

Draft #3
A guide for students (and faculty) about licensure
LICENSURE FOR I-O AND OTHER GENERAL APPLIED PSYCHOLOGISTS

BACKGROUND

In order to protect the public from harm, states license and regulate many professions from lawyers to hair braiders. Each state or province has its own legislation regarding licensure. This is done at the state or provincial level, not at the national level. APA supplies a “Model Act” that these jurisdictions are urged to use, but this is a recommendation not a mandate. This Model Act is currently being revised (in ways that we believe will be beneficial to I-O and other psychologists who work outside of the clinical area), however the new Act will not be finished until spring of 2010 and there is no guarantee that a specific jurisdiction will accept the new Model Act completely.

Because of the great variability and complexity across states, there is a great deal of confusion and misinformation about laws and regulations, particularly for non-health providers. Although we will provide some general information here, **you must contact your own jurisdiction to guarantee that you understand the requirements of your own state or province.** Contact information for each jurisdiction can be found at: www.ASPB.org or on the website for each state or provinces Board of Psychology. ?

WHY BE LICENSED?

1. It is the law in most states that you must be licensed in order to call yourself a psychologist.
2. Being licensed can increase credibility with the public.
3. Being licensed provides your clients with the opportunity to claim privilege and, thus, allows you to promise confidentiality. Non-licensed individuals with psychology degrees can tell clients that they will preserve confidentiality but they have no legal basis for this. Although anyone, licensed or not, can have records subpoenaed or be forced to testify, having a license makes it less likely and more difficult for someone to gain access to your records.
4. Being licensed can protect you. (If challenged legally, you can cite your license as an indicator of your expertise. You may have access to liability insurance that non-licensed people do not have available to them.)
5. Being licensed can serve as an additional marketing tool for branding and selling your practice.

DO YOU NEED TO BE LICENSED?

Answer: It depends.

Currently, in a large majority of jurisdictions, you must be licensed in order to call yourself a psychologist. Many also require licensure for those who do work “of a psychological nature,” however; the definitions of psychological practice vary greatly. A

small number of states give an exemption for I-O psychologists. Some of these exemptions are limited to the sort of work that the I-O person does. For example, in Delaware, the work must not involve the direct practice of psychology to individuals or groups as the beneficiaries. Typically, jurisdictions give exemptions for those who are full time academics or who work in government agencies. However, if university professors have a part time consulting practice in which they hold themselves out to be psychologists, the law would typically require them to be licensed. Many I-O psychologists practice as management consultants or another title rather than use the title of psychologist. You must check your own jurisdiction's laws and regulations to determine the necessity for licensure in your own state or province.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSURE FOR I-O AND APPLIED PSYCHOLOGISTS WHO ARE NOT HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS?

Again, these vary but there are some general requirements that are fairly similar across jurisdictions. We are currently working to modify a number of these but, at present, the information below is typical.

Academic Programs

In general, having a degree in some form of "psychology" from a regionally accredited school is sufficient. Some states require that the degree must be from a program accredited by APA, a program "designated" as a psychology program by the ASPPB/National register, or "the equivalent". Because APA only accredits school, clinical and counseling programs, no I-O program can meet this standard, thus these candidates for licensure face an additional need to document their training by providing transcripts or other documentation to demonstrate that their program was "equivalent". A small (and increasing number) of I-O programs have opted to have their program "designated" by ASPPB/National Register. This involves a paper review (no site visit) of the program's curriculum and faculty. Students from these programs have their academic credentials automatically approved. If your program is not "designated", you might want to encourage your department head to explore if this could be done. In order to qualify for the ASPPB/National Register designation, the program must include coursework content in core areas of general psychology. Most I-O programs meet this requirement easily with the possible exception of a class in "biological basis of behavior" (although this is broadly interpreted). Students who must prove their individual "equivalence" are typically required to have these specific courses as well. In many cases, a formal list of course areas is noted in the regulations. If your program does not offer such courses, you might be able to take them in another department of your institution to assure you can be licensed. If, after review, your jurisdiction determines that you lack a specific course, you may be able to take that course post-doctorally. A few states also require additional special course requirements such as "human sexuality" that can usually be taken as a weekend program.

Supervision

Typically, jurisdictions require somewhere around 3000 hours of "supervised experience" to become licensed. Those who graduate from APA programs generally have formal

internships that meet half of these requirements prior to completing their degree. Recently, a number of states have approved the ability of students to accrue all of their supervision hours prior to graduation. Graduates from non-APA programs that do not have formal APA approved internships (such as I-O students) may need to acquire all their hours post-doctorally. One complication for I-O graduates is that there are few licensed psychologists who can provide the kind of post-doctoral supervision that most jurisdictions require. A few states have provided greater flexibility in the supervision requirements for I-O or other non-health service psychologists and SIOP is supporting greater flexibility in this area. In most states, formal paperwork must be filed in order to have the experience count as acceptable hours. If you are interested in being licensed, you may want to talk to your current supervisor or faculty member to ensure that your hours are being appropriately supervised and that your hours will count toward licensure.

The EPPP (Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology)

All jurisdictions have agreed on a single test, the EPPP, which must be passed to obtain licensure. It is given on line and is designed to be a “generic” test that has items from many fields of psychology. The test developers typically have at least one I-O psychologist on the committee that develops the test, however most non-clinicians may need to study areas that were not covered in their graduate curriculum (e.g. abnormal psychology, clinical testing or experimental psychology). There are a number of study courses that can be taken through reading, on-line or in person, to prepare for the exam. Although I-O people often complain about the clinical items, it may be of some small comfort to know that clinically trained people complain about the items in the organizational and research area that are more familiar to I-O students.

Other Testing

Most states or provinces require a jurisprudence or oral exam (or both) in addition to the EPPP. The jurisprudence exam covers laws and regulations of that jurisdiction and general ethics issues. Oral exams provide case studies to which the candidate must respond to issues raised. California has a test that includes items on the practice of psychology.

PRACTICING ACROSS STATE LINES

Because each jurisdiction has its own regulations, cross-state practice is difficult. There are, however, efforts to make this easier. If you are licensed in another state, most jurisdictions allow you to practice in their jurisdiction for a limited amount of time. This varies greatly. The most common time is 30 days but it can range from zero days to 90 days, depending on the state. The Association of State and Provincial Boards of Psychology has created an Interjurisdictional Practice Certificate that is designed to ease the process of serving clients in multiple jurisdictions.