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The State of Psychology: 2019

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The first psychologist was licensed in Pennsylvania in 1974, although the law establishing the State Board of Psychology was passed in 1972. Currently Pennsylvania licenses about 6,000 psychologists. This article looks at psychologists in Pennsylvania today and asks, "What do they do?" "Where do they work?" "Do they like their jobs?" and other questions.

What Do Psychologists Do?

According to data from the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB)¹ the largest percentage of licensed psychologists reported working in adult psychotherapy (51%) and child or adolescent psychotherapy (38%). Also, about 50% of psychologists will do assessments and evaluations. About 14% of psychologists reported that they regularly work with addictions, 15% in forensic psychology, 16% with persons with serious or chronic mental illnesses, 16% with persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, 19% in health psychology, 10% in pain management, 5% in vocational assessments, and 2% in sports psychology (Pearson Vue, 2016).

1. The Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB) is the association of 67 American and Canadian state, provincial and territorial psychology licensing boards. It develops and administers the Examination for the Professional Practice of Psychology and offers other services to psychology licensing boards.

2. Since 1996, PPA has conducted an annual survey of its members. For many years the surveys were conducted by Peter Keller and Samuel Knapp. In more recent years they have been conducted by Jeffrey Leitzel and Samuel Knapp.

3. Some of the options included working in prisons, skilled nursing homes, consulting, residential facilities, or research.

4. Some of the options included working in prisons, skilled nursing homes, consulting, residential facilities, and on research.

Where Do Psychologists Work?

According to surveys of PPA members, the work locations for PPA members have been stable over the last 22 years.² Slightly more than half of PPA members have full-time employment in independent practices and another 43% of PPA members reported that they worked in a private practice as a secondary source of employment. The work locations according to PPA surveys were similar to the findings in APA's member survey (APA 2016) where 45% reported having an independent practice, 13% reported working in academia, and about 6% in schools. The major difference was that 17% of APA respondents worked in hospitals, which was far above the 7% reported in the PPA survey. The primary work settings for PPA members is shown in Table One.

Table One: Primary Work Setting of PPA Members

| Work Location | 1996 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---------------------------------------|------|------------------|------------------|
| <i>Independent Practice</i> | 56% | 53% | 59% |
| <i>Academia</i> | 9% | 12% | 10% |
| <i>Hospitals</i> | 8% | 7% | 3% |
| <i>Schools</i> | 6% | 5% | 4% |
| <i>Community mental health center</i> | 8% | 6% | 6% |
| <i>Other Setting</i> | 10% | 13% ³ | 15% ⁴ |
| <i>Retired</i> | 3% | 4% | 3% |

Continued on page 2

How Are Psychologists Trained?

The educational backgrounds of psychologists have changed over time. Until 1996, individuals could become licensed as a psychologist with a master’s degree in psychology, or a doctoral degree in a field related to psychology. However, in 1996 psychologists could only be licensed with a doctoral degree and, by regulation the State Board of Psychology eliminated the option of becoming licensed with a doctoral degree in a “field related to psychology.” These policies led to changes in the educational levels of psychologists. In the initial PPA survey, 28% of PPA members held terminal master’s degrees and another 16% held doctoral degrees in a field related to psychology. However, the percentage of psychologists with terminal master’s degrees or doctoral degrees in fields related to psychology has declined over time through retirement. In 2018 only 8% of psychologists held terminal master’s degrees in psychology and 9% held degrees in fields related to psychology. In other words, 56% of licensed psychologists in 1996 had a doctoral degree from a department of psychology; but more than 80% did in 2018.

Data from the Job Analysis from the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB) found that 64% of licensed psychologists were trained in clinical psychology (including child-clinical), 14% in Counseling Psychology, 4% in School Psychology, and 18% in other fields of psychology (Pearson Vue, 2016). So, the educational preparation of Pennsylvania psychologists is roughly equivalent to ASPPB data, although there are fewer trained in clinical psychology (49% compared to 64%), and slightly more in Counseling Psychology (17% compared to 14%), and School Psychology (8% compared to 4%). These differences are not surprising because PPA members are more likely to be practitioner psychologists as opposed to academic or research psychologists.

The other significant change is the prevalence of the professional degree in psychology. Whereas Psy.D. psychologists were rare in 1996, they were more common in 2018. The educational backgrounds of PPA members is shown in Table Two.

Table Two: Terminal Degrees of PPA Members

| Terminal Degree | 1996 | 2009 | 2018 |
|--|------|------|------|
| Ph.D Clinical Psychology | 24% | 24% | 33% |
| Psy.D. Clinical Psychology | 6% | 20% | 26% |
| Ph.D., or Ed. D. Counseling Psychology | 14% | 14% | 18% |
| Doctorate in field related to psychology | 16% | 12% | 9% |
| Master’s in psychology or related field | 28% | 18% | 8% |
| Other doctorate in psychology | 4% | 5% | 1% |
| Ph.D. or Ed. D. School Psychology | 7% | 6% | 5% |

Currently, all applicants for a psychology license must have a doctoral degree from a program accredited by the American or Canadian Psychological Association (there are a few exceptions). However, the Association for Psychological Science (APS) has developed its

own accreditation program through the Academy of Psychological Clinical Science (APCS). Currently, most if not all APCS programs are simultaneously accredited by APA to ensure that their students have access to licensing, although APCS have achieved regulation changes in several states that will allow them to forego APA accreditation. Sayette, Norcross, and Dimoff (2011) found that APCS programs tend to emphasize clinical research, are more competitive in admissions, and more generous in offering financial aid.

Nationwide about 77% of test takers pass the EPPP at any given examination. About 82% of first time applicants pass while only 47% of non-first-time applicants pass. Those who graduated from Ph.D. programs average 85% passing at the first attempt and those from Psy.D. programs average 70% passing (Sharpless & Barber, 2013). However, this broad statistic could be misleading. Some Psy.D. programs, such as the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, routinely have 100% of their graduates pass the first time. Also, a small number of programs (none in Pennsylvania) account for a disproportionate number of failures and several have first time passing rates below 50% (Schaffer et al., 2012).

How Much Do Psychologists Earn?

Calculating the average income of psychologists is difficult because the salary surveys typically do not include employee benefits and they often include part-time with full-time workers. Salaries also vary according to location with psychologists in the Middle Atlantic region (which includes New York City) earning the highest amount. Nonetheless, APA data showed that psychologists had a median income of \$70,000 a year for early career psychologists, \$93,000 for mid-career, \$95,000 for senior career, and \$110,000 for late senior career (Lin, Stamm, & Christidis, 2017). PPA members reported an average income of \$94,000 in 2016. The median income was \$88,000 and the modes were \$85,000 and \$100,000 (Leitzel & Knapp, 2017). Thus, PPA data appears to approximate that of mid-career psychologists nationwide.

Although the earnings of psychologists have kept pace with inflation over the last 20 years, recent trends portend a less optimistic future for younger psychologists. The average debt for recent Psy. D. graduates was a median of \$200,000 (for recent Ph.D. graduates it was \$75,000). The estimated monthly payments for Psy.D. holders was \$2,300 (Stamm et al., 2015). This increase in debt is occurring across a wide range of health care professions. Nonetheless, it is so high that it threatens the ability of doctoral programs to attract qualified students who would be more likely to go into fields with a greater return on the investment.

Do Psychologists Like Their Careers?

Over the years, the PPA’s surveys have asked members about their satisfaction with psychology as a career. We have selected some responses to represent changes over time in the self-reported satisfaction with psychology as a career, level of optimism for the profession, and satisfaction with their income as a psychologist. As Table Three shows, a large percentage of psychologists like their work a great deal. Most feel optimistic about the future of psychology as a profession, but there is less satisfaction with their income as a psychologist. The finding concerning income dissatisfaction is not surprising because psychologists are the lowest paid of any doctoral level health profession.¹

Table Three: Career Satisfaction

Satisfaction with Psychology as a Career

| | 1998 | 2005 | 2010 | 2016 | 2018 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Low/Very Low | 7% | 5% | 3% | 4% | 4% |
| Unsure | 10% | 9% | 5% | 9% | 7% |
| High/Very High | 83% | 87% | 93% | 88% | 89% |

Level of Current Optimism for Psychology

| | 1998 | 2005 | 2010 | 2016 | 2018 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Low/Very Low | 17% | 8% | 7% | 10% | 11% |
| Unsure | 26% | 22% | 21% | 27% | 23% |
| High/Very High | 57% | 70% | 72% | 63% | 66% |

Satisfaction with Psychology Income

| | 1998 | 2005 | 2010 | 2016 | 2018 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Low/Very Low | 33% | 32% | 27% | 25% | 30% |
| Unsure | 18% | 15% | 17% | 21% | 20% |
| High/Very High | 46% | 51% | 57% | 53% | 51% |

PPA data is consistent with what has been found in other studies of career satisfaction among psychologists. The number of psychologists who said that they would choose psychology again as a career varies from 59% to 89% depending on the survey (Rupert, Miller, Tuminello-Hartman, 2012). Looking over studies through the years, Norcross and Karpiak (2012) reported that the mean levels of satisfaction of psychologists with their careers from 1973 through 2010 has ranged from 5.0 to 5.4 on a 6-point scale with 6 indicating the highest possible level of satisfaction. Goodyear (2008) found that counseling psychologists rated their career satisfaction as 4.85 and 5.21 on a 6-point scale in surveys conducted in 1985 and 2000 respectively. Most recently, Rupert et al. (2012) found that psychologists rated their career satisfaction as 5.7 on a 7-point scale, with 7 being the highest possible rating of satisfaction.

Regardless of methodologies used, the factors associated with lower levels of distress were being in private practice, having practiced for more years, having higher incomes, and encountering fewer negative client behaviors (Rupert et al., 2012). Job satisfaction is inversely related to burnout (Lee, Lim, Yang, & Lee, 2011). Psychologists who have been working in the field longer may have learned better coping skills, although it is also possible that some dissatisfied professionals voluntarily left the profession or sought niches within the profession more suited to their interests and abilities. However, some of the factors associated with lower distress may be confounded because psychologists who go into private practice tend to be older and have more freedom to screen out more problematic patients, thus exposing themselves to fewer negative patient behaviors.

Who Are Psychologists?

Like most professions in the United States, psychologists were once populated almost exclusively by White males. The field of psychology has not been immune from sexist, racist, homophobic, and other beliefs prevalent in society as reflected in its membership, but, this is changing. In the 1960s only about 16% of members of APA's Division 12 (Psychotherapy) were women and few of the members identified as ethnic minorities (Norcross, Vandenbos, & Freedheim, 2016). Now a majority of PPA members are women. Three fourths of doctoral students in psychology are women and one quarter of doctoral students identify as members of an ethnic minority group (Norcross, Sayette, & Pomerantz, 2018).

Ethnic minorities have historically been under represented in psychology. But that is slowly changing. In 2005 about 9% of psychologists identified themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority and that increased to 16% by 2013 according to an APA survey (but the ASPPB survey of licensed psychologists in the United States and Canada reported 13%). In that 2013 APA study, 4% of psychologists identified themselves as Asian, 4% as African-American, 5% as Hispanic, and 2% as other (Lin, Stamm, & Christidis, 2015). In 2014, 25% of new doctorates identified themselves as non-White (Christidis, Stamm, & Lin, 2016). Less than 1% of psychologists identify themselves as transgendered and almost 5% considered themselves as having a disability using the Americans with Disabilities Act definition (Pearson Vue, 2016).

Pennsylvania psychologists are less diverse than psychologists nationwide. An unpublished survey by PPA found that only 5% of psychologists in 2006 identified themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority group, which is about one-half of what APA's survey found a year before. Probably this occurs, in part, because Pennsylvania has a smaller percentage of ethnic minorities than other states. About 18% of Pennsylvania's population is identified as either Black, Hispanic or Latinx, Asian, or Native American, compared to about 34% of the American population in general (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017) and about 4% of Pennsylvania residents are foreign born compared to the national average of 13% (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

Continued on page 5

1. Identifying the incomes of other professions is difficult because of ways in which income is measured. Nonetheless, salary.com identified the incomes of optometrists at \$120,000, podiatrists at \$144,000 and physical therapists (which are gradually moving into a doctoral level profession) at \$86,000.

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THE STATE OF PSYCHOLOGY: 2019

Continued from page 3

What is the Pathway to Becoming a Psychologist?

About 4% of students with a bachelor's degree in psychology go on to earn a doctorate in psychology. Another 6% of psychology bachelor's graduates earn doctorates or professional degrees in other fields. This figure of 10% of psychology majors who go on to receive a doctoral or professional degree is higher than college graduates in general. About one-third of doctoral degree holders in psychology did not have psychology as an undergraduate degree (Lin, Christidis, & Stamm, 2017).

For those who have a bachelor's degree in psychology, 20% went into sales, 19% research, 7% professional service, and 16% into management (Stamm, Lin, & Christidis, 2016). The average GRE scores for doctoral students have changed little in the last 25 years. It takes an average of 6 years for an individual to earn a doctorate in a professional field of psychology. The attrition rates for APA accredited programs is around 8% (Norcross, Sayette, & Pomerantz, 2018).

Continuing Competency

Neimeyer, Taylor, and Rozensky (2012) estimated that the half-life of psychology is 9 years. The half-life of a profession refers to the amount of time it takes for half of the knowledge base to become outdated

or inadequate. Because of the very rapid changes in the field of psychology, this sample also believed that the length of the half-life is becoming shorter and shorter. The most common way to guard against professional obsolescence is to require continuing education as a condition of licensure renewal.

Surveys of interests in continuing education topics has shown stability over the last 20 years, although there appears to be an increased interest in health psychology and psychiatric medications (See Table Four below). These surveys can be used as an informal bell whether to determine how the interests of psychologists are changing over time. For example, when managed care companies were more stringent in rationing care, as reflected in the 1996 data, there was an increased interest in CE programs on short-term treatment models.

Most of the data comes from unpublished PPA surveys of its members. However, Table Four also includes a study by Neimeyer, Taylor, and Wear (2010) conducted on all licensed psychologists in the United States, including Pennsylvania. Neimeyer et al. used a different manner of assessing areas of interests and asked about specific diagnostic categories. Anxiety, depression, and trauma were the most common areas of diagnostic interest identified which corresponds to the three most common mental disorders treated by psychologists (Stamm, Lin, & Christidis, 2018).

Table Four: Continuing Education Interests

| TOPIC | 2012 (N=320) | Neimeyer et al. ¹ | 2009 (N= 428) | 2007 (N=321) | 1996 (N=78) |
|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Psychiatric medications | 30% | 24% | 29% | 36% | 19% |
| Child/adolescent | 31% | 28% | 25% | 32% | n.a. |
| Psychological assessment | 30% | 51% | 27% | 30% | 22% |
| Ethics | 32% | 47% | 23% | 28% | 19% |
| Marital therapy | 27% | | 26% | 27% | 18% |
| Health psychology | 31% | 22% ² | 27% | 26% | 17% |
| Differential diagnosis | 29% | | 22% | 25% | 15% |
| Neuropsychology | 21% | | 23% | 25% | 22% |
| General psychotherapy issues | 22% | | 22% | 24% | 24% |
| Psychopathology | 25% | | 24% | 22% | 19% |
| CBT | 25% | 22% | | | |
| Practice management | 26% | | 18% | 20% | 12% |
| Short-term treatment | 16% | 24% | 19% | 20% | 31% |
| Family therapy | 22% | | 19% | 20% | 18% |
| Religion/Spirituality | 16% | | | LT 1% ³ | |
| Anxiety disorders | | 43% | | | |
| Mood disorders | | 30% | | | |
| Trauma | | 21% | | | |

¹ Neimeyer, Taylor and Wear (2010) survey including 527 respondents from Pennsylvania.

² Called "chronic illness."

³ Spirituality only, changed to religion and spirituality in 2012.

Continued on page 6


THE STATE OF PSYCHOLOGY: 2019

Continued from page 5

Where Are Psychologists Needed in the Future?

The demand for mental health services is expected to increase in the future. Currently in several areas the shortage of psychologists is especially severe. More psychologists are needed who work at the “ends of life,” meaning old age and childhood. The number of older adults will rise to 20% of the American population by 2030 and Pennsylvania has the fourth oldest population of any state (behind Florida, Connecticut, and West Virginia). Of course, older adults have health care needs that are higher than any other age group. As the current generation of baby boomers age, it is expected that the rate of dementia and late life cognitive decline will also increase. Yet the number of psychologists who work with older adults is not increasing at the same rate and only 4% of psychologists work primarily with older adults (Hoge, Karel, Zeiss, Alegria, & Maye, 2015). Psychologists who work occasionally with older adults only spend an average of 9 hours per week providing direct services to them (Stamm et al., 2016). In part this has occurred because reimbursement rates under Medicare have not kept pace with inflation. Psychologists who work with children and adolescents including school psychologists are needed, especially child forensic psychology (such as child custody evaluations).

Correctional psychology continues to be a specialty in demand. Although the desire for correctional reform cuts across political spectrums and ideologies, the country remains mired with a system that over incarcerates with little social benefit as a result. Addictions have always been a major problem in American society and the issues appear to be getting worse with the rise of the opioid epidemic. A small number of psychologists specialize in addictions and only one-third of clinical psychology training programs offer any specialty training in addictions (Dimoff, Sayette, & Norcross, 2017). With the increase in integrated health care, there is a greater need for psychologists who can work with primary care or specialty care physicians.

Bilingual psychologists are needed. About 21% of the American population has a primary language other than English. Most of these Americans speak English well or very well. However, about 6% of Americans speak English poorly or not at all. Even some who speak English well may prefer to speak on important topics in their primary language. The most common foreign language demand is in Spanish where almost 10 million Spanish-speaking Americans report poor or no English. This is followed by almost 1 million Chinese, 500,000 Vietnamese and Korean speakers respectively, and 300,000 Francophones. 

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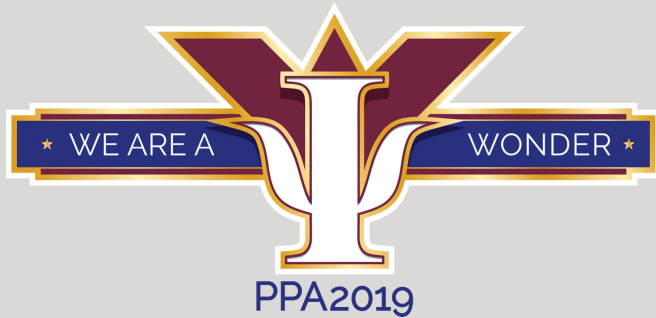
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Home Study CE Courses

Act 74 CE Programs

Older Adults at Risk to Die From Suicide: Assessment Management and Treatment—1 CE

Assessment, Management, and Treatment of Suicidal Patients (Extended)—3 CEs

Essential Competencies When Working with Suicidal Patients - 1 CE

Act 31 CE Programs

Pennsylvania Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting—3 CE Version

Pennsylvania Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting—2 CE Version

General

Record Keeping for Psychologists in Pennsylvania—1 CE

Introduction to Telepsychology, Part 1, 2, and 3 (Webinar)—1 CE each

*Introduction to Ethical Decision Making**—3 CEs

*Competence, Advertising, Informed Consent, and Other Professional Issues**—3 CEs

*The New Confidentiality 2018**—3 CEs

**This program qualifies for 3 contact hours for the ethics requirement as mandated by the Pennsylvania State Board of Psychology.*

Act 74 CE Programs qualify for the suicide requirement mandated by the Pennsylvania State Board of Psychology.

Act 31 CE Programs have been approved by the Department of Public Welfare and the Pennsylvania Department of State to meet the Act 31 requirements.

For a full listing of our home studies, download our catalog here, or visit our online store.



For CE programs sponsored by the Pennsylvania Psychological Association, visit papsy.org.

Registration materials and further conference information are available at papsy.org.

Join in on the fun!

PPA MEMBERSHIP SOCIAL AND WINE TASTING

CULLARI VINEYARDS & WINERY
1251 EAST CHOCOLATE AVENUE
HERSHEY, PA 17033
OWNED AND OPERATED BY
DR. SALVATORE CULLARI,
PSYCHOLOGIST AND PPA MEMBER

Tuesday, May 21, 2019

5:30 - 7:30 pm

Cost is \$20 per person and includes wine tasting, snacks, and a bottle of wine to take home! PLEASE BRING CASH.

Can't make it by 5:30? Stop in after work when you're able!

