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APBA-BACB Supervision Survey Results Now Available

The supervision of others is an essential activity in applied behavior analysis because of its central role in obtaining BACB certification and in the tiered service-delivery systems often used by behavior analysts. In March 2012, the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts (APBA) and the BACB collaborated on a joint survey of supervision practices. The survey's two main purposes were to summarize important supervision phenomena for the field and provide relevant information for the BACB's Supervision Task Force, which was tasked with updating the organization's supervision and experience standards. An Internet survey was sent to all BACB certificants, student members of APBA, and faculty contacts of BACB approved course sequences who were requested to invite current students to participate. A total of 2,268 individuals responded to the survey. A summary of the survey's main findings is now available in [Issue #39](#) of the APBA Reporter and the full report will soon be available on the [ABPA website](#). Below are a few key highlights from the survey.

Key Demographics

- 81% female
- 64% between the ages of 26 and 40
- BACB certification
 - 64% BCBA
 - 13% BCBA-D
 - 11% BCaBA
 - 12% pursuing certification
- 55% held the job title of Behavior Analyst

Individuals Holding or Pursuing the BCBA Credential*

- Most respondents met (or are meeting) experience requirements using the Supervised Independent Fieldwork option (compared to the Practicum and Intensive Practicum options)
- Most respondents were supervised by 1-2 individuals
 - Most supervisory interactions were "in person"
- Most respondents obtained experience at 1-2 sites
- Most respondents obtained experience with 1-2 populations
 - Most common: individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Most respondents rated supervisors as Excellent or Good for each assessed dimension (e.g., expertise in ABA, modeling ethical behavior, improving clinical skills)

**Note: these narrative descriptions are identical to those holding or pursuing the BCaBA credential.*





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Provision of Supervision Services

- Approximately half of BCBA supervisors reported 5 or fewer years of ABA experience prior to supervising
- Approximately half of BCBA-D supervisors reported 8 or more years of ABA experience prior to supervising
- The vast majority of supervisors reported working with 6 or fewer supervisees
- The vast majority of supervisors reported conducting “in person” supervision sessions
- The vast majority of supervisors reported having a formal professional relationship (employee or consultant) with the sites at which they supervised
- There was little consistency in the fees charged for supervision services

Ideal Standards for Supervisors

- At least three-quarters of respondents indicated the BCBA credential as sufficient for supervision
- Over half of respondents recommended 2-3 years post-certification prior to supervising
- Respondents endorsed \$40-100 hourly fees for supervising individuals pursuing BACB certification; the most common fees were \$40-50

Revised Supervision & Experience Standards

As we reported in the September 2011 issue of the *BACB Newsletter*, the BACB established the Supervision Task Force to review all of its supervision and experience standards and revise them if needed. The task force, which was comprised of 8 subject matter experts, met for a 2-day meeting in March 2012. Membership included individuals with at least BCBA-level certification who are involved in university teaching, staff training, and/or the oversight of clinical service delivery. The group was also geographically diverse, representing six US states and two countries. During the meeting, each supervision and experience standard was carefully discussed, edited

for enhanced clarity, and revised to reflect more rigor or more effective guidance to supervisors and supervisees. A consensus approach was used to identify proposed revisions to the experience standards. The BACB Board of Directors reviewed and approved the recommendations in May 2012. The most notable changes to the experience standards are described below.

Supervisor Qualifications

The current standard is that supervisors must hold the BCBA or BCBA-D credential at the time of supervision. Although the Task Force discussed the possibility of requiring certificants to work for some number of years before being authorized to supervise individuals pursuing certification, the consensus was that the time period would ultimately be arbitrary and not necessarily predictive of one’s ability to effectively supervise others. As an alternative, the Task Force identified the following requirements that should more directly impact the acquisition and maintenance of quality supervision repertoires and increase compliance with BACB standards. In addition to holding the BCBA or BCBA-D credential, supervisors will now need to:

- pass a post-certification, competency-based, BACB-approved training module/ workshop on supervising pre-certification individuals; AND
- pass an online, competency-based training module on BACB experience standards at www.BACB.com; AND
- obtain 3 hours of continuing education related to supervision during each certification cycle.

The above requirements will apply to anyone who supervises the applied experience of those who are pursuing certification (including noncertified faculty in approved course sequences) and anyone who supervises the ongoing practice of BCaBAs. The completion of these requirements will eventually be indicated in the certificant registry, at which time a certificant will be eligible to supervise someone pursuing BACB certification.

The new supervisor requirements will be phased-in over the next two years. All potential supervisors will need to complete



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(a) and (b) above by **December 31, 2014**. The BACB is currently developing a curriculum outline for the required supervision training mentioned above (a). This outline will be made public in late fall so that vendors can begin preparing workshops and training modules that meet the new requirements. The online training module on BACB experience standards (b) will soon be developed and is scheduled for release on **September 30, 2013**. The requirement that supervisors obtain 3 hours of continuing education related to supervision (c) will go into effect in the next recertification cycle after completing (a) and (b). In other words, a supervisor will be able to complete his/her upcoming recertification before the requirement goes into effect.

The Nature and Structure of Supervision

The current experience standards have been updated to include a stated purpose of supervision and a description of the activities that should occur during supervisory interactions. The revised standards (below) should better focus supervisor-supervisee interactions and are **effective immediately**.

The purpose of supervision is to improve and maintain the behavior-analytic, professional, and ethical repertoires of the supervisee and facilitate the delivery of high-quality services to his/her clients. Effective behavior-analytic supervision includes:

- Development of performance expectations
- Observation, behavioral skills training, and delivery of performance feedback
- Modeling technical, professional, and ethical behavior
- Guiding behavioral case conceptualization, problem-solving, and decision-making repertoires
- Review of written materials (e.g., behavior programs, data sheets, reports)
- Oversight and evaluation of the effects of behavioral service delivery
- Ongoing evaluation of the effects of supervision

Additional clarity has been added to the description of how supervision should be

structured. Although concern has been publicly expressed about the acceptability of Internet-based supervision, the Task Force opted not to exclude this format due to its utility for individuals pursuing certification in many rural and non-US areas without access to local supervisors. However, the experience standards now indicate that in-person, on-site observation is preferred and that when distance supervision occurs, synchronous (real-time) observation is encouraged. In addition, small-group supervision has now been more clearly defined and the role of non-supervisees in those meetings clarified. The revised standards (below) are **effective immediately**.

The supervisor must observe and provide feedback to the supervisee on his/her behavior-analytic activities with a client in the natural environment during each required supervisory period. In-person, on-site observation is preferred. However, this may be conducted via web-cameras, videotape, videoconferencing, or similar means in lieu of the supervisor being physically present; synchronous (real-time) observation is strongly encouraged.

Supervision may be conducted in small groups for no more than half of the total supervised hours in each supervisory period. Small groups are interactive meetings in which 2-10 supervisees who share similar experiences participate in the supervision activities described above. If non-supervisees are present during the meeting, their participation should be limited so as to increase the interaction opportunities of supervisees. The remainder of the total supervision hours in each supervisory period must consist of individual supervision.

The Onset of Experience

The current standards permit individuals to begin accruing experience hours only after they begin the coursework that will be used to satisfy the BACB's coursework eligibility requirement. This standard has been expanded to also require individuals to complete a supervisee registration process with the BACB in which they must pass an online, competency-based training module on BACB experience standards (*Note*: this is the same module supervisors



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will now complete). This new requirement will provide greater clarity regarding the onset of experience and should increase compliance with BACB standards. **Individuals pursuing certification must complete the supervisee registration process no later than December 31, 2014.** From that point forward, the registration process will need to be completed prior to any experience that will be used toward certification requirements.

The Temporal Distribution of Experience

The existing distribution requirement for experience is “no less than 10 hours per week but no more than 30 hours per week, for a minimum of 3 weeks per month.” This requirement was instituted to increase the concentration of experience to facilitate individuals having more cohesive and less fractured practical training. The Task Force deemed the current rule difficult to follow and suspected that many were likely not following it. The new requirements are as follows:

- No fewer than 10 hours but no more than 30 hours may be accrued per week (the 3 week-per-month requirement has been eliminated) - **Effective immediately**
- The start-date and end-date of experience may not be more than five years apart. - **Effective December 31, 2014**

Approved Activities

The current definition of Approved Activities specifies that individuals pursuing certification should spend their time on activities that are behavior-analytic in nature (per Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968) and are related to the current version of the Task List. The revised section (below) now includes additional guidance on the scope of experience and specifies that the supervisor will determine whether activities are appropriate. This revision should provide greater clarity regarding the focus of the experience requirement. In addition, direct

implementation of behavioral programs may not count for more than 50% of the accrued experience hours. We currently recommend this approach for all pre-certification experiences. As of **January 1, 2014** we will monitor (and may audit) applications to ensure that no more than 50% of the accrued experience hours are in direct implementation of behavioral programs.

Supervisees are strongly encouraged to have multiple experiences (e.g., sites, populations) with multiple supervisors and from each of the activity areas below.

- Conducting assessments related to the need for behavioral intervention (e.g., stimulus preference assessment, functional assessment, staff performance assessment);
- Designing, implementing, and systematically monitoring skill-acquisition and behavior-reduction programs;
- Overseeing the implementation of behavior-analytic programs by others;
- Training, designing behavioral systems, and performance management;
- Other activities normally performed by a behavior analyst that are directly related to behavior analysis such as attending planning meetings regarding the behavior analytic program, researching the literature related to the program, and talking to individuals about the program.

Examples of activities that will not count as experience include: attending meetings with little or no behavior-analytic content; providing interventions that are not based in behavior analysis; performing nonbehavioral administrative activities; and completing nonbehavioral assessments (e.g., diagnostic assessments, intellectual assessments), paperwork, documentation, billing, or any other activities that are not directly related to behavior analysis.



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BACB Newsletter - Special Edition on Supervision

September, 2012

The Supervision Contract

Current experience standards require supervisors and supervisees to use a contract at the onset of their professional relationship. The revised standards now include specific content requirements of the contract (below).

The supervisee and supervisor must execute a written contract prior to the onset of the experience. The purpose of the contract is to protect all parties and align experience activities with the purpose of supervision described in Nature of Supervision. The contract should:

- State the responsibilities of the supervisor and supervisee; and
- Include a description of the appropriate activities and instructional objectives; and
- Include the objective and measurable circumstances under which the supervisor will sign the supervisee's Experience Verification Form when the experience has ended; and
- Delineate the consequences should the parties not adhere to their responsibilities (including proper termination of the relationship); and
- Include a statement requiring the supervisee to obtain written permission from the supervisee's on-site employer or manager when applicable; and
- Include an attestation that both parties will adhere to the *BACB Guidelines for Responsible Conduct for Behavior Analysts and the BACB Disciplinary and Ethical Standards*

All supervisory contracts written after **September 30, 2013** must include the content above. However, we strongly encourage supervisors and supervisees to consider reviewing existing contracts to determine if helpful revisions could be made.

In addition, the BACB is currently preparing sample supervision contracts for the following three contexts: university

supervision, privately contracted supervision, and within-agency supervision. These contracts will be placed on a new Supervision Resources webpage at www.BACB.com in late Fall.

Documentation of Ongoing Supervision

Supervisors and supervisees now use the Fieldwork and Practicum Experience Supervision Form to document ongoing supervision. However, the heterogeneity of training experiences and contexts frequently makes the form cumbersome. Consequently, many supervisors have developed their own "in house" forms to document ongoing supervision. The following section has been added to the experience standards to formally sanction this practice and ensure that information most critical to the BACB is included in alternative forms.

Supervisors may develop their own version of the Experience Supervision Form. These alternative forms must include all of the following elements:

- Date of each supervisory meeting
- Duration of each supervisory meeting
- Format of each supervisory meeting (i.e., individual or small group)
- An evaluation of supervisee performance
- The total experience hours obtained during the supervisory period
- The total individual and small-group supervision hours obtained during the supervisory period
- Date lines for supervisor and supervisee indicating when the form was completed & signed
- Signature lines for supervisor and supervisee

In addition, a retention window (7 years) for supervision documentation was added (based on the data retention policy in the American Psychological Association publication manual). Both of these changes (supervision form and retention window) are **effective immediately** moving forward.



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Contested Experience

For several years, the BACB has implemented a Contested Experience policy regarding situations when a supervisor refuses to sign a supervisee's Experience Verification Form. However, the policy is not located in the Experience Standards for Experience document but is instead located online in the Frequently Asked Questions section regarding exam applications. The policy (see below) has now been included in the Experience Standards to increase its visibility.

If a supervisee is unable to obtain the signature of a supervisor on the Experience Verification Form or disagrees with the total number of hours recorded on the form, the supervisee may supplement his or her application with proof of the following:

- a. A copy of the supervisory contract
- b. Copies of the signed BACB Experience

Supervisor Forms (or equivalent) completed during the experience

- c. Letters or other documentation from third parties who observed the supervisory relationship

Applicants also must provide the supervisor with copies of the documentation they are submitting to the BACB and must include proof of provision of this information to the supervisor (e.g., certified mail receipt along with a letter from the applicant to the supervisor). The BACB may attempt to contact the supervisor to confirm receipt of this information and to provide him or her with an opportunity to address this matter in writing. Supervisors will be asked to provide documentation of dissatisfaction/ concerns regarding the experience previously provided to applicants claiming a contested supervision. If the application is denied based on the lack of proof of supervision, applicants will have a right to appeal this denial.

The new [BACB Experience Standards](#) document includes the new changes that are effective immediately.