

Florida Psychologists must stop using BCIA credential. February 27, 2008

This story is a reprint from *Florida Biofeedback*. Thank you to Dr. Aubrey Ewing for his contributions on this very important matter.

An amendment to a Florida statute affecting which credentials may be used by psychologists licensed under Chapter 490 was passed in the last session by the legislature. The amended statute and accompanying rules refer only to psychologists and school psychologists in Florida who are licensed under Chapter 490. Licensed mental health counselors, social workers, and marriage and family therapists licensed under Florida Chapter 491, and health care professionals licensed under other regulatory chapters are not currently affected. This new statute and accompanying rule applies ONLY to psychologists and school psychologists in Florida who are licensed under Chapter 490. It has nothing to do with the American Psychological Association and is solely a Florida law.

Licensed mental health counselors, social workers and marriage and family counselors licensed under Chapter 491 and other professional regulatory chapters are thus currently exempt. It was passed to prevent psychologists from using "checkbox diplomates." It would thus prevent fewer than the estimated 20 psychologists certified by BCIA from using this designation directly after their name as a credential. They still may indicate they specialize in biofeedback, yet can't use a credential after their names or in their advertising like "BCIA" or as in "John Jones, Ph.D., BCIA" or advertise they are BCIA certified.

American Psychological Association recognizes biofeedback as a proficiency area and interested psychologists may obtain this proficiency credential and use it as APA recommends. Since BCIA certification is awarded irrespective of profession, BCIA could not now be recognized in Florida as a specialty for psychologists as it now exists. The Florida statute cited below along with the accompanying rules specify that recognized boards must award certificates ONLY to psychologists and not to a variety of other professions.

Here is the Florida Statute and associated Rules: 490.0149 Specialties. --

(1) As used in this section, the term "certified psychology specialist," "board-certified psychology specialist," or "psychology diplomate" means a psychologist with recognized special competency acquired through an organized sequence of formal education, training, experience, and professional standing that is recognized by a certifying body approved by the board pursuant to criteria adopted under subsection (3).

According to Warren Rice, PhD, Past-president of the Florida Psychological Association and a biofeedback practitioner, the law was passed to prevent psychologists from using "checkbox diplomates", or credentials that are essentially purchased without requiring an examination or other rigor. The new law and rules specify that psychologists may only advertise credentials from recognized boards, and such boards must award certificates only to psychologists, and not to a variety of other professions. Because BCIA certifies different professions, its credential is excluded from use by Florida psychologists. The American Psychological Association recognizes biofeedback as a proficiency area and interested psychologists may obtain this proficiency credential and use it as APA recommends, but in accordance with state licensing laws.

The new law will prevent the estimated 20 psychologists in Florida certified by BCIA from using this designation directly after their name as a credential. They may still indicate that

they specialize in biofeedback, but cannot use a credential after their names or in their advertising like "BCIA", as in "John Jones, PhD, BCIA", or advertise they are BCIA certified. Aubrey Ewing, PhD, AAPB President-elect has indicated that the state and national organizations are holding discussions to consider an appropriate course of action. The Biofeedback Society of Florida and BCIA will keep its members and certificants informed as new information becomes available. The Florida statute and associated rules are included below:

(1) As used in this section, the term "certified psychology specialist," "board-certified psychology specialist," or "psychology diplomate" means a psychologist with recognized special competency acquired through an organized sequence of formal education, training, experience, and professional standing that is recognized by a certifying body approved by the board pursuant to criteria adopted under subsection (3).

(2) A person licensed as a psychologist may not hold himself or herself out as a certified psychology specialist, board-certified psychology specialist, or psychology diplomate unless the person has received formal recognition from an approved certifying body.

(3) The board shall adopt rules to establish criteria for approval of certifying bodies that provide certification for specialties in psychology as provided in subsection (1). The criteria shall include that a certifying body:

(a) Be national in scope, incorporate standards of the profession, and collaborate closely with organizations related to specialization in psychology.

(b) Have clearly described purposes, bylaws, policies, and procedures.

(c) Have established standards for specialized practice of psychology.

(d) Provide assessments that include the development and implementation of an examination designed to measure the competencies required to provide services that are characteristic of the specialty area

(4) A person licensed as a psychologist under this chapter may indicate the services he or she offers and may indicate that his or her practice is limited to one or more types of services when this accurately reflects his or her scope of practice. [History. --s. 1, ch. 2006- 209.]

Rule 64B19-18.008, F.A.C., Board Approval of Specialty Certifying Bodies Rule 64B19-18.008, F.A.C., was noticed for development on November 9, 2006, adopted on October 12, 2007 and made effective on November 1, 2007. 64B19-18.008 Board Approval of Specialty Certifying Bodies. To obtain Board approval as a certifying body, eligible to grant formal recognition declaring a licensed psychologist to be a "certified psychology specialist," board-certified psychology specialist," or a "psychology diplomate," pursuant to Section 490.0149, F.S., an applicant shall file a petition demonstrating that it:

(1) Is an independent body, national in scope, that incorporates standards of the profession, collaborates closely with organizations related to specialization in psychology, and only certifies doctoral-level, licensed psychologists as having advanced qualifications in a particular psychological specialty through demonstrations of competence in the specialty being recognized;

(2) Has clearly described purposes, bylaws, policies, and procedures, that include an internal review and budgetary practices, to ensure effective utilization of resources with an administrative staff, housed in dedicated office space that is appropriate for the certifying body's program and sufficient for responding to consumer or regulatory inquiries;

(3) Has established standards for specialized practice of psychology and adopts the American Psychological Association (APA) "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct," effective June 1, 2003, to guide the practice of its members. The code is incorporated by reference and available for inspection at the Board office as well as at: www.apa.org/ethics/code2002.html; and:

(4) Has implemented and documented a comprehensive assessment procedure, designed to measure the competencies required to provide services characteristic of the specialty area that describes security and grading standards, and consists of an oral examination and peer-review of practice samples and may include a written examination.

Specific Authority 490.0149, 490.004(4) FS. Law Implemented 490.0149 FS. History-New 11-1-07