



# Newsletter

Academy of Family Psychology

Volume 6, Issue 3  
Winter 2004

## President's Message

### New directions

By John Northman, Ph.D., ABPP

It is a both a pleasure and an honor to be assuming the president's role in the Academy of Family Psychology. We are a small group of colleagues bound together by the common tie of promoting excellence in the science and practice of family psychology.

As psychology has grown and flourished across the twentieth century, it may be viewed as inevitable that specialized fields and areas of study would emerge. One needs to look no further than the sheer number of divisions, currently 55, within APA. One of the areas to have emerged and become formally recognized by APA within the past quarter century is family psychology.

As psychology has become diversified in its topics of study, another well recognized change started to emerge during the second half of the twentieth century. As psychology matured it began to expand

its scope beyond its research base. Psychological principles began to be applied in many areas, from schools to industry to clinical settings. State licensing laws were enacted across the country, recognizing and legitimizing the practice of psychology as a profession.

The combination of specialization and licensing made it inevitable that formal recognition of specialty training would become increasingly significant for professional practice. The American Board of Professional Psychology, founded in 1947, has long been regarded as psychology's premier specialty board.

The primary purpose of the Academy of Family Psychology, affiliated with the American Board of Professional Psychology, is to encourage and assist psychologists attain ABPP recognition in the specialty of family psychology.

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## Editor's Notes

By John Thoburn, Ph.D., ABPP

Five minutes after finding out that my application for diplomate status in ABPP had been approved, a colleague emailed me and invited me to get involved in the academy. In an ecstatic frame of mind I emailed back and said, 'sure, anything!' He immediately emailed back and told me that there was an opening for newsletter editor – would I consider

filling the position? I said yes and that was almost three years ago. I have enjoyed editing the newsletter, mainly because it has allowed me to get involved in the academy, which I very much believe in, and as editor, I have become known to members across the country. Now, its time to turn the press over to another person as I begin to



meet the responsibilities of my new position as president elect of the family division. That means an opportunity for you! Please seriously consider becoming involved in ABPP in this way. My predecessor Ben Ferguson ,and I have tried to create an interesting and useful tool for the membership, continued page 3

## Opportunity for you!

### Become the next Newsletter

### Editor for 2005



## **Florence W. Kaslow, Ph.D., ABPP**

### **ABPP-BOT Report**

The recent ABPP-BOT meeting in Savannah in early December was very productive. The good news is that our Central Office (CO) is fully staffed, and up and running much better than it has in many years. Dr. Bent is in the office three days a week, unless he is out representing us at the meetings of other organizations. We have two other full-time staff, and one part-time person. All questions and requests for assistance are to be addressed to Nancy McDonald ([nmcdonald@abpp.org](mailto:nmcdonald@abpp.org)), who

determines to whom they should be routed. She impresses me as both competent and pleasant, and eager to be responsive to our needs – to the extent possible. ABPP now has a web master and associate who is helping with our web design. The new web site should be up the first week in January. Each Board and Academy will have a place on the web, and it is asked that whoever is in charge of the individual Board and Academy web sites be in touch with Nancy to see how we can dovetail and avoid

duplication. I hope each Board and Academy President will receive a copy of the overall table or chart that shows where to access what is needed. All forms can be downloaded from the web site.

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#### **Finances**

**If you are chairing an Exam Committee, it is vital that you be certain that the fee for regis-**

## **President's message**

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**“Unquestionably the best ambassador for board certification is another board certified psychologist.”**

#### New directions

Where is AFP? Where are we headed? Importantly, how do we wish to get there?

If the above questions sound vaguely familiar as organizational spin-offs from Eriksonian identity questions, you're right on.

I have long been a believer in building strategic partnerships. As I look around the professional landscape, there are at least three (and perhaps more) organizations with overlapping goals and membership: AFP, the American Board of Family Psychology (ABPP's family psychology board), and Division 43 (Family Psychology) of APA. It only makes sense that we seek to partner among these three organizations in ways that benefit all of us within family psychology.

In furthering the concept of strategic partnerships, I have spoken with Mark Stanton, Ph.D., editor of the Division 43 quarterly newsletter *The Family Psychologist* (and coincidentally president of Division 43 in 2005). Mark has graciously agreed to make space available in that publication for an AFP column. Through *The Family Psychologist* AFP can extend its reach to the large Division 43 pool of potential diplomates.

On a related front, there has already been initial discussion of a possible three-way meeting involving AFP, ABFamP, and Division 43 in the fall of 2005.

On still another front, I recently participated in my first conference call meeting of the Council of Presidents of Psychology Specialty Academies. Also present on the call was ABPP President Norma Simon, Ed.D. All academies

have the common goal of promoting specialty board certification. Within psychology this means both enlarging the number of diplomates and gaining further recognition among psychologists and psychology organizations. An equally significant challenge lies beyond the profession, as the academies and ABPP specialty boards, working together, seek to gain further recognition for the diplomate among state licensing boards, other governmental agencies, third party payers, etc. I came away from that conference call with the clear sense of interest and willingness of the specialty academies and ABPP to work together toward such major goals.

While such goals, partnerships and activities take place on an *organizational* level, there remains a very real challenge on the *individual* level. Unquestionably the best ambassador for board certification is another board certified psychologist. If you are reading this



## President's message

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column you have already decided that the ABPP diploma is a valued accomplishment and asset. So let us challenge ourselves as colleagues to approach individually other colleagues and encourage them to gain the benefits of board certification in family psychology.

### ABPP certification: The mark of excellence

Why, you may ask, attain ABPP certification? Let me count some of the ways.....

Psychology continues to become increasingly specialized. Importantly, clinical practice focuses on specific sub-areas. One need look no further than credentialing forms, routinely sent by insurance carriers, asking questions such as "populations served" (individuals, couples, families, age groups, etc.), "problems addressed" (anxiety, depression, conduct disorder, etc.) and "methods used" (psychoanalytic therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, family systems therapy, etc.). True, such check-off lists may be flawed and limited; nevertheless they do reflect the recognition that psychology has become increasingly specialized.

Legitimate board certification (as opposed to vanity boards) is the gold standard for professional practice. Consider medicine. Would you seek the services of a non-board certified physician? Note that the importance of board certification holds for all areas of medical practice including primary specialties such as family medicine and pediatrics. Similar specialty recognition will become increasingly important within psychology.

As individuals and organizations outside psychology increasingly seek and demand specialty credentials, enlightened self-interest mandates that individual psychologists attain such credentials as legitimate demonstration of their skills. ABPP credentials are broadly recognized by groups and organizations such as hospitals, health and medical organizations, third party payers, state and federal courts, government agencies, licensing jurisdictions, etc.

From government's perspective, protection of the public has long been the rationale for licensing any profession. The peer review specialty board certification process afforded by ABPP supplements the generic licensing statutes used in each state. The stature of the ABPP credential assures the consumer that the psychologist has demonstrated the highest level of expertise in the chosen specialty.

As board certification becomes increasingly recognized, individual psychologists may benefit via increased employment options, increased recognition from colleagues and referral sources, increased credibility within the local community, and increased stature within the profession.

John Northman

## Editor's comments

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but there is much more that can be done. A creative, energetic person could turn the Academy of Family Psychology newsletter into the envy of the ABPP I'd like to see new member profiles, a column that focuses on multicultural issues, a column that focuses on the interface between ABPP family and Division 43 of APA. I'd like to see guest editorships focusing on specific topics in family psychology and an interview column. The possibilities are many and exciting, actually. I got involved during the high of acceptance, so it was easy to say yes. It may be harder for you as you more objectively count the cost – but I can tell you that the academy needs you. So, my question to you is, "would you like to get actively involved in the academy? There's a position waiting for you with your name on it – Academy of Family Psychology Newsletter Editor." Just let me know.

Thank you,

John Thoburn

# Kaslow's Column

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tering for the exam has been paid before the exam is scheduled (obtain this information from the Regional Chairperson who asked you to serve), *and* that you send in the report within a day or two of completion of the exam. It is only when these two things occur that we are credited with the exam having taken place, and the person goes on our diplomate list. I believe that fees for the credentialing process are being slightly raised. It has not been done for many years, yet the cost of our distributing work samples, arranging for meetings, etc. has gone up. We will hear more about this in *The Specialist*.

### Collaboration

There is a strong effort to have the Boards and Academies collaborate much more. The Academy, as a group, is being strengthened, and the BOT is working very well as a coordinating body, with all SB's quite cooperative and fully represented. All *Mentoring* is to be done under the aegis of the *Academy*, so we will have to make sure that we have a smooth structure. The Mentoring Chairperson must do so as an Academy member, and report to both the Academy, and in that position, to the Board.

### Recruitment

Some of the Boards have very active and effective recruitment programs. This has included Diplomates doing conversation hours and preparation workshops at their State Psychological Association meetings – some with cooperation from their State association or at APA.

Since returning from Savannah, I have been in the process of writing letters to everyone with whom I have personally been in contact in the past who has indicated interest in the certification process. I ask that you all do the same. In addition, we again need to establish a list of people, by categories, and send out a very attractive recruitment letter. This year Family fell far short of our quota; these figures are embarrassingly low. It is vital that we step up our recruitment efforts and get those people who are currently in the pipeline set for their exams. Most of the Boards hold exams 2 or 3 times a year in conjunction with their meeting at APA, and perhaps one other regional place –

so that anywhere from 3 to 6 exams are administered at one time. Any other way is too costly. Other Boards do not have difficulty when they tell people that exams will be done in February, August and November, for example, and where they will be held. It is the candidate's responsibility to choose which site they prefer, and to arrange for the travel. To give one exam at a time at a candidate's choice of date and locale, as ABFamP often does, is a costly and slow way to operate, so I recommend that we seriously consider doing it the other way. Most of the Boards are trying to expedite the process, so that from the time an application is received, it will be processed quickly, as will the work sample, the collecting of fees, and establishing of the Committee and the exam line. I think we should follow suit.

### Joint Meeting

As some of you know, I have been urging that we have a combined meeting of our Board, our Academy officers, our Family Psychology Specialty Council (now called a synergy), and the Division #43 Board. It is vital that these four groups increasingly work collaboratively. Our CRSPPP petition will be coming up for renewal and all four groups need to have input. In addition, if we can hold such a meeting annually, it becomes an excellent time and place for exams to be given, as we would have a variety of examiners to draw from – not only our Board members, but Academy officers and Division #43 Board members.

### Examiners Training Workshop

I have requested a special grant from ABPP to hold a training workshop for examiners, so we can move toward greater standardization of our procedure, and avoid some of the pitfalls of having people on the Committees who do not know the internal and external procedures. This is being reviewed by the ABPP Finance Committee, and hopefully we will have a response on this quickly.

### Diversity and Multicultural Sensitivity

It is imperative that our exam procedure, well as all of our materials, reflect multicultural sensitivity and competence. If we do an examiner training,

there will be an emphasis on this. Just as we have vignettes to cover ethical issues, it is now time for us to develop vignettes on cases that require responses showing sensitivity to issues of diversity to all kinds of differences. Who might be willing to write one or two of these? Mike Gottlieb and I did many of the ethical vignettes. We'll need about a dozen. I hope ABFamP President, Irene Goldenberg, will appoint someone to coordinate this soon after she takes office in January. Also, we should be sending out a recommended bibliography to all candidates and examiners, that is updated annually, that includes several relevant references in ethics and multicultural issues in marriage and family treatment, training and research.

I hope you find this report informative. Please contact me if you have any questions.

*Florence Kaslow, Ph.D.*

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# Specialty Certification in Professional Psychology

Ted Packard and Carla Reyes

The following column consists of part I of excerpted portions of a book chapter by Packard and Reyes (2003). The column is meant to educate on the history, rationale and structure of specialty certification in professional psychology.

Specialty certification in professional psychology has a long history starting with the establishment of the American Board of Examiners in Professional Psychology (ABEPP) in 1947 (Bent et al, 1999).

Although the impetus for the establishment of ABEPP came from a committee of the American Psychological Association, the new board was incorporated independently and... set out on a course that has reinforced an unfortunate separation from mainstream psychology in general and APA in particular up to the present time.

Three "fields of certification" were identified initially, and oral and written examinations developed soon thereafter to test competence in clinical psychology, personnel-industrial and counseling psychology. By the mid 1950s over 2,500 "diplomas" had been earned by psychologists representing one of the three recognized specialties. (Note that the words "diploma" and "diplomat" have been replaced in recent years by the more universally recognized terms "certificate" and "board certified."

Two significant changes occurred in 1968 when the name of the organization was shortened to the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) and School Psychology was recognized as a fourth specialty... In 1984 and 1985 the preciously independently organized American boards of Clinical Neuropsychology and Forensic Psychology were accepted under an enlarging ABPP umbrella. The 1990s that followed were a time of rapid expansion of ABPP as new specialties were recognized and credentialing procedures developed for psychologist seeking board certification in Family Psychology, Health Psychology, Behavioral Psychology, Psychoanalytic Psychology, Rehabilitation Psychology and Group Psychology. Now in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, ABPP exists through its board of Trustees as an umbrella organization coordinating the efforts of the following 12 affiliated, but separately incorporated examining boards: American Board of Behavioral Psychology, American Board of Behavioral Psychology, American Board of Clinical Psychology, American Board of Clinical Health Psychology, American Board

of Clinical Neuropsychology, American Board of Counseling Psychology, American Board of Family Psychology, American Board of Forensic Psychology, American Board of Group Psychology, American Board of Organizational and Business Consulting Psychology, American Board of Psychoanalysis Psychology, American Board of Rehabilitation Psychology, American Board of School Psychology.

Is certification really necessary and essential for professional psychology?

After an initial surge in the 1940s and early 1950s, in the following four decades the vast majority of psychologists did not seek board certification (Bent et al, 1999). And, with some exceptions, most contemporary psychologists are not following through in pursuing board certification. The ABPP Central Office typically receives each year in excess of 2,000 requests for application packets for the various specialty examinations. Approximately 10% of this number ultimately apply. (However), Dattilio (2002) concludes that, "if we are to take a serious stance on protecting our future profession and our position in the field of mental health delivery, board certification may well become not only necessary, but imperative as a way to define advanced qualifications and standards of excellence as the field of psychology continues to expand" (p. 56).

1. Exponential growth of psychological knowledge leaves no alternative but to specialize. The mass of available conceptual material, related empirical research, and potential practice applications leaves no alternative (but to specialize).

2. Our work environments impel us to specialize. In order to survive economically, creative psychologist have had to adapt and to develop new patterns of practice. Formerly unknown "niches" have been identified, and new practice patterns have emerged, and in the process, 'specialization' has become a necessity for many rather than an option for a few.

3. Our professional context reinforces the need for specialization. The history of most professions recognized currently by our society is in many ways a story of the development of specialties and specialty practice. The clear example is Medicine (where) most physicians seek board certification as a necessary credential for practice. Inevitably, psychologist in large numbers will follow suit.

4. The generic nature of psychology licensing in North America presumes additional professional self regulation of specialty practice (Dattilio, 2002).

5. Enlightened self-interest mandates that

individual psychologists develop specialty skills that subsequently are documented through attainment of specialty certification. Psychologists who have documented their specialty skills through certification by a recognized psychology specialty board will have distinct advantages over self-identified or "vanity board" (e.g. no examination) credentialed specialists.

6. Protecting the public from charlatans and the ill prepared requires personal and professional self regulation. Governmental licensing jurisdictions in North America, whose sole purpose is the protection of the public, continue to implement generic psychology licensing statutes. The peer review processes and examinations constructed and offered by legitimate psychology specialty boards are designed to identify practitioners who possess the knowledge and skills basic to specialty areas of psychology practice.

## References

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*The remainder of the chapter will be excerpted in the summer edition of the AFP newsletter, which will focus on: how psychology currently recognizes specialty practice areas, on vainly credentialing boards, and the maturation of professional psychology.*



**Academy of Family  
Psychology**

AFP Database Update

A number of you have mentioned that you have not received the newsletter. In an effort to correct such errors the AFP is updating its database. Please take a moment and email us with

Your name

Address

Email

Fax

Phone

:

Email to [thoburn@spu.edu](mailto:thoburn@spu.edu) or write to me at:

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