

PROCEDURES FOR RECOGNITION OF SPECIALTIES AND PROFICIENCIES IN PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Approved by the APA Board of Directors August 2009

Section A: Background

(1) Introduction

These procedures describe the process by which the American Psychological Association (APA) and its Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP) will consider petitions for initial and renewed recognition of specialties and proficiencies in professional psychology.¹ The procedures will be reviewed periodically by CRSPPP, and any proposed changes will be subject to a period of public comment prior to adoption for implementation by CRSPPP, as authorized by the Board of Directors in accordance with APA Association Rule 90.5.

(2) Basis of Review and Evaluation for Recognition

CRSPPP recommendations pertaining to initial and renewed recognition will be based on criteria set forth in the APA policy document *Policy for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology*, approved by the Council of Representatives.² Decisions by CRSPPP in that process are made on the basis of the collective professional judgment of its members. Should a member of CRSPPP have a potential conflict of interest with respect to the review of a petition, that member will disclose the nature of this potential conflict to the other commissioners. For the purposes of this policy, “potential conflict of interest” means circumstances that could be perceived by a reasonable third party as creating an apparent conflict of interest and consistent with the CRSPPP Conflict of Interest Policy. The Commissioners, by majority vote, will determine the nature and extent of participation in which that member should engage for purposes of discussion and voting on the petition.

(3) CRSPPP Membership and Meeting Procedures

Members of CRSPPP will be elected in accordance with provisions of the governing APA Association Rules. Their meetings will be open except for sessions concerned with the review and evaluation of petitions for recognition, and the resulting formulation of actions by CRSPPP members. Other procedures regarding open and closed sessions will be in accordance with APA policy governing such matters. Minutes of sessions that pertain to petition reviews will only reflect the formal actions taken by CRSPPP.

1 The Association’s actions in conferring recognition are not intended to, nor shall they constrain, the general and broad practice of psychology by any psychologist duly licensed to practice who is acting (a) in conformity with relevant statutes and administrative rules and (b) within the Association’s ethical principles. In addition, and unless required by statute or by administrative rule, recognition does not create a duty for a psychologist to secure any credential beyond licensure as a condition for practice.

2 This policy document can be found at APA (CRSPPP) website <http://www.apa.org/crsppp/>.

(4) Liaisons to CRSPPP

APA divisions, boards, and committees, as well as professional education, training, and credentialing organizations outside the APA, may request a liaison relationship with CRSPPP, whose decision it will be to honor such a request. Liaisons may attend all open sessions of CRSPPP meetings at the expense of their sponsor organizations and, with concurrence of the CRSPPP chairperson, may speak to items on the meeting agenda.

(5) Public Information and Records of the Recognition Process

The APA maintains official records in accordance with its policies on the recognition process. It provides information on its CRSPPP website (<http://www.apa.org/crsppp/>) about the specialty and proficiency recognition process for access by the public. CRSPPP also periodically notifies its membership and others of the public about its activities in the *APA Monitor and APA Division Newsletter*. In addition, a description of CRSPPP recognition activities each year will be placed in the annual issue of the *American Psychologist* in which the official business of APA is reported. Other information about the specialty and proficiency recognition process will be provided upon request.

Section B: Recognition Procedures

(1) Petition for Initial Recognition

The annual deadline for submission of a petition will be January 1st of each year to allow for and efficient review process. The deadline for submission will apply to all petitions for initial and renewed recognition of specialties and proficiencies in professional psychology.

Petitioners for initial specialty or proficiency recognition will submit petitions to CRSPPP using a form developed by CRSPPP, requiring petitioners to demonstrate how the criteria for recognition are met.³ Petitioners are encouraged to consult with the APA Office of Graduate and Postgraduate Education and Training for the purpose of maximizing the clarity and comprehensiveness of their petitions, and particularly with regard to the Commission's definition of "specialty" and "proficiency" and the criteria applied by the Commission regarding recognition as a specialty or proficiency.

During the term of his/her appointment to CRSPPP, and for a period of three years thereafter no member of CRSPPP shall offer any consultation service or individual guidance to anyone in a petitioning group (reimbursed or non-reimbursed) for the purpose of assisting that group in seeking or renewing recognition status.

Prior to consideration by CRSPPP, petitions will be reviewed by APA staff to determine whether all required components are present. If a petition is not complete, the petitioner will be notified in writing of the additional information required. When a petition is determined to be complete, it will be forwarded by APA staff to CRSPPP.

(2) Public Notice of the Petition

³ Petition forms can be found at the APA (CRSPPP) website <http://www.apa.org/crsppp/>.

CRSPPP will acknowledge receipt of the petition in writing to the petitioning organization(s). At the same time it will issue public notice of the same to the APA governance bodies, divisions, affiliated state and provincial psychological associations, and other national organizations responsible for education, training, and credentialing in professional psychology by direct written communication to those groups and organizations. General public notice of the petition will generally be given through the APA (CRSPPP) website.

(3) Request for Public Comment

Public notice about the petition will offer access to copies of the petition and request third-party comment to inform the deliberations of CRSPPP. The deadline date for submission of comments will be stated in the notice and will be not less than 60 days after the public notice posting of the petition. All public comments to the petition will be submitted electronically. Copies of public comments will also be provided to petitioners for informational purposes.

(4) Replies to Comments

Copies of public comments on a petition will be provided to the petitioner(s) as soon as received and will be made available for public review and comment. The APA (CRSPPP) website will generally be the means for this public disclosure. Replies to comments may be submitted by interested parties. All replies to comments will be available for review by petitioners and other interested parties during the 60 day public comment period. Petitioners may provide CRSPPP with a written response to public comments; however amended petitions will not be considered.

(5) CRSPPP Review and Evaluation of Petition and Comments

At its next scheduled meeting subsequent to the end of all public comment periods, CRSPPP will review the petition(s) and all comments and replies to comments. In its review, CRSPPP will evaluate the extent to which the criteria for recognition are met, as specified in Section A, Paragraph (2) of this document. CRSPPP may seek additional information as it deems appropriate. If two or more complete petitions for the same specialty or proficiency are received, CRSPPP will contact the petitioning organizations and encourage them to develop a single petition. If the organizations are unable to develop a single petition within six months, CRSPPP will proceed with succeeding steps in its procedures.

(6) Options for Action by CRSPPP

On the basis of its evaluation of a petition and the comments received, CRSPPP will elect one of the following three options for action:

a. If the criteria for recognition are met sufficiently by the petition and any criterion-related public concerns received are appropriately addressed, CRSPPP will recommend that the Council of Representatives grant recognition of the specialty or proficiency and will recommend a date by which renewal of recognition should be petitioned.

b. If the criteria for recognition are not met sufficiently, CRSPPP will not recommend recognition by the Council of Representatives. In the case of a decision not to recommend recognition, the petitioning organization(s) will be provided with written notice by CRSPPP

specifying the criteria that have not been met. Petitioner(s) will be advised that they may re-petition, but not for one year after the date of the CRSPPP decision.

Reconsideration: CRSPPP will notify petitioners that they may request reconsideration by CRSPPP of an adverse decision. Petitioner(s) may request reconsideration by CRSPPP of an adverse decision in writing within 30 days from receipt of the decision, which shall include a rationale for the reconsideration. The rationale should be based on either a procedural violation or substantive error by CRSPPP in its review of the petition. CRSPPP in turn will review and respond to the request for reconsideration within 30 days. If the reconsideration is accepted, CRSPPP will then review the petition and rationale at its next scheduled meeting.

c. If the petition materials, including comments, raise questions that do not permit making a reasoned judgment about one or more of the criteria for recognition, including but not limited to the criteria for determining whether recognition should be granted as a “specialty” or as a “proficiency”, CRSPPP may defer its action to recommend or not recommend recognition and request of the petitioner(s), in writing additional information or clarification as needed.

(7) Council of Representatives Action

If CRSPPP forwards a recommendation for recognition of a specialty or proficiency to the Council of Representatives, it will do so with: (a) a description of the specialty or proficiency and how it meets the recognition criteria; (b) the date recommended by CRSPPP for renewal of recognition of the specialty or proficiency; and (c) notation of any recognition criteria that CRSPPP recommends be given particular attention at the time of the petition for renewal of recognition. The full text of the petition(s) on the basis of which CRSPPP is recommending Council recognition also will be made available by notice to members of the Council, in the form of APA (CRSPPP) website posting and on-site copy at the Council meeting.

If the Council adopts the CRSPPP recommendation, the specialty or proficiency will be considered recognized until the recommended date for renewal of recognition. If Council rejects the CRSPPP recommendation, petitioner(s) for recognition of the same specialty or proficiency may not petition again until one year after the date of the Council’s action.

(8) Notification of Council Action

CRSPPP will notify the petitioning organization(s) of the action taken by the Council. If Council rejected the CRSPPP recommendation, CRSPPP will explain the basis of that decision to the petitioning organization(s). In the case of a decision to recognize a new specialty or proficiency, petitioners will be advised of the date Council has adopted for the review of a petition for renewal of recognition and of any recognition criteria to which CRSPPP will pay particular attention at that time. In addition, the action of Council to recognize a specialty or proficiency will be made public through notices in the *American Psychologist* and the *APA Monitor*, and by posting on the APA (CRSPPP) website.

(9) Petition for Renewal of Recognition

Each APA-recognized specialty and proficiency in professional psychology will be reviewed for renewal of recognition at a time recommended by CRSPPP and confirmed by the Council of Representatives on the occasion of the Council's most recent prior recognition decision. In no instance will the period between the most recent and next review dates be greater than seven years. In exceptional circumstances, *e.g.*, if there is reason to believe that substantial change has occurred in the status of a specialty or proficiency, CRSPPP or the petitioning organization(s) of recognized specialties or proficiencies may seek an earlier review than that previously specified by Council. The following procedures pertain to renewal of recognition.

One year in advance of the expected renewal review, CRSPPP will notify the prior petitioning organization(s) with instruction on how and when to file the petition for renewal of recognition. The petitioning organization(s) will be provided a copy of the prior petition, a copy of the public description of the specialty or proficiency, a copy of the current criteria for recognition, and a copy of the letter previously sent by CRSPPP communicating the Council's prior recognition decision, including a notation of any criteria to which particular attention should be given in the petition for renewed recognition. A complete petition will be required for renewal of recognition. In addition, the petitioning organization(s) will be instructed to highlight within each criterion area significant changes in the specialty or proficiency that have occurred, if any, since the prior petition.

All other procedures governing receipt of a petition for renewal of recognition, the process of public notice and comment, CRSPPP review and evaluation of the same, and the actions of CRSPPP and the Council of Representatives, will be the same as for an initial petition for recognition, as specified in Section B, Paragraphs (1)-(7), with the following exceptions:

Should CRSPPP not receive a petition for renewal of recognition, or if a petitioning organization chooses to not submit a petition for renewal of recognition, on or before the date specified in its notice to the petitioning organization(s), it will give public notice in the *APA Monitor* and on the APA (CRSPPP) website that failure to submit a petition within a period of time designated by CRSPPP will result in a recommendation by CRSPPP to the Council of Representatives that the APA recognition of that specialty or proficiency in professional psychology be discontinued. In addition, if a petitioning organization chooses to withdraw a petition for renewal of recognition during the process of review by CRSPPP, CRSPPP will give public notice in the *APA Monitor* and on the APA (CRSPPP) website of the withdrawal of the petition, and provide opportunity for comment or to submit a substitute petition by interested parties via electronic means.

If the criteria for recognition are met sufficiently and any criterion-related public concerns that may have been submitted are addressed appropriately, CRSPPP will recommend that the Council of Representatives renew recognition of the specialty or proficiency with specification of the date for the next scheduled review.

If the petitioning organization's petition is unclear about meeting one or more of the recognition criteria, CRSPPP will defer a decision to recommend renewal of recognition to obtain more information. If the effective period for recognition established by Council will expire before CRSPPP can reach a decision in such instance, CRSPPP will recommend that the Council of Representatives renew the recognition for a period of one year, by the end of which time the petitioning organization(s) will be required to address the basis of the CRSPPP deferral or have its recognition discontinued. If extenuating circumstances warrant, CRSPPP may choose to

recommend to the Council of Representatives the extension of the recognition beyond the period of one year.

(10) Notification of Council Action on Petition for Renewal of Recognition

Procedures followed for notification of Council action on a petition for renewal of recognition will be carried out by CRSPPP in the same manner as for Council action in the case of initial recognition, as specified in Section B, Paragraph (8).

Section C. Public Description of a Recognized Specialty or Proficiency

CRSPPP will maintain for the public a description of each recognized specialty and proficiency. The description will include the name of the specialty or proficiency and a brief definition. Specialty descriptions will also include a brief account of the distinctive ways in which professional practice in the specialty is defined according to the specialized knowledge, populations served, problems addressed, and skills and procedures employed. Proficiency descriptions will address the specialized knowledge and skills and procedures employed.

As a part of the petition process, CRSPPP will ask the petitioning body to provide on the petition form, in a format developed by CRSPPP, a description of the specialty or proficiency in plain language easily understood by the public. CRSPPP will review the description provided by the petitioning body and publish the final public description upon recognition or renewal of recognition of the specialty or proficiency. CRSPPP will ensure that the public description of a specialty or proficiency granted renewal of recognition is accurate and reflects any changes that may have occurred since an initial public description was developed. After initial recognition and prior to submission of a petition for renewal of recognition, CRSPPP will grant requests to modify the approved public description of a recognized specialty or proficiency if petitioners provide sufficient rationale for the need to make such changes outside of the regular renewal process. Such rationale must include supporting evidence for the need for the requested change and must fall within the parameters of the most recent petition for recognition.