

Complexities of Assessing Competency in Clinical Health Psychology

Kevin T. Larkin, Ph.D., ABPP
West Virginia University



CCHPTP
Council of Clinical Health
Psychology Training Programs

Conflict Statement: I have no conflicts of interest to declare

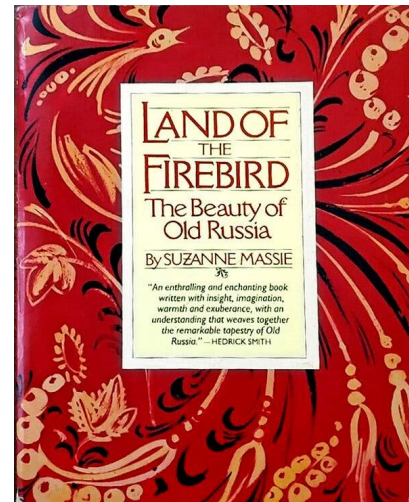


Bernard Charlon/Gamma-Rapho, via Getty Images
(New York Times, Feb 1, 2025)

Suzanne Lisolette Marguerite Massie (née Rohrbach)

January 8, 1931 – January 26, 2025

“Doveryai no proveryai”



“Trust, but verify”

- Term paper submission
- Manuscript submission
- Grant proposal
- Clinical competence
- Clinical expertise
- Program quality
- Delivery of quality health care

- Turn-it-in evaluation
- Peer review process
- Scientific review panel
- Licensure
- Board certification
- Accreditation
- Hospital accreditation

Overview of Today's Talk

- Past - Historical contributions of the Arden House and Tempe Summit conferences in defining competencies in Clinical Health Psychology (CHP) and the programs that train them
- Present - Current modes for assessing CHP competencies for individuals and the academic programs that train them
- Future - Challenges to address and paving the way forward for Clinical Health Psychology

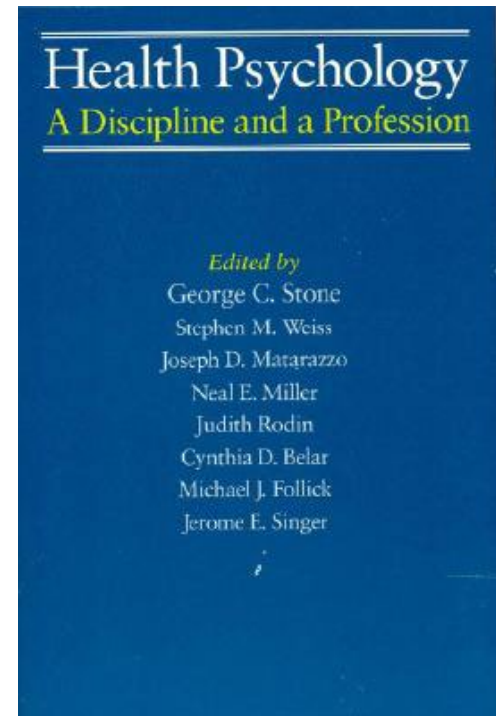
Arden House: Beginnings

National Working Conference on
Education and Training in Health
Psychology

May 23-27, 1983



Health Psychology, 1983, vol 2(5), suppl.



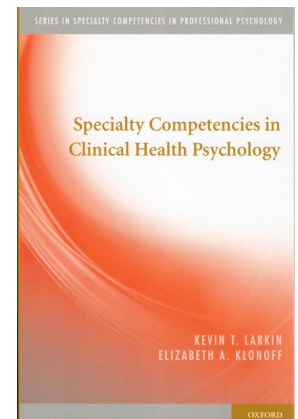
Tempe Summit

Executive Summit on Education and Training in Clinical Health Psychology, Tempe, AZ (March 1-2, 2007)

- Focus: defining entry level competencies of clinical health psychologists
- Commitment to re-establish the inactive professional training council in health psychology

Competencies for Entry Level CHPs

- France, C. R., Masters, K. S., Belar, C. D., Kerns, R. D., Klonoff, E. A., Larkin, K. T., Smith, T. W., Suchday, S., & Thorn, B. E. (2008). Application of the competency model to clinical health psychology. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 39*(6), 573-580.
- Masters, K. S., France, C. R., & Thorn, B. E. (2009). Enhancing preparation among entry-level clinical health psychologists: Recommendations for "best practices" from the first meeting of the Council of Clinical Health Psychology Training Programs (CCHPTP). *Training and Education in Professional Psychology, 3*(4), 193-201.
- McDaniel, S. H., Grus, C. L., Cubic, B. A., Hunter, C. L., Kearney, L. K., Schuman, C. C., Karel, M. J., Kessler, R. S., Larkin, K. T., McCutcheon, S., Miller, B. F., Nash, J., Qualls, S. H., Connolly, K. S., Stancin, T., Stanton, A. L., Sturm, L. A., & Bennett Johnson, S. (2014). Competencies for psychology practice in primary care. *American Psychologist, 69*, 409-429.
- Larkin, K. T., & Klonoff, E. A. (2014). *Specialty competencies in clinical health psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.



Sample: Science Competency

CLUSTER 1: SCIENCE			
Rating: N=Novice; AB=Advanced Beginner; C=Competent; P=Proficient; E=Expert			
Benchmarks Competencies		Clinical Health Competencies	
Rating		Rating	
1. Scientific Knowledge and Methods		1. Scientific Knowledge and Methods of Clinical Health Psychology	
1A. Scientific Mindedness			
Independently applies scientific methods to practice			
1B. Scientific Foundation of Psychology			
Demonstrates advanced level knowledge of core science (i.e., scientific bases of behavior)		Knowledge of pathophysiology of disease and biomedical treatments specific to medical specialty or environment in which the practice will occur	
		Knowledge of the pathways and reciprocal interactions among psychosocial (cognitive/affective/behavioral) and biological phenomena as they relate to health promotion, illness prevention, and disease progression	
		Knowledge of lifespan developmental and social-environmental factors associated with health behavior, illness, and disease	
		Knowledge of the interactions among populations and contextual variations (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, etc.) and the impact on health behavior and health outcomes	
		Knowledge of the scientific foundations and research methods of other health disciplines (e.g., epidemiology, biostatistics)	
1C. Scientific Foundation of Professional Practice			
Independently applies knowledge and understanding of scientific foundations independently applied to practice		Knowledge of relevant scientific literatures as they bear on healthcare and the ability to conceptualize and generate new issues, concerns, and questions based on that knowledge	

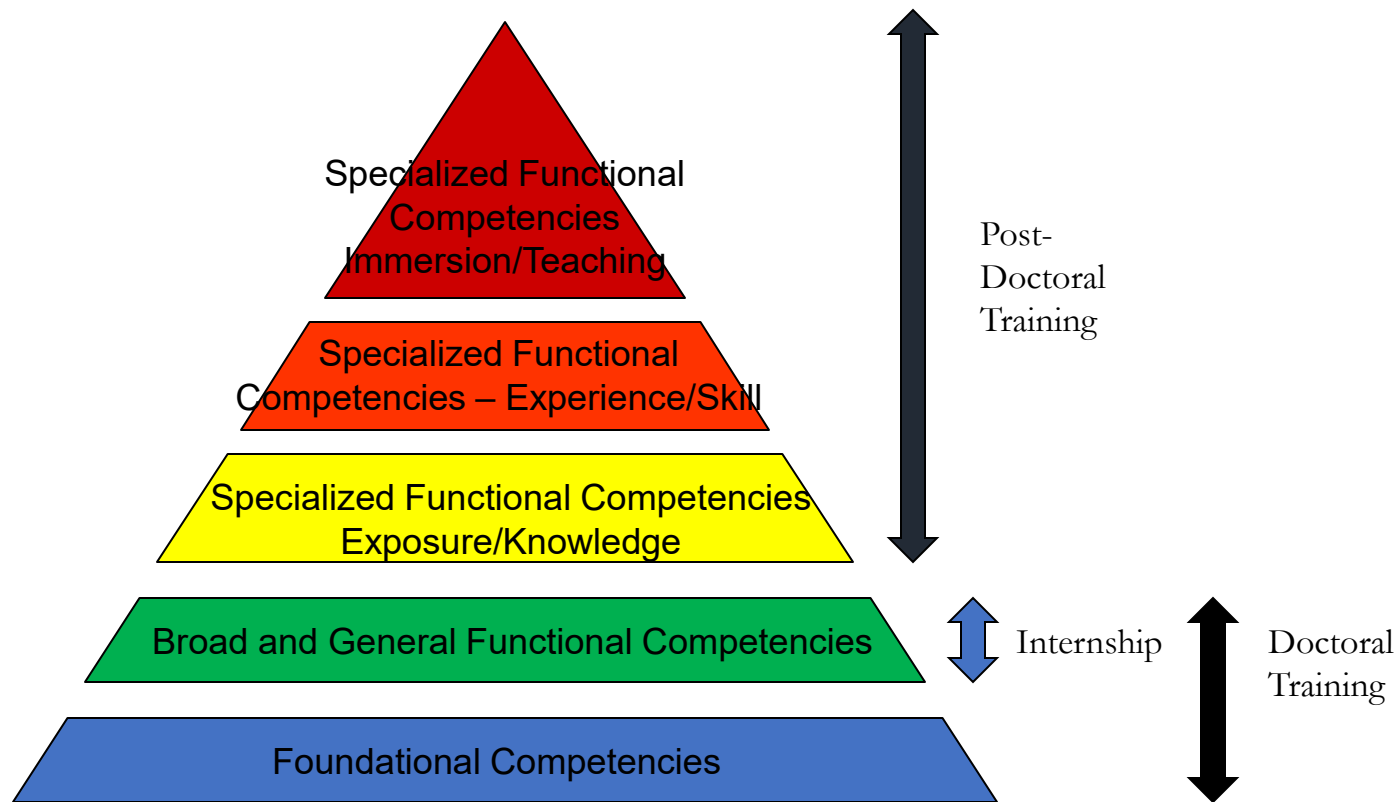
Postdoctoral Residency Specialty Competencies – Clinical Health Psychology

- I. Research
- II. Professional Values, Attitudes, and Behaviors
- III. Communication and Interpersonal Skills
- IV. Assessment
- V. Intervention
- VI. Teaching/Supervision
- VII. Consultation and Interprofessional/Interdisciplinary Skills
- VIII. Leadership

APA Commission on Accreditation (2021)
--

Now let's consider program
evaluation...

Traditional Specialty Training Model



Nash & Larkin (2012)

Where does training in CHP occur?

According to the *Clinical Health Psychology Petition for Recognition as a Specialty in Professional Psychology* (under review):

- “training in clinical health psychology occurs at all levels: doctoral, internship and postdoctoral.” (p. 57)
- “Specialty education and training in clinical health psychology begins at the doctoral level, continues with experiential training during internship and is most often completed during postdoctoral training.” (p. 56)

Accredited HSP Training Programs

Type of Accreditation	2013	2023
Doctoral Programs	374	409
Clinical Psychology (APA)	234	248
Clinical Science (PCSAS)	21	48
Counseling Psychology (APA)	69	74
School Psychology (APA)	63	72
Combined and Integrated Professional Psychology (APA)	8	15
Internship Programs (APA)	470	644
Postdoctoral Programs (APA)	79	175
Clinical Psychology	43	98
Clinical Neuropsychology	19	42
Clinical Health Psychology	7	12
Clinical Child Psychology	7	9
Rehabilitation Psychology	3	11
Geropsychology	0	3

Reality Check!

Specialized training in APA-Accredited Clinical Doctoral Programs (Perry & Boccaccini, 2009)

- 136/231 (59%) programs have at least one specialized area
- 41 (18%) of these programs require a specialization
 - 83 Child psychology
 - 66 Health psychology
 - 47 Neuropsychology
 - 38 Forensic psychology
 - 23 Family psychology
 - 20 Adult psychology
 - 16 Multicultural psychology

Reality Check!

Specialized training in APPIC-member internships and post-doctoral fellowships

- Internship Rotations
 - Clinical Health – 729
 - Primary Care – 590
 - Pediatric Psychology - 105
- Postdoctoral Fellowships
 - Clinical Health – 248
 - Primary Care – 210
 - Pediatric Psychology – 60

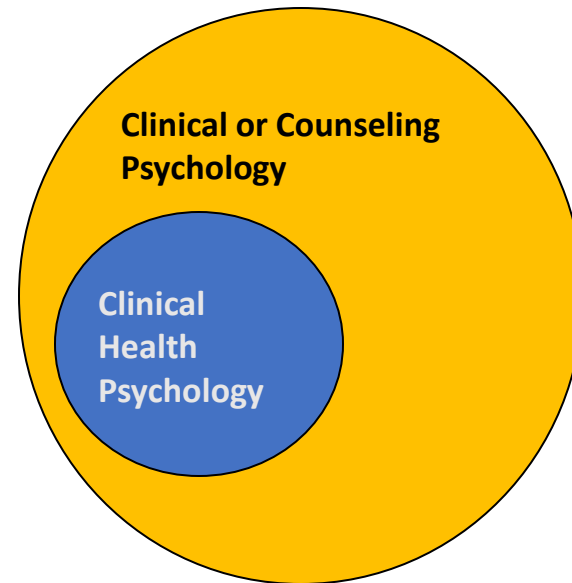
as of February 9, 2025

Types of Doctoral Training Programs

- Exclusive Programs

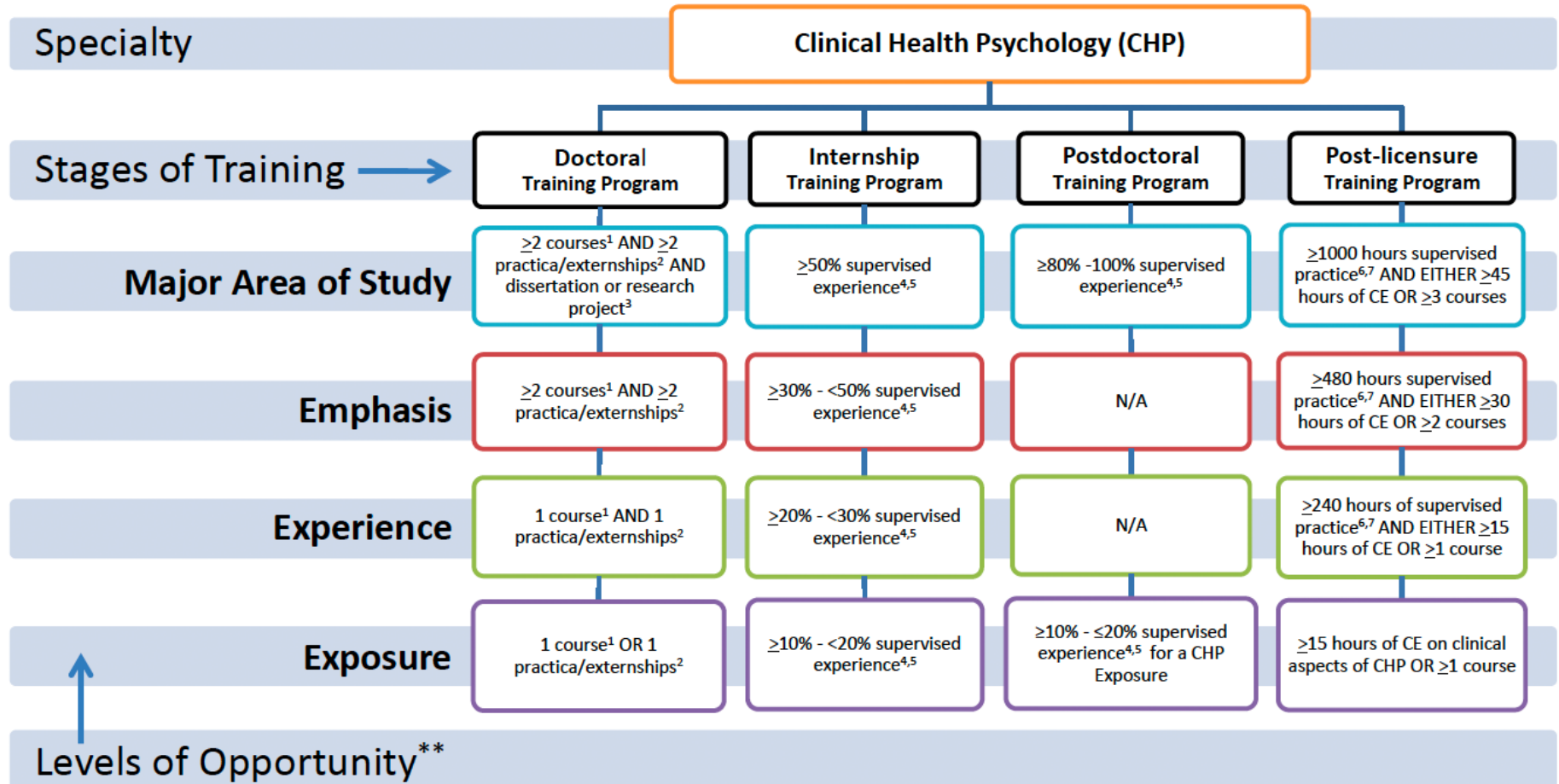


- Embedded Programs

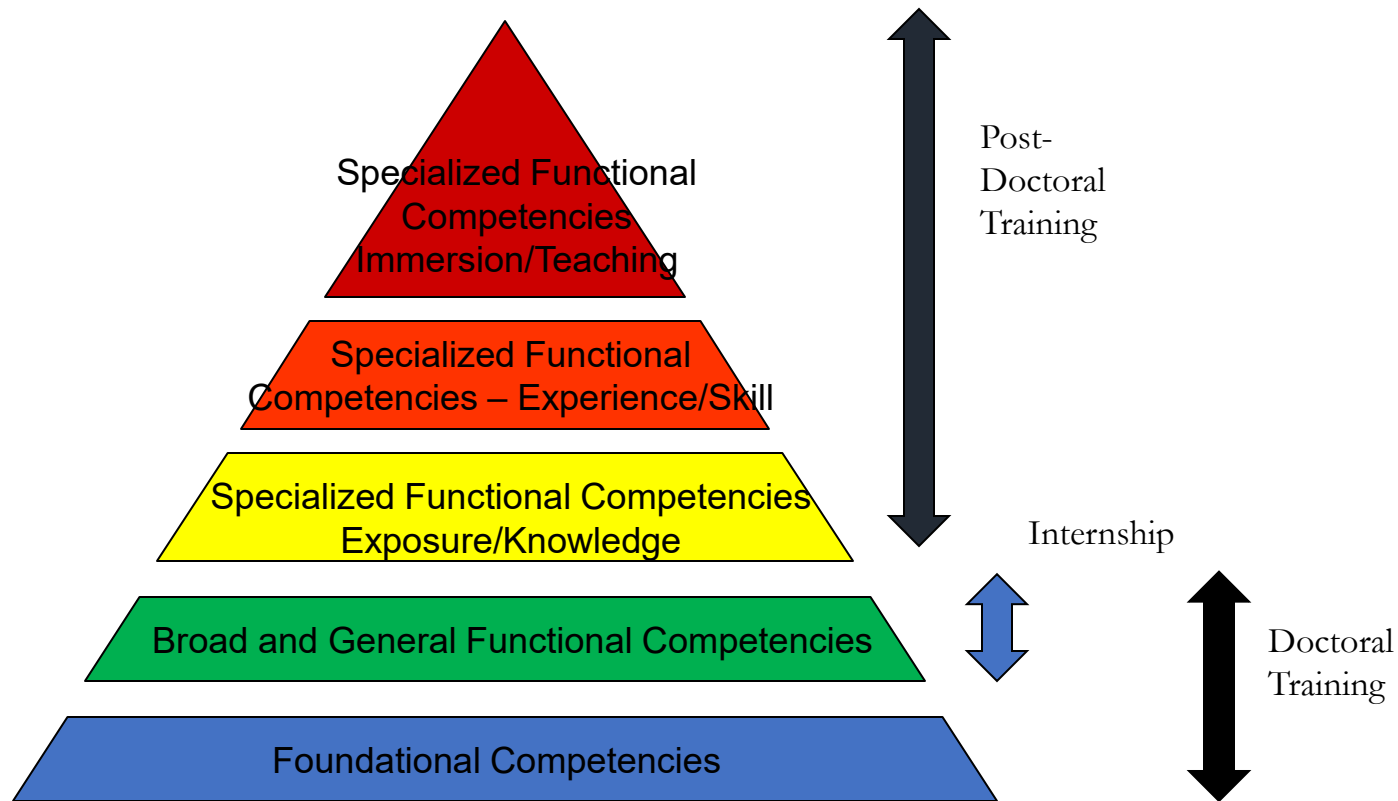


Larkin (2009)

CHP Taxonomy

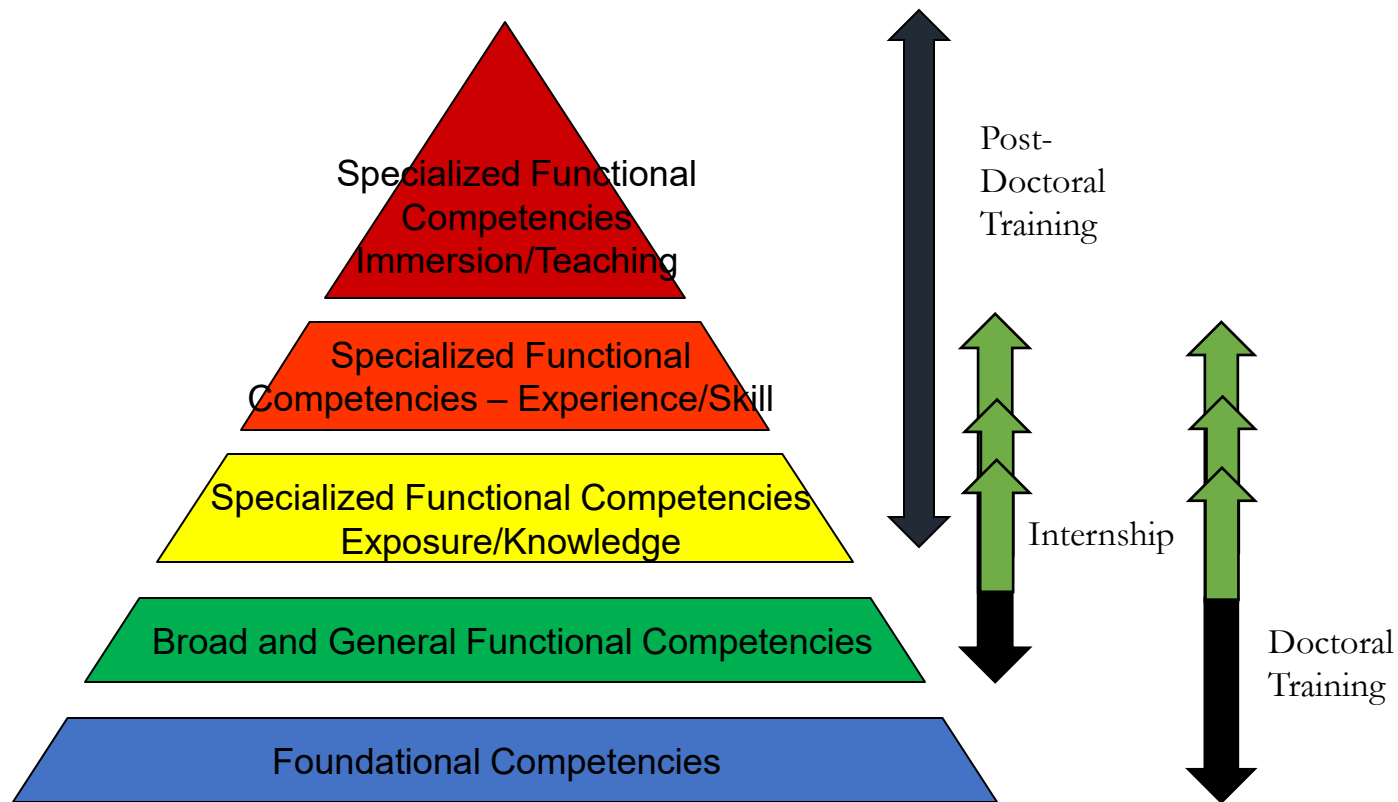


Current State of CHP Training



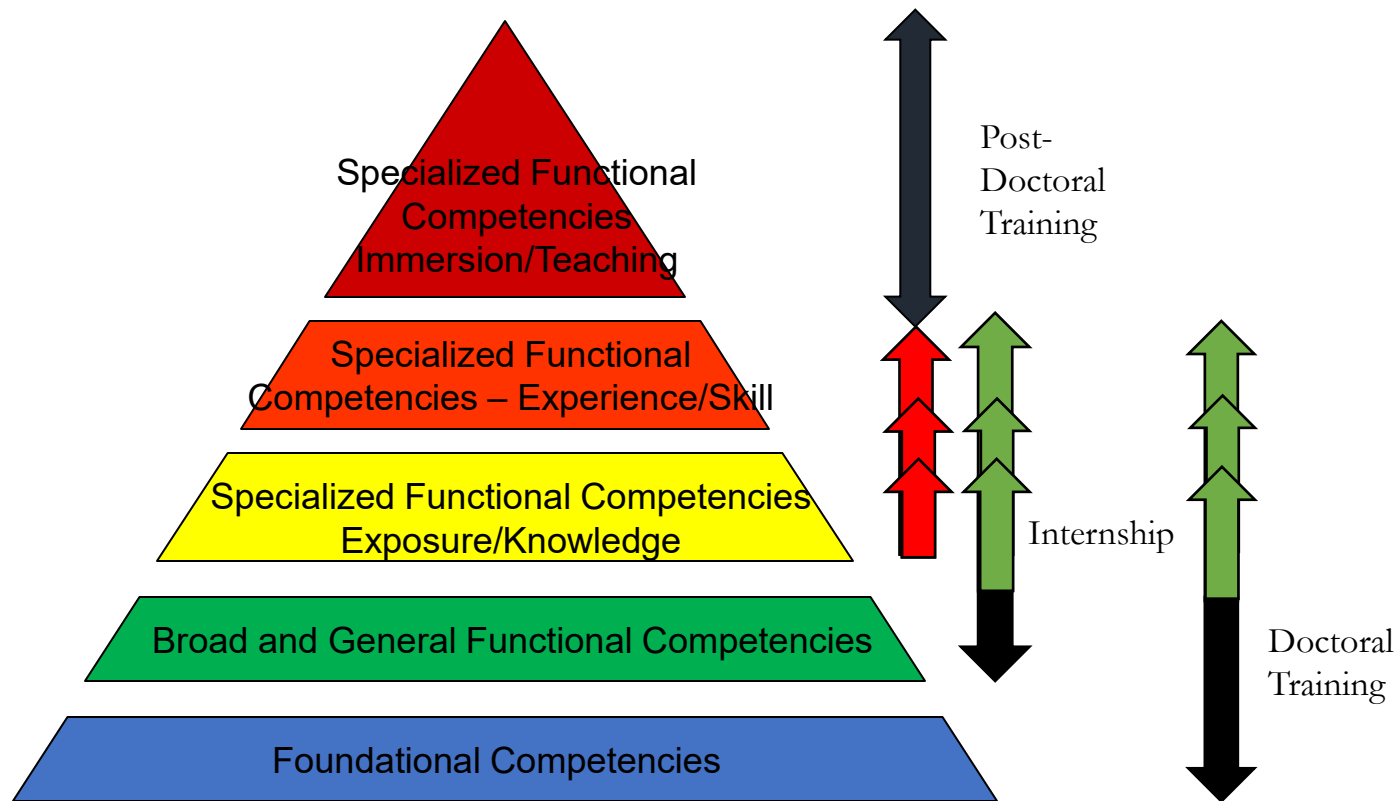
Nash & Larkin (2012)

Current State of CHP Training



Nash & Larkin (2012)

Current State of CHP Training



Nash & Larkin (2012)

Current status of “verifying” individual and program outcomes

- Entry level competencies have been articulated for both clinical health psychologists (Larkin & Klonoff, 2014) and those working in primary care settings (McDaniel et al., 2014).
 - *The extent to which trainee’s competencies are being evaluated according to these guidelines is unknown.*
- The taxonomy has been established for describing CHP training programs at the doctoral program, internship, and postdoctoral fellowship levels.
 - *The extent to which programs are using the taxonomy to describe the training they provide is unknown.*

Issues for Our Future

A. Competencies of Individuals

- What role should the training community take in ensuring all early career CHPs possess the requisite competencies for entry-level practice?
 - Use evaluation procedures that adhere to the CHP competencies articulated by our field
- Who is responsible for doing this?
 - Training programs? Licensing Boards? ABPP Evaluators?

Issues for Our Future

B. Competencies of Individuals and Program Curricula

- How should program curricula be constructed to ensure CHPs acquire the requisite competencies for entry-level practice?
 - Match components of program curriculum with the specific competencies being acquired
 - Construct educational experiences to cover specific competencies efficiently

Example Syllabus



Seminar on Teaching Psychology

Specific teaching competencies of students who complete this educational experience successfully include:

Knowledge-based competencies:

- Observes differences in teaching styles
- Demonstrates knowledge of various methods of assessing student learning
- Demonstrates knowledge of methodological considerations in assessment of teaching effectiveness

Skill-based competencies:

- Demonstrates ability to organize and present information related to a topic
- Introduces innovation/creativity into application of teaching method
- Utilizes evaluation strategy to assess learning objectives met
- Integrates feedback to modify future teaching strategies
- Uses media effectively in presentation (e.g., multimedia, handouts)

Issues for Our Future

C. Accuracy of Training Program Descriptions

- How should we ensure all CHP programs are described accurately according to the CHP taxonomy?
 - Construct a website for all CHP programs to state the level of training they provide (i.e., exposure, experience, emphasis, or major area of study).
 - Advocate that accreditation standards ensure all CHP programs assess student outcomes in specialty competency areas.

Issues for Our Future

- What organization should be empowered to “verify” we are adhering to these standards?
 - State Licensing Boards
 - APA’s Commission on Accreditation
 - Society of Health Psychology (Division 38)



More Issues for Our Future

D. Work Force Projections

- How many psychologists are needed to address the increasing need for behavioral health services?
- Relatedly, how many psychologists is the health care system willing to support?

Market Analyses

Table 2. Projected Shortages of Selected Behavioral Health Providers in 2036, number and percent adequacy

Profession	Status Quo	Unmet Need	Elevated Need
Addiction counselors	-87,630 (53%)	-125,010 (45%)	-153,190 (40%)
Adult psychiatrists	-37,980 (45%)	-51,680 (38%)	-82,920 (27%)
Child and adolescent psychiatrists	-4,150 (75%)	-7,470 (63%)	-20,050 (39%)
Child, family, and school social workers	25,270 (112%)	-15,250 (94%)	-15,920 (93%)
Healthcare social workers	-3,920 (96%)	-26,080 (80%)	-31,640 (77%)
Marriage and family therapists	-27,450 (64%)	-42,840 (54%)	-51,140 (49%)
Mental health and substance use disorder social workers	-8,250 (93%)	-32,350 (78%)	-61,120 (65%)
Mental health counselors	-69,610 (62%)	-105,950 (52%)	-138,670 (45%)
Psychiatric physician assistants/associates	530 (111%)	-490 (92%)	-2,190 (71%)
Psychologists	-62,490 (63%)	-95,970 (52%)	-110,600 (49%)
School counselors	-21,030 (89%)	-60,010 (74%)	-

Behavioral Health Care Work Force Analysis, HRSA, 2023

More APA Accredited doctoral programs but declining enrollments

Students Enrolled in HSP Doctoral Training Programs			
Year	Clinical PhD	Clinical PsyD	All HSP
2011	9,436	11,279	26,086
2012	9,321	10,969	25,630
2013	9,176	10,525	24,921
2014	9,192	10,272	24,649
2015	8,770	9,894	23,714
2016	8,567	9,675	23,228
2017	8,497	9,448	23,121
2018	8,438	9,386	23,080
2019	8,349	9,284	22,976
2020	8,252	9,464	23,077
2021	8,279	9,636	23,308
2022	8,297	9,949	23,716
2023	8,409	9,506	23,308
Reduction-2011-23 (%)	-1,027 (-10.8%)	-1,773 (-15.7%)	-2,778 (-10.6%)

Lack of Specialization Designation in Work Force Analyses

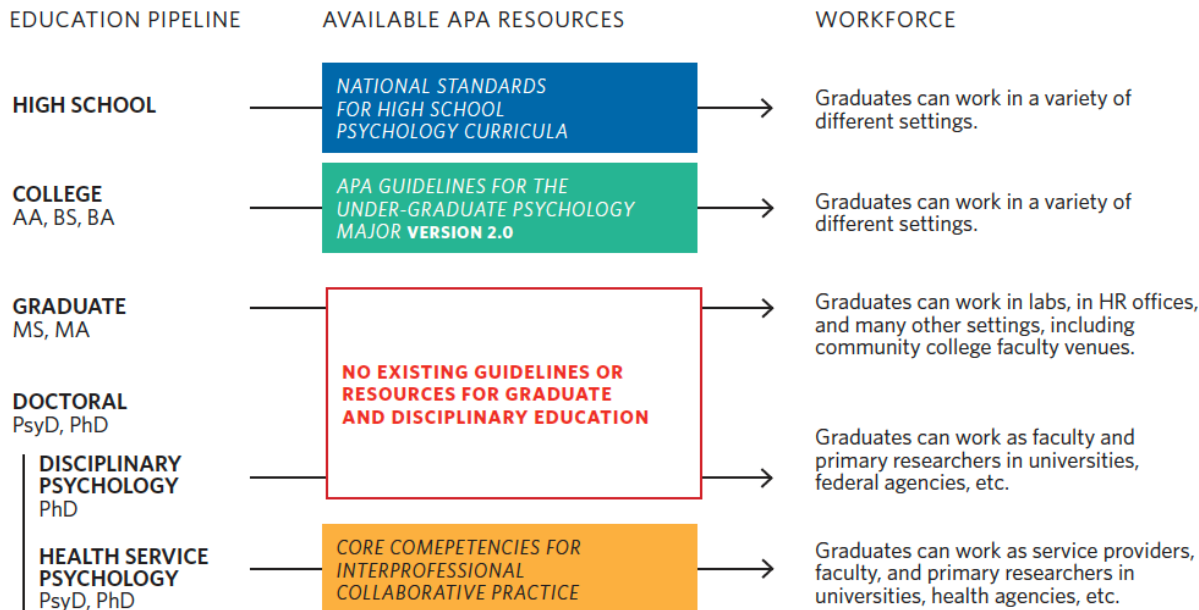
- Clinical Health Psychology
 - Integrated Primary Care Psychologists
 - Cardiac Psychologists
 - Pain Psychologists
 - Pediatric Psychologists
 - Transplant Psychologists
 - Oncology Psychologists
 - among others...

More Issues for Our Future

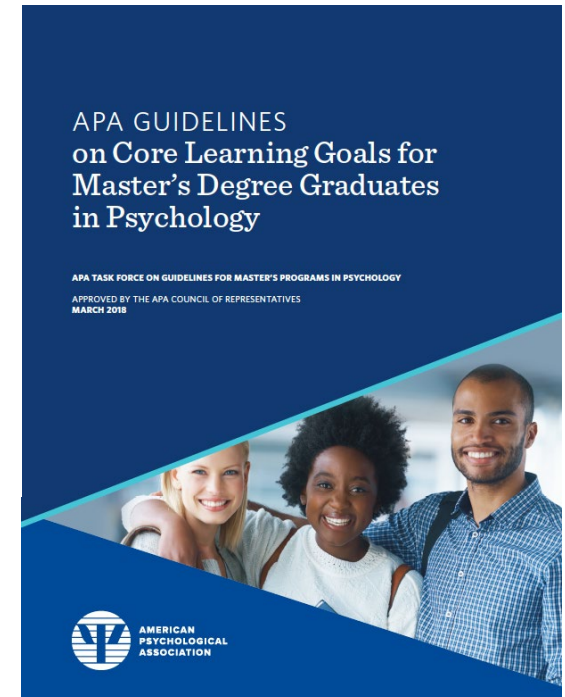
E. Credentialing of Master's Level Psychological Practitioners

FIGURE 1

PSYCHOLOGY DISCIPLINARY AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PIPELINE



<https://www.apa.org/about/policy/masters-goals-guidelines.pdf>



Distinctive Competencies of CHPs

- Developing evidence-based assessments & interventions
- Disseminating evidence-based assessments & interventions
- Evaluating health care systems of delivery (program evaluation)
- Teaching health care professionals about identifying and treating behavioral health care problems
- Leading interdisciplinary treatment and research teams
- Consulting on complex case presentations (live or tele-consultation)
- Managing workers, including making hiring/firing decisions, conducting performance evaluations, constructing business plans, marketing services, and overseeing fiscal operations
- Supervising direct behavioral health care providers

More Issues for Our Future

F. Postdoctoral Training in CHP

- The Numbers Issue
 - 248 programs provide postdoctoral training in CHP in the APPIC Directory
 - 12 postdoctoral programs are accredited by APA's Commission on Accreditation
- Varying Entry-Level Competencies of Trainees
 - Exposure, Experience, Emphasis, and Major Area of Study
 - Challenges of Curricular Flexibility
- Entry-Level Practice without Postdoctoral Training



A CLOSER LOOK AT POSTDOCTORAL EXPERIENCE

The following psychology licensing boards require postdoctoral experience:

Alaska	Nebraska
Arkansas	Nevada
California	New Brunswick
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	New Hampshire*
Delaware*	New York*
Florida	North Dakota
Georgia	Nova Scotia
Hawaii*	Oklahoma
Idaho*	Ontario
Illinois*	Oregon*
Indiana*	Prince Edward Island
Iowa	Rhode Island
Kansas	South Carolina
Louisiana	South Dakota
Manitoba*	Tennessee*
Michigan*	Texas
Minnesota	Vermont
Montana*	Virgin Islands*



More Issues for Our Future

G. Board Certification

- Eligibility for ABPP in Clinical Health Psychology
- The applicant can apply for certification upon successful completion of at least one year of an APA/CPA accredited clinical health psychology postdoctoral fellowship or a clinical child psychology postdoctoral fellowship with a major area of study (80%) in pediatric health psychology **OR**
- If the applicant completed an APA/CPA accredited postdoctoral fellowship before October 29, 2021, in an area other than clinical health psychology, but at least 50% of the training was in clinical health psychology, the applicant can apply for certification after one additional year of clinical health psychology experience following the fellowship **OR**
- If the applicant completed a non-accredited postdoctoral fellowship with 80% supervised training in clinical health psychology, the applicant could apply for certification after one additional postdoctoral year of supervised clinical health psychology experience **OR**
- The applicant can apply for certification after three post-licensure years with evidence of continued education including one-year post-licensure supervised experience in clinical health psychology and two additional years of post-licensure clinical health psychology experience. To qualify for this option the applicant must demonstrate a major area of study in clinical health psychology by attesting to either at least ≥ 45 continued education credits in clinical health psychology **AND/OR** \geq three clinical health psychology courses.

We have trust down...

...but still some work to be done on how to go about verifying

Questions, Comments, and
Dialogue

Kevin T. Larkin, Ph.D., ABPP
West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV 25606-6040

Kevin.Larkin@mail.wvu.edu