the sponsor institution's regulations and local, state, and federal statutes regarding due process and fair treatment.
3. **Availability of Policies and Procedures.** At the start of internship, the program must provide interns with written policies and procedures regarding program and institution requirements and expectations regarding interns' performance and continuance in the program and procedures for the termination of interns.
4. **Record Keeping.** The program must document and permanently maintain accurate records of the interns' training experiences, evaluations, and certificates of internship completion for evidence of the interns' progress through the program as well as for future reference and credentialing purposes.
5. **Complaints and Grievances.** The program must keep information and records of all formal complaints and grievances of which it is aware that have been submitted or filed against the program and/or against individuals associated with the program since its last accreditation site visit.

## E. Program Climate

1. **Diversity**
  - a. The program engages in actions that indicate respect for and understanding of cultural and individual diversity.
  - b. Throughout this document, the phrase "cultural and individual diversity" refers to diversity with regard to personal and demographic characteristics. These include, but are not limited to, age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, national origin, race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.
2. **Supportive Learning Environment**
  - a. The program recognizes the rights of interns and staff to be treated with courtesy and respect. To maximize the quality and effectiveness of the interns' learning experiences, all interactions among interns, training supervisors, and staff should be collegial and conducted in a manner that reflects the highest standards of the profession. (See the current *APA*

*Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct.*) The program has an obligation to inform interns of these principles and of their avenues of recourse should problems arise.

- b. Program staff is accessible to interns and provides them with a level of guidance and supervision that encourages successful completion of the internship. Staff members provide appropriate professional role models and engage in actions that promote interns' acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with the program's training aims.

## **II. Competencies, Training, and Outcomes**

### **A. Required Profession-Wide Competencies**

1. Certain competencies are required for all interns who graduate from accredited programs in health service psychology. Programs must provide opportunities for all of their interns to achieve and demonstrate that each required profession-wide competency has been met.
2. The role of the internship is to build upon competencies in several of the competency areas. (The level of competency expected of interns in all areas will be defined in *Implementing Regulations*.)
  - a. Evidence-based practice in intervention
  - b. Evidence-based practice in assessment
  - c. Ethical and legal standards
  - d. Individual and cultural diversity
  - e. Research
  - f. Professional values and attitudes
  - g. Communication and interpersonal skills
  - h. Consultation/interprofessional/interdisciplinary
  - i. Supervision
  - j. Reflective practice

### **B. Aims of the Program**

1. **Specific Aims of the Training Program.** Consistent with health service psychology standards, the program must provide information on the specific aims of the training program. Program aims should reflect the program's approach to training and intended outcomes.

2. **Program-Specific Competencies.** While accredited internship programs in health service psychology must encompass profession-wide competencies required of all programs, they may also elect to demonstrate program-specific competencies.
  - a. The program must specify if its intended training outcomes will place special emphasis on the development of any competencies in addition to those expected for all psychology interns or to a greater degree of achievement than might be expected for all psychology interns.
  - b. Additional competencies must be current and consistent with the definition of health service psychology, ethics of the profession, and aims of the program.

### C. Learning Elements to Develop Competencies

1. **Educational Activities.** It is the responsibility of the program to have a clear and coherent plan for educational activities that support interns' achievement of both profession-wide and program-specific competencies.
2. **Learning Elements**
  - a. The program's primary training method must be experiential (i.e. service delivery in direct contact with service recipients) and must include sufficient mentoring by, and observation of, psychologists to facilitate interns' readiness to enter into the general practice of psychology on training completion.
  - b. The program must follow a logical training sequence that builds on the skills and competencies acquired during doctoral training.
  - c. Training for practice must be sequential, cumulative, and graded in complexity in a manner consistent with the program's training structure.
  - d. The program must demonstrate that intern service delivery tasks and duties are primarily learning-oriented and training considerations take precedence over service delivery and revenue generation.
3. **Supervision**
  - a. Supervision is regularly scheduled.
  - b. Interns receive at least 4 hours of supervision per week.
  - c. A doctoral-level licensed psychologist, who is involved in an ongoing supervisory relationship with the intern and has primary professional clinical responsibilities for the cases on which he/she provides

supervision, must conduct at least 2 hours weekly of individual supervision during the course of the training year.

- d. Supervisory hours beyond the 2 hours of individual supervision must be consistent with the definition of supervision in the glossary, and must be supervised by health care professionals who are appropriately credentialed for their role/contribution to the program. These interactive experiences can be in a group or individual format.
- e. The doctoral-level licensed psychologist supervisors maintain overall responsibility for all supervision, including oversight and integration of supervision provided by other mental health professionals.

## **D. Outcomes and Program Effectiveness**

### **1. Evaluation of Interns' Competencies**

- a. **Current Interns.** As part of its ongoing commitment to ensuring the quality of its graduates, the program must evaluate intern competencies in both profession-defined and program-defined areas. By the end of the internship, each intern must demonstrate achievement of both the profession-wide competencies and those required by the program. For each competency, the program must:
  - i. specify how it evaluates intern performance;
  - ii. identify the minimum level of achievement or performance required of the intern to demonstrate competency;
  - iii. provide outcome data that clearly demonstrate all interns successfully completing the program have attained the minimal level of achievement of both the profession-wide and program-specific competencies;
  - iv. base each intern evaluation in part on direct observation (either live or electronic) of the intern;
  - v. present outcome data that reflects assessment consistent with best practices (e.g., is reliable and valid, uses multiple methods, and includes at least some direct observation).
- b. **Internship Program Alumni**
  - i. To provide more distal evidence of interns' competencies and program effectiveness, the program must evaluate the functioning of internship program alumni as health service psychologists after they have left the program.

- ii. Each program must provide data on how well the program prepared interns in each of the profession-wide and program-specific competencies. The program must also provide data on interns' job placement and licensure status.

## 2. Evaluation of Program Effectiveness and Quality Improvement Efforts

- a. The program must demonstrate a commitment to excellence through ongoing self-study in order to monitor its performance in training competent health service psychologists and contribute to fulfillment of its sponsor institution's mission.
- b. The program must document mechanisms for engaging in regular, ongoing self-assessment that:
  - i. involves program stakeholders, including training staff, interns, program graduates, and others involved in the training program;
  - ii. evaluates its effectiveness in training interns who, by the completion of the internship, demonstrate competencies required by the profession and the program, and who are able to engage in professional activities consistent with health service psychologists and with the program's aims;
  - iii. has procedures in place to use proximal and distal data to monitor, make changes in, and improve the program;
  - iv. provides resources and/or opportunities to enhance the quality of its training and supervision staff through continual professional development;
  - v. evaluates the currency and appropriateness of its aims, educational activities, policies and procedures with respect to its sponsor institution's mission and goals; local, state/provincial, regional, and national needs for psychological services; national standards for health service psychologists; and the evolving evidence base of the profession.

## III. Interns

### A. Intern Selection

1. **Identifiable Body of Interns.** The program has an identifiable body of interns who are qualified to begin doctoral internship training.
  - a. They are currently enrolled in a doctoral program accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education or by the CPA. If the internship accepts a student from an unaccredited program,

the program must discuss how the student is appropriate for the internship program.

- b. Interns have interests, aptitudes, and prior academic and practicum experiences that are appropriate for the internship's training aims and competencies.
- c. Adequate and appropriate supervised practicum training for the internship program must include face-to-face delivery of professional psychological services.

## **2. Recruitment of Diverse Interns**

- a. The program has made and continues to make systematic, coherent, and long-term efforts to attract interns from different ethnic, racial, gender, and personal backgrounds into the program.
- b. Consistent with such efforts, the program acts to ensure the provision of training opportunities appropriate for the training of diverse individuals. It reviews its success with these efforts and makes changes as appropriate.

## **3. Intern Sufficiency**

The program has at least two interns who:

- a. are provided with opportunities that ensure appropriate peer interaction, support, and socialization;
- b. are provided with opportunities for socialization with other professionals-in-training and interaction with professional colleagues in a manner consistent with the program's training structure;
- c. have an understanding of the program's philosophy, aims, and expected competencies;
- d. have meaningful involvement in those activities and decisions that serve to enhance training and education;
- e. have a training status at the site that is officially recognized in the form of a title or designation such as "psychology intern" (consistent with the licensing laws of the jurisdiction in which the internship is located or with the sponsoring institution).

## **B. Feedback to Interns**

1. Interns receive, at least semiannually, written feedback on the extent to which they are meeting stipulated performance requirements. Feedback is linked to the program's expected competencies and minimal levels of achievement.

2. Such feedback should include:
  - a. timely written notification of all problems that have been noted and the opportunity to discuss them;
  - b. guidance regarding steps to remediate all problems (if remediable);
  - c. substantive written feedback on the extent to which corrective actions are or are not successful in addressing the issues of concern;
  - d. documentation that the intern evaluation was reviewed and discussed by the intern and the supervisor.

#### **IV. Supervisor/Faculty Leadership**

##### **A. Program Leadership**

1. **Administrative Structure.** The program's administrative structure and processes facilitate appropriate review and continuous program improvement to ensure the program achieves its aims and provides the training environment needed for interns to attain all competencies.
  - a. The program director is primarily responsible for directing the training program and has administrative authority commensurate with that responsibility.
  - b. The director should have appropriate administrative skills to ensure the success of the program and serve as a role model for the interns.
  - c. The director must be a psychologist, appropriately credentialed (i.e., licensed, registered, or certified) to practice psychology in the jurisdiction in which the program is located.
  - d. The director's credentials and expertise must be consistent with the program's aims and the expected competencies of its interns.
2. **Intern Training Supervisors**
  - a. Supervisors function as an integral part of the site where the program is housed and have primary responsibility for professional service delivery.
  - b. The program must have a sufficient number of supervisors to accomplish the program's service delivery and to supervise training activities and goals. An accredited internship program must have a minimum of two doctoral-level psychologists on-site.
  - c. Supervisors are doctoral-level psychologists who have primary professional (clinical) responsibility for the cases for which they provide supervision and are appropriately credentialed (i.e., licensed, registered,

or certified) to practice psychology in the jurisdiction in which the internship is located.

- i. When supervision services are conducted in a context where a state or territory credential is required for practice, then the appropriate credential is that provided by the state or territory.
  - ii. When supervision services are conducted in a federal jurisdiction (e.g., the VA or Bureau of Prisons), the credentialing rules pertaining to practice in a federal setting apply.
- d. Supervisors are responsible for reviewing with the interns the relevant scientific and empirical bases for the professional services delivered by the interns.
  - e. Supervisors participate actively in the program's planning, implementation, and evaluation and serve as professional role models to the interns consistent with the program's training aims and expected competencies.
- B. Other professionals who are appropriately credentialed can participate in the training program.
1. The program must demonstrate systematic and long-term efforts to recruit and retain diverse staff from different ethnic, racial, gender, and personal backgrounds as supervisors/faculty in the program.
  2. Consistent with such efforts the program needs to ensure a supportive and encouraging working and training environment. The program reviews its success with these efforts and makes changes as appropriate.

## **V. Communication Practices**

### **A. Public Disclosure**

#### **1. General Disclosures**

- a. The program demonstrates its commitment to public disclosure by providing clearly presented written materials and other communications that appropriately represent it to all relevant publics. At a minimum this includes general program information pertaining to its aims, required training sequence, and expected outcomes in terms of its interns' careers.
- b. The program also demonstrates commitment to public disclosure by providing current information on its use of distance education technologies for training and supervision and implementation strategies to ensure diverse intern cohorts.

- c. The program provides its status with regard to accreditation, including the specific training program covered by that status, and the name, address, and telephone number of the Commission on Accreditation. The program should make available, as appropriate through its sponsor institution, such reports or other materials as pertain to the program's accreditation status.

## **2. Communication With Prospective and Current Interns**

- a. All communications with potential interns should be informative, accurate, and transparent.
- b. The program is described accurately and completely in documents that are available to current interns, prospective interns, and other publics. This information should be presented in a manner that allows applicants to make informed decisions about entering the program. Program descriptions should be updated regularly as new cohorts begin and complete the program.
- c. The program describes its aims; requirements for admission and completion; curriculum; training supervisors, facilities, and other resources; administrative policies and procedures; the kinds of experiences it provides; and training outcomes in documents available to current interns, prospective interns, and other publics.
- d. The program provides reasonable notice to its current interns of changes to its aims, didactics, program resources, and administrative policies and procedures, as well as any other program transitions that may impact its training quality.
- e. The program issues a certificate of completion to all interns who have successfully met all program requirements. The certificate of completion must include a statement about the program's scope of accreditation (e.g., Internship in Health Service Psychology).

## **3. Communication Between Doctoral and Internship Programs**

- a. Throughout the internship year, there should be communication between the doctoral program and the internship program. The nature and frequency of this communication will depend on needs. Communication must take place when problems arise with interns.
- b. The internship should send formal written intern evaluations to the doctoral program at or near the midpoint of the training year and again at internship completion.

## **B. Communication and Relationship With Accrediting Body**

The program demonstrates its commitment to the accreditation process through:

1. **Adherence.** The program abides by the accrediting body's published policies and procedures as they pertain to its recognition as an accredited program, and the program responds in a complete and timely manner to all requests for communication from the accrediting body, including completing all required reports and responding to questions from the accrediting body.
  - a. **Standard Reporting.** The program responds to regular recurring information requests (e.g., annual reports and narrative reports) as identified by the accrediting body's effected policies and procedures.
  - b. **Nonstandard Reporting.** The program submits timely responses to information requests from the accrediting body consistent with its effected policies and procedures.
  - c. **Fees.** The program is in good standing with the accrediting body in terms of payment of fees associated with the maintenance of its accredited status.
2. **Communication.** The program informs the accrediting body in a timely manner of changes in its environment, plans, resources, or operations that could alter the program's quality. This includes notification of any potential substantive changes in the program, such as changes in sequence of experiential training, faculty changes, and changes in administration.