



POSITION STATEMENT ON LICENSURE

Association of Professional Behavior Analysts

Adopted February 25, 2009

Practitioners of applied behavior analysis presently enjoy credentialing in the form of an international certification program conducted by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board®. There is growing interest in supplementing certification with licensure, which is regulated by government and requires statutes and regulations to be adopted by each state. The position of the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts (APBA) on licensing ABA practitioners is based on its review of the potential benefits and the significant risks associated with this type of professional credential, as well as some common misunderstandings about credentialing.

Potential benefits of licensure

- Licensure statutes may legally mandate that ABA services be provided only by licensed ABA practitioners.
- Licensure statutes may protect ABA practitioners' right to practice from intrusion by other professions.
- Licensure statutes may help ABA practitioners qualify for third-party payments for services.
- Licensure statutes may offer ABA practitioners parity with other professions.
- Licensure statutes may provide enforcement of ethical standards of professional practice by state regulatory boards.

Risks of pursuing licensure

- Obtaining a licensure statute is a political process that may yield unsatisfactory outcomes, even leaving ABA practitioners worse off than before.
- Other interest groups may oppose a licensure initiative and create undesirable legislative language and regulations, such as restrictions on the practice of ABA.
- State licensing boards will determine licensing requirements, standards of practice, enforcement of standards, and fees. Such boards may include individuals who are not trained in ABA. Licensing fees may be relatively high.
- Licensure statutes will vary across states and may limit portability of licenses.

Common misunderstandings about ABA credentialing

- Licensure assures protection of ABA practitioners' right to practice. *Not necessarily. Licensure initiatives may succeed but have undesirable outcomes. For instance, qualified individuals may not be allowed to practice ABA, or individuals untrained in behavior analysis may be licensed to practice ABA.*
- Licensure will resolve regulatory issues with state governments. *Again, not necessarily. This depends more on factors such as political influence and pressure from professional interests than on the type of professional credential involved.*
- Licensure is required for third-party reimbursement. *In fact, third-party reimbursement to BACB®-certified ABA practitioners is common. Reimbursement opportunities depend on Medicaid waiver language, insurance statutes, and specific arrangements with third-party payers.*
- Licensure represents a more respected type of credential than certification. *Actually, the two types of credentials differ only in their origins and control (for certification, by the profession, and for licensure, by the state). There are many strong and weak examples of each credential across various professions.*

In addition to an assessment of benefits and risks, APBA's position on licensure is based on the needs of ABA practitioners and consumers, the pace of growth in the BACB® credentialing program, the different circumstances faced by ABA professionals from one location to another, the rapidly changing landscape of professional practice, the political nature of the legislative process, the organizational resources available for licensure efforts in each state, and the outcomes of some early licensure attempts. The Board of Directors of the APBA recommends the following approach to credentialing ABA professionals:

- 1. Certification and licensure should be viewed as appropriate and complementary credentials for professional behavior analysts.**
- 2. BACB® certification should be the default credential for professional behavior analysts, in part because the profession controls its standards and processes across governmental boundaries.**
- 3. At present, ABA practitioners are likely to gain more from securing recognition of BACB® credentials in state laws and regulations than from pursuing licensure.**
- 4. Although state licensure statutes may bring some benefits, pursuing licensure involves significant risks that may harm professional interests. Licensure initiatives should therefore be undertaken with caution and only when risks can be minimized with required resources.**
- 5. Licensure statutes should be based on the BACB® Model Licensing Act, which uses the BACB® credentialing process as a foundation for licensing.**