

PROPOSED RULEMAKING

STATE BOARD OF PSYCHOLOGY

[49 PA. CODE CH. 41]

Accreditation

The State Board of Psychology (Board) proposes to amend §§ 41.1, 41.31 and 41.61 (relating to definitions; educational qualifications; and Code of Ethics) to read as set forth in Annex A.

Effective Date

This proposed rulemaking will be effective upon publication of the final-form rulemaking in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

Statutory Authority

The Board has the authority to adopt and revise the regulations that govern its licensees under the authority granted to it by section 3.2 of the Professional Psychologists Practice Act (act) (63 P.S. § 1203.2). Under section 3.2(1) and (2) of the act, the Board has the authority to: pass upon the qualifications and fitness of applicants for licenses and reciprocal licenses; adopt and revise rules and regulations requiring applicants to pass examinations relating to their qualifications as a prerequisite to the issuance of license; and adopt and, from time to time, revise the rules, regulations and policies to be consistent with the law as may be necessary to carry into effect the provisions of this act. Under section 6(a)(2) of the act (63 P.S. § 1206(a)(2)), an applicant must be a graduate of an accredited college or university with a doctoral degree in psychology or a field related to psychology to be eligible for licensure as a psychologist.

Background and Need for the Amendments

The Board's regulations in § 41.31 recognize program accreditation from the American Psychological Association (APA) and the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA). In this proposed rulemaking, the Board seeks to also recognize the Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (PCSAS) to afford clinical psychological programs an additional pathway to licensure. Three PCSAS-accredited clinical psychology doctoral programs located in this Commonwealth (University of Pittsburgh, University of Pennsylvania and Temple University) attended a Board meeting and requested that the PCSAS receive parity with the APA and the CPA. Penn State University also has a PCSAS-accredited clinical psychological program.

The PCSAS is an independent, nonprofit organization providing rigorous, objective and empirically based accreditation of PhD programs that adhere to a clinical science training model—one that increases the quality and quantity of clinical scientists contributing to all aspects of public health and extends the science base for mental health care. The Academy of Psychological Clinical Science is the parent organization of the PCSAS. According to its web site, the PCSAS programs adhere to a clinical science training model—one that supports and expands the scientific foundation for mental and behavioral health care and increases the quality and quantity of clinical scientists contributing to all aspects of public health for all people. The PCSAS is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), which is the entity that carries out the recognition of accrediting agencies in the private, nongovernmental sector. The majority of top-ranked PhD programs in

clinical psychology in the United States are PCSAS programs. The PCSAS only accredits clinical science PhD programs.

The APA also accredits clinical psychology education and training programs. However, the PCSAS's scope is narrower with a goal to accredit doctoral programs that adhere to a clinical science training model. The APA accredits a broader range of programs. The PCSAS currently accredits 47 programs; the APA accredits over 500 programs. PCSAS accreditation focuses more on clinical science as compared to the APA. APA must cover three different training models whereas PCSAS focuses on evidence-based clinical training and science training. At this time, because the Board does not recognize the PCSAS, programs that want the more specific science-centered PCSAS accreditation would also be required to be accredited by the APA or the CPA. The Board has determined that this dual accreditation is unnecessary and overly burdensome, given the quality of PCSAS accreditation. The Board recognizes the importance of science-centered training in clinical psychology and believes that providing parity to the PCSAS will have a positive impact in the treatment of mental and behavioral health problems.

Delaware was the first state to pass legislation permitting the PCSAS parity in 2014. Since then, seven other states allow for PCSAS graduates to be licensed. Other states that recognize PCSAS graduates include Arizona, California, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico and New York.

In this proposed rulemaking, the Board also proposes to update its regulations to reflect a name change from the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA) to the CHEA.

In accordance with the requirements of Executive Order 1996-1 (4 Pa. Code §§ 1.371—1.382 (relating to regulatory review and promulgation)), on February 5, 2024, the Board sent an exposure draft of the proposed regulation to interested parties and stakeholders. After a 30-day comment period, no comments were received.

Description of the Proposed Amendments

Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System

In the Board's existing regulations, § 41.1 defines "doctoral degree in psychology" and "doctoral degree in a field related to psychology." In both definitions, a doctoral degree must meet one of the following: be accredited by the APA or the CPA, be designated by the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards/National Register Designation Committee (ASPPB/National Register) or be offered by a foreign college or university whose standards are equivalent to the ASPPB/National Register Designation Project criteria. To reflect the Board's intent to provide for PCSAS parity, the Board proposes to add a definition of "PCSAS" in § 41.1 and proposes to amend the definitions of "doctoral degree in a field related to psychology" and "doctoral degree in psychology" by making PCSAS accreditation an alternative to APA and CPA accreditation. The Board also proposes to amend § 41.31(1) and (3) to reflect PCSAS parity.

Council for Higher Education Accreditation

The Board also proposes to update its regulations to reflect a name change from the "CORPA" to the "CHEA." The Board's regulations at § 41.1 define an accredited

college or university as an “institution which is recognized as an institution of higher education under 22 Pa. Code (relating to education) or which is accredited by a regional accrediting association recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA).” CORPA was established in January 1994 to continue the recognition of accrediting agencies previously carried out by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) until the time a new National organization for accreditation could be established. CORPA was dissolved in April 1997 after the CHEA was created. The CHEA is currently the entity that carries out the recognition function in the private, nongovernmental sector. The PCSAS is recognized by the CHEA.

Accordingly, the Board proposes to update the definition of “accredited college or university” in § 41.1 to delete the outdated reference to “CORPA” and to add “CHEA.” Similarly, the Board proposes to amend § 41.61(d) to update the Board’s regulations to replace the term “CORPA” with “CHEA.”

Fiscal Impact and Paperwork Requirements

This proposed rulemaking will have no adverse fiscal impact on the Commonwealth or its political subdivisions and will impose no additional paperwork requirements upon the Commonwealth, political subdivisions or the private sector.

Sunset Date

A sunset date is not being established for this proposed rulemaking. The need and efficacy of the regulation will be periodically monitored by the Board.

Regulatory Review

Under section 5(a) of the Regulatory Review Act (71 P.S. § 745.5(a)), on November 4, 2024, the Board submitted a copy of this proposed rulemaking and a copy of a Regulatory Analysis Form to the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) and to the chairperson of the Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee of the Senate and the chairperson of the Professional Licensure Committee of the House of Representatives. A copy of this material is available to the public upon request.

Under section 5(g) of the Regulatory Review Act, IRRC may convey comments, recommendations or objections to the proposed rulemaking within 30 days of the close of the public comment period. The comments, recommendations or objections shall specify the regulatory review criteria in section 5.2 of the Regulatory Review Act (71 P.S. § 745.5b) which have not been met. The Regulatory Review Act specifies detailed procedures for review prior to final publication of the rulemaking by the Board, the General Assembly and the Governor.

Public Comment

Interested persons are invited to submit written comments, recommendations or objections regarding this proposed rulemaking to the Regulatory Counsel, State Board, P.O. Box 69523, Harrisburg, PA 17106-9523, RA-STRegulatoryCounsel@pa.gov within 30 days of publication of this proposed rulemaking in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. Reference No. 16A-6327 (Accreditation) when submitting comments.

STEVEN K. ERICKSON, PhD,
Chairperson

Fiscal Note: 16A-6327. No fiscal impact; recommends adoption.

Annex A

TITLE 49. PROFESSIONAL AND VOCATIONAL STANDARDS

PART I. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Subpart A. PROFESSIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL AFFAIRS

**CHAPTER 41. STATE BOARD OF PSYCHOLOGY
GENERAL**

§ 41.1. Definitions.

The following words and terms, when used in this chapter, have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

* * * * *

Accredited college or university—An institution which is recognized as an institution of higher education under 22 Pa. Code (relating to education) or which is accredited by a regional accrediting association recognized by the [**Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA)] **Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)**.**

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Doctoral degree in a field related to psychology—A degree awarded upon successful completion of a program which, within 1 year from the award of the doctoral degree, meets one of the following:

- (i) Is accredited by the APA [**or the**], CPA **or PCSAS**.
- (ii) Is designated by the ASPPB/National Register Designation Project.
- (iii) Is offered by a foreign college or university whose standards are equivalent to the ASPPB/National Register Designation Project criteria.

Doctoral degree in psychology—A degree awarded upon successful completion of a program in psychology which, within 1 year from the award of the doctoral degree, meets one of the following criteria:

- (i) Is accredited by the APA [**or the**], CPA **or PCSAS**.
- (ii) Is designated by the ASPPB/National Register Designation Project.
- (iii) Is offered by a foreign college or university whose standards are equivalent to the ASPPB/National Register Designation Project Criteria.

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National Register—The Council for the National Register of Health Service Providers.

PCSAS—Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System.

Parent—A biological parent, adoptive parent or legal guardian.

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QUALIFICATIONS

§ 41.31. Educational qualifications.

To meet the education requirements for licensure under section 6 of the act (63 P.S. § 1206), an applicant shall

complete the requirements for a doctoral degree in psychology or a field related to psychology as defined in § 41.1 (relating to definitions). The following documentation evidences compliance:

(1) For degree holders from a program in the United States, Canada or United States territories, a Verification of Doctoral Program Approval Status completed by the program's director reflecting accreditation by the APA [or], CPA or PCSAS or designation by the ASPPB/ National Designation Project within 1 year from the award of the doctoral degree, and an official transcript from the registrar.

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(3) An applicant who does not meet the criteria in paragraph (2) shall complete supplemental education or training, or both, from a program accredited by the APA [or the], CPA or PCSAS or designated by ASPPB/ National Register Designation Project based upon an evaluation of the deficiency by the program. The program director shall certify that the supplemental coursework or experience, or both, makes the applicant equivalent to a graduate of that program.

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CODE OF ETHICS

§ 41.61. Code of Ethics.

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Principle 2. Competency.

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(d) Psychologists accurately represent their competence, education, training and experience. They claim as evidence of psychological educational qualifications only those degrees obtained from institutions accredited by a regional accrediting association approved by the [Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA)] Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Degrees earned from foreign colleges and universities may be represented only if they are determined to be equivalent to the degrees conferred by these accredited institutions. Determinations of equivalency shall be made by an agency acceptable to the Board, subject to the Board's final approval. Representations of nonpsychological earned academic degrees are not prohibited, if the degrees are from accredited schools. If these degrees are generic, such as Ph.D., Ed.D., M.S., M.A. and M.Ed., the holder may represent them, but shall specify the discipline in which each particular degree was earned.

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