

Looking for a Postdoc? Read This First!

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At this time of the year, interns in predoctoral training programs are probably wondering where the time has gone—at this time last year, they were likely reflecting on their good fortune to have successfully matched to an available internship position. As interns complete their final degree requirements, they face the next step in their career progression toward psychology licensure. This article reviews the postdoctoral supervised experience requirement for licensure in Wisconsin and offers some examples of available options for meeting this requirement.

According to Wisconsin Administrative Code Rules of the Psychology Examining Board (Psy 2.09), “A psychological trainee shall complete 3,000 hours of supervised experience as a prerequisite to licensure as a psychologist” [Psy 2.09(3)(a)1.]. Further inspection of this rule indicates that the first 1,500 hours may be satisfied by completing the formal doctoral psychology internship. Generally, member programs of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) meet this requirement. The second 1,500 hours of supervised experience “must follow completion of all the requirements for the doctoral degree” [Psy 2.09(3)(a)4.] and “shall be planned, organized and integrated, and appropriate to the intended area of practice, and include a minimum of one hour per week of regularly scheduled formal face-to-face individual supervision with the specific intent of dealing with the services rendered directly by the trainee” [Psy 2.09(3)(a)3.]. The Board further delineates the criteria for this experience by stipulating that the primary supervisor may not be the same person who supervised the trainee during the predoctoral internship.

Embedded in these criteria for the postdoctoral supervised experience are some important issues to consider as trainees seek opportunities for satisfying this requirement. The first is the emphasis on experience appropriate to one's intended area of practice. The trainee's choice of postdoctoral supervised experience may have far-reaching limiting and defining effects on career direction. The Psychology Examining Board and the American Psychological Association both place limitations on the scope of practice performed by psychologists. These limitations are defined by the individual psychologist's education, training, and experience. Though psychologists as a group tend to

regard themselves as intellectually inquisitive individuals dedicated to a lifetime of learning, the postdoctoral supervised experience is possibly the last formally mandated training experience in the psychologist's career. Therefore, trainees are advised to consider the ramifications of their career decisions at this juncture—experiences and skills acquired during postdoctoral training will become the foundation for trainee's qualifications and specialty practice areas for years to come.

Once a prospective postdoctoral trainee has gravitated toward an area or areas of practice, the immediate challenge becomes securing a suitable postdoctoral position. This can seem like a daunting task, given that the doctoral degree in psychology alone does not permit the degree recipient to practice psychology in Wisconsin. Indeed, the Psychology Examining Board statutorily restricts the practice of psychology to licensed psychologists [Wis. Stat. ch. 455.02(1m)]. Fortunately, the licensing board permits exceptions, as delineated in Wis. Stat. ch. 455.02 (2m). Among these exceptions are exemptions provided for persons providing psychological services under the direction of a qualified supervisor, persons who have met the examining board's requirements for predoctoral supervised experience while employed as a psychology resident by a clinic certified by the department of health services, or persons providing psychological services as employed by a federal, state or local governmental agency when performing services as part of their regular work duties. Under these provisions, there are several options to consider.

Probably the most systematically organized experience is the formal postdoctoral training program. In addition to promulgating standards for predoctoral internship programs, APPIC also recognizes postdoctoral training programs that meet quality standards. These standards, as well as membership programs, can be viewed at the APPIC website (<http://appic.org/>). Currently, the directory lists postdoctoral training programs, or fellowships, in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health at Marshfield Clinic; the Health Psychology Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics in Madison; and a postdoctoral fellowship at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center. In addition, the Neuropsychology Section of the Medical College of Wisconsin offers a postdoctoral residency program that meets standards established by the

Association of Postdoctoral Programs in Clinical Neuropsychology. Information regarding application procedures may be obtained by contacting these programs directly.

Fellowship and residency programs offer a limited number of positions each year, and provide advanced training in some, but not all, specialty areas and settings. Consistent with the statutory provision allowing non-licensed professionals to provide psychological services when employed by federal, state, or local governmental agencies, the State of Wisconsin Departments of Health Services and Corrections have established a job classification of Psychological Associate. Note that the title of psychologist is protected by statute, and is reserved for licensed individuals. Qualifications for persons in these positions include a master's degree in psychology, and the job duties include the full range of psychological services including assessment, treatment, and consultation. Positions may be available at Central Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled (CWC), Mendota Mental Health Institute (MMHI), Winnebago Mental Health Institute (WMHI), Wisconsin Resource Center (WRC), and in Wisconsin's state prisons, community correctional centers, and juvenile corrections programs. These positions offer opportunities for experience in a variety of practice areas and in a range of settings. Qualified supervision for postdoctoral experience is routinely

provided, but not guaranteed for Psychological Associates in all settings; however, at least one agency, the Department of Corrections, promises to provide required postdoctoral supervision for employees seeking licensing.

The final option discussed in this article is the community mental health center and certified mental health outpatient clinic. Wisconsin Administrative Code HFS 61 recognizes psychology residents as professionals qualified to provide clinical services in certified mental health outpatient clinics within the limits of their scope of practice. However, reimbursement is another, sometimes thorny, issue. Clinicians must meet established requirements to be certified for receiving payments from Medicare, Medicaid and other third-party billing. These requirements include 3,000 hours of supervised clinical practice experience specifically providing psychotherapy to clients diagnosed as mentally ill. Applicants who do not satisfy this requirement sometimes limit their practice to self-paying clients. Individuals pursuing this option must also be mindful that not all certified outpatient mental health clinics employ psychologists who are qualified to provide postdoctoral supervision, but this topic, making the most of postdoctoral supervision, is the subject of the next article in this series. Stay tuned!

This article is scheduled to appear in the May-June 2010 issue of The Wisconsin Psychologist newsletter. Watch for a follow-up in future issues.