

# CHRONICLES OF THE NORTH CAROLINA PSYCHOLOGY BOARD

## BACKGROUND

The North Carolina State Board of Examiners of Practicing Psychologists (as it was then called) was created in 1967 to carry out provisions of the North Carolina Practicing Psychologist Licensing Act (now called the N.C. Psychology Practice Act). The Board's mission was then, as it is now, to protect the public from the practice of psychology by unqualified persons and from unprofessional conduct by persons licensed to practice psychology.

The Board is comprised of seven members appointed by the Governor to staggered terms of three years. Three Board members are licensed psychologists (LPs), two members are licensed psychological associates (LPAs), and two are members of the public, not licensed under the Act. Under statute, members must be residents of North Carolina. In addition, to be eligible for one of the LP or LPA member positions, an individual must have been actively engaged in one or more branches of psychology, in education and training of psychologists, or in psychological research for at least five years, the two most current of which must be in North Carolina.

For the first decade of the Board's existence, the Board office was located wherever the Chair was located, and only part-time clerical support provided. In 1977, the Board hired its first full-time staff member, Martha Noggle (now Storie). The Board office took root in a renovated area in the basement of a dorm at Appalachian State University (ASU) in Boone in 1977. It subsequently resided in other ASU office buildings, and then moved in 1994 to its present location in Oak Summit Office Park (also in Boone).

## STRUCTURE

The Board currently employs six full-time staff members. An attorney with the Attorney General's office is employed on a part-time basis as well. In addition to the elected Chair and Vice Chair, consists of the Credentials Review, Probable Cause, and Consent Committees, each appointed by the Chair.

The **Credentials Review Committee** (CRC), which includes two Board members and the two staff psychologists, reviews credentials of applicants whose applications present questions, based on staff review, to determine if applicants are eligible for examination or licensure. Following CRC review, recommendations of the committee are presented to the full Board. The CRC also reviews applications for reduced supervision that present questions to determine if the Licensed Psychological Associate applicant is eligible for a reduction in the required amount of supervision he/she must receive per month.

The **Probable Cause Committee** (PCC), which includes staff members and a Board member, reviews investigative reports resulting from complaints, and decides whether there is probable cause to believe that a violation of the North Carolina Psychology Practice Act, the Rules of the Board (within the North Carolina Administrative Code), and/or the American Psy-

chological Association Ethics Code has occurred. If no probable cause is found by the committee, one recommendation by the PCC to the Board might be to close the case with no further action. If the committee concludes that there are specific issues about which the licensee needs education, the committee may recommend to the Board that the licensee be educated. If probable cause is found by the committee, a statement of charges is issued in which the licensee is offered an opportunity for a hearing as part of his/her due process rights, or to have an opportunity for informal resolution through a consent agreement process.

In order to conduct a hearing, at least four members of the Board must be present. The hearing is a formal hearing in which any individuals who testify are placed under oath and the testimony is recorded. An attorney may represent any psychologist that appears before the Board. The Board listens to all of the testimony and reviews any exhibits which are placed into evidence during the hearing. Following the hearing, the Board goes into closed session during which it deliberates on the matter. It issues its final decision within 120 days of the hearing.

The **Consent Committee**, which includes two Board members, reviews agreements negotiated between the Board's attorney and the licensee or his/her attorney. This committee may recommend to the Board that a consent agreement be approved, or the committee may determine that the consent agreement should be modified or rejected.

Other committees may be formed to perform additional tasks as necessary. For example, a newsletter committee is comprised of Board members and staff who assist in editing newsletter articles. If a topic discussed in a Board meeting requires further study, a committee may be created to gather information to report back to the full Board at a later date.

## LAWS, RULES, AND THE ETHICS CODE

The North Carolina Psychology Practice Act, which is found in statute, or law, governs the practice of psychology in this state. The Board is given its authority under the Psychology Practice Act, enacted by the state legislature, to regulate such practice, which is why staff members will often refer to it and reference its provisions by number.

In addition, the Board is given authority under specific provisions in the Practice Act to establish rules to further define those provisions. The Rules, which are codified in the North Carolina Administrative Code, go through a comment period and review process before becoming effective. Once in effect, rules have the force of law. The American Psychological Association's (APA) Ethics Code falls under a specific provision in the Code of Conduct in the Practice Act, G.S. § 90-270.15(a) (10), so staff will often respond to questions by referring to the standards in the code as they apply. The APA Ethics Code and the Code of Conduct are actively utilized by the Board in its various deliberations.

M I L E S T O N E S I N B O A R D H I S T O R Y

1967  
1968  
1977  
1979  
1984  
1993  
1997  
2002

North Carolina Practicing Psychologist Licensing Act, establishing the North Carolina State Board of Examiners of Practicing Psychologists, is passed into law.

First licenses issued.

Board hires first full-time employee.

Term for master's level licensure, "Psychological Examiner," becomes "Psychological Associate."

Board publishes its first newsletter.

The North Carolina Psychology Practice Act (amending the previous Licensing Act) changes the name of the Board to the "North Carolina Psychology Board," the term for doctoral level licensure from "Practicing Psychologist" to "Licensed Psychologist," the renewal date for licensees from January 1st to October 1st, and the renewal cycle from annual to biennial.

Board rule becomes effective allowing eligible LPAs to apply for reduced supervision based on post-licensure supervised experience.

Mandatory continuing education requirement is established for license renewal.

R E S O U R C E S

O N L I N E



*For the convenience of both the public and for licensees, many forms and processes may now be found on the Board's website.*

➤ **VERIFYING A LICENSE**—By typing in either a licensee's name or license number, you are able to confirm if he/she has had board action. If action has been taken on the license, you have access to PDF copies of the action through the website.

➤ **THE NC PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICE ACT**—This statute governs the practice of psychology in North Carolina. The Board is given its authority under this statute, which was enacted by the state legislature. Findings of fact resulting from hearings are based on the statute sections in the Practice Act, the administrative code rules (found on the website under the "Rules-Title 21, Chapter 54" link on the sidebar), and the APA Ethics Code.

➤ **FILING A COMPLAINT**—Complaints are typically received in the Board office on the Board's Complaint/Inquiry Form, which is available in interactive format on the website. A detailed explanation of the complaint investigation process is available under the link, "Filing a Complaint," on the sidebar. This description provides an overview of the standard investigative process. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact the Board office.

➤ **LINKS TO OTHER SITES**—Sometimes questions or complaints are brought before the Board that are outside its jurisdiction and may be related to other professional issues rather than regulatory concerns. Links are available to the websites of various state and national associations, organizations, and agencies.

C O N T A C T

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**M I S S I O N** *The Board's mission is to protect the public from the practice of psychology by unqualified persons and from unprofessional conduct by persons licensed to practice psychology.*