Promoting Competence in Health Service Psychology: Models, Methods, and Considerations

Catherine L. Grus, Ph.D.,
Deputy Executive Director,
Education Directorate
American Psychological Association
Why focus on competence?

• Public accountability is a fundamental value of a profession (Rodolfa et. al, 2005)

• Assure that those who provide services in the practice of their profession have met a quality threshold

• Shift within higher education toward an emphasis on the acquisition and maintenance of competence

  a “culture of competence”

Roberts, Borden, Christiansen & Lopez (2005)
Highlights of our Journey

- APA Competency Benchmarks (2006)
- Competency Assessment Toolkit (2009)
- Revised Benchmarks Competencies (2011)
- Competencies for Psychology Practice in Primary Care (2013)
- Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology (2017)

© American Psychological Association 2017. All Rights Reserved
The Benchmarks: A Developmental Model for Defining Competencies in Psychology

(Fouad et al., 2009)

- Delineates competency benchmarks, or measurable standards of performance, that are developmental and integrated through the sequence of education and training
- Developed by expert consensus

© American Psychological Association 2017. All Rights Reserved
Competency Benchmarks Model

• Foundational competencies - the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that serve as the foundation for the functions a psychologist is expected to carry out

• Functional competencies - encompass the major functions, or actions, that a psychologist is expected to carry out, each of which requires reflective integration of foundational competencies

• Developmental - level of education and training incorporated into model
  – Readiness for Practicum, Internship, and entry-level to Practice

© American Psychological Association 2017. All Rights Reserved

**Competency Cube**

- **Foundational Competency Domains**
  - Assessment/Diagnosis/Conceptualization
  - Intervention
  - Consultation
  - Research/Evaluation
  - Supervision/Teaching
  - Management/Administration

- **Functional Competency Domains**
  - Doctoral Education
  - Doctoral Internship/Residency
  - Post Doctoral Supervision
  - Residency/Fellowship
  - Continuing Competency

**Stages of Professional Development**

**These Domains are not mutually exclusive, are interrelated, developmental in nature and occur at every stage of professional development.**

**Within each professional stage, the ways in which specialty education becomes relevant can be visualized through the Parameters of practice that differentiates specialities, namely:**
- Populations served
- Problems addressed
- Procedures of theoretical orientation
- Settings

© American Psychological Association 2017. All Rights Reserved
Tensions Encountered

• Too complex, too much work to change
• Where is the research support that this will improve training outcomes?
• Is this a “fad?”
• Why are you doing this?
• Will this be required?
Dissemination and Implementation Strategies

• Invited comment from broader education and training community
• Published in key psychology journal
• Multiple presentations with key stakeholder groups
• Web presence
• Associated resources: implementation guidebook, rating form
2011 Revision to the Benchmarks

Simplified structure, grouped by six major categories:

• Professionalism
• Relational
• Science
• Application
• Education
• Systems
Competency Assessment “Toolkit”
(Kaslow et al., 2009)

• Purpose: promote broader implementation of competence assessment and provide information about application of assessment methods to the assessment of competence
• Coordinated with benchmarks work group
• Addresses competency assessment at the three levels of education and training from the benchmarks and for the practicing professional

© American Psychological Association 2017. All Rights Reserved
Assessment Methods in Toolkit

• Annual Rotation
  Performance Review
• Case Presentation
• Client/Patient
  Process/Outcome
  Measure
• Competence Evaluation
  Rating Form
• Consumer Satisfaction
  Survey
• OSCE
• Portfolio

• Ratings of live or
  recorded performance
• Record Review
• Self-Assessment
• Simulation/Role Play
• Standardized
  Client/Patient
• Structured Oral Exam
• Written Examination
• 360

© American Psychological Association 2017. All Rights Reserved
Components of Toolkit

• Assessment Method Fact Sheets
  – Description
  – Use specific to core competencies, formative vs. summative, developmental level
  – Implementation
  – Psychometrics
  – Strengths/Challenges
  – Future Directions

• Grid of Assessment Methods and Competencies Best used for
Specialty Specific Models in Psychology

- Clinical Health Psychology (2008)
- Psychology in Primary Care (2013)

- Examples of others not based on the Benchmarks
  – Rehabilitation psychology (2005)
  – Geropsychology (2009)

- Profession Wide Competencies, APA Standards for Accreditation in Health Service Psychology (2017)
Remember ..... 

“Quality isn’t something you lay on top of subjects and objects like tinsel on a tree. It is the core from which the tree must start”

- Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance
For more information: