![American Psychological Association logo]

**American Psychological Association Commission on Accreditation**

# 2021 Annual Report

**Commission Members:** Georita M. Frierson, PhD, CoA Chair; Jason D. Williams, PsyD, Co-Chair, Program Review; Aaron Joyce, PhD, Co-Chair, Quality Assurance; Mitchell E. Berman, PhD; Cyndy Boyd, PhD; Frances R. Brown, PsyD; M. Dolores Cimini, PhD; Rebekah Ingram Estevez, MEd; William L. Hathaway, PhD; F. Myron Hays, PhD; Tiffany Hill, Esq.; Joseph D. Hovey, PhD; Aaron P. Jackson, PhD; Ellen I. Koch, PhD; Ann M. Lagges, PhD; Phillip J. Lansizera, PhD; Valerie Stephens Leake, PhD; Adam Lewin, PhD; Greg E. Manship, D.Be; David Marcus, PhD; Marc C. Norman, PhD; Judith E. Patterson, PhD; Douglas Peterson, PhD; Dinelia Rosa, PhD; Hege Riise, PhD; Janay B. Sander, PhD; Gary Stoner, PhD; Nicole Torrance, PhD; Jorge G. Varela, PhD; Edelyn Verona, PhD; Cathy McDaniels Wilson, PhD, and Stephanie C. Wood, PhD[1]

**Staff Liaison:** Jacqueline Remondet Wall, PhD

## TOPIC: Program Review

### Periodic and Annual Review of Programs

During 2021, the Commission on Accreditation (CoA or the Commission) conducted the following program review activities: 1) comprehensive reviews of programs that applied for accreditation (full or contingent applications); 2) periodic, or comprehensive reviews of accredited programs seeking to continue full accreditation status; 3) reviews of data for programs holding contingent accreditation status that were seeking full accreditation; 4) review of program submitted responses to reporting requirements; 5) reviews of program requests submitted for inactive status, return to active status (from inactive), or to withdraw from accreditation; 6) analyses of threshold data and program reported fiscal change from data submitted by programs in the Annual Report Online (ARO); 7) review of program submissions of substantive change notifications; and 8) reviews of program submissions for the non-accredited, intent-to-apply declaration.

Consequent to the applicant and periodic review processes for programs seeking to either attain or to continue accredited status, the CoA made decisions on 118 programs. Table 1 provides a listing of the different accreditation status decisions and actions made by the CoA in 2021, including those leading towards (i.e., deferral for cause and probation) or effecting an adverse action (i.e., denial and revocation). Plus, the CoA granted new or continuation requests for "accredited, inactive" status that were received from 25 programs and accepted the voluntary withdrawal of accreditation from 23 accredited programs. The Commission also evaluated numerous reports submitted by accredited programs in response to the Commission during the year (N=193) (these reports are referenced above as reporting requirements). In addition to conducting periodic and applicant program reviews in 2021, two programs were reviewed and granted the non-accredited, "intent to apply" status.

As previously mentioned in the listing of review processes, the CoA conducted a review of information submitted by accredited doctoral programs in the Annual Report Online (ARO). The review of ARO data examines specific information against threshold values, as is specified in Implementing Regulations D.4-7(b) and D.4-7(c) and serves to support continued compliance with accreditation standards. In 2021, 15 programs were noted to have submitted data that was incongruent with at least one of the threshold values and thereby subject to additional reporting for the demonstration of program consistency with the SoA. As part of the ARO analysis, the Commission examines program's reporting of change in fiscal status, as prescribed by accreditation standards and regulations. A review of program-submitted notices of change in fiscal status resulted in additional review for one program. Thirdly, the CoA also reviewed responses from 18 programs that had been sent D.4-7 letters in 2020; there were no status changes implemented as a result of these monitoring reviews.

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1  This listing represents those serving on the Commission for the year 2021; a roster containing the seats held by each Commissioner is available on the APA Accreditation website.

TABLE 1.

**COA PROGRAM REVIEW DECISIONS, 2021[2]**

| Decision | Number of programs |
|---|---|
| Granted initial or continued full accreditation | 63 |
| Granted full accreditation from contingent accreditation | 21 |
| Granted accreditation on contingency | 9 |
| Extend contingency | 11 |
| Deferred for information | 6 |
| Deferred for cause | 6 |
| Accredited on probation | 2 |
| Denial | 0 |
| Revocation of Accreditation | 0 |
| **Total** | **118** |

At the conclusion of 2021, there was a total of 1,235 accredited programs. A detailed breakdown of the numbers and types of accredited programs is provided in Table 2. The Appendix of this report presents a table illustrating the growth in the number of accredited programs by decade between 1948 and 2018, as well as the number of accredited programs in the three most recent years (2019-2021). It is noted that the increases seen, especially during recent decades, has lessened over the last 3 years; this could be due to a number of factors that is beyond the scope of this document.

Throughout the year, OPCA staff provided logistic, clerical, financial, and administrative support to the Commission for program review operations. For example, OPCA staff completed preliminary or administrative reviews of self-studies submitted by 28 applicant programs and 52 accredited programs seeking continued accreditation. OPCA staff also coordinated 89 virtual site visits made to programs during 2021. Plus, members of the OPCA staff continued to provide consultative guidance to programs and constituent groups on accreditation matters and supported four workshops for training site visitors or completing self-studies, two critical aspects of the program review process.

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2  All reviews occurred under the *Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology* (SoA).

TABLE 2.

## NUMBER AND TYPE OF APA ACCREDITED PROGRAMS, 2021

| Programs (Level and Area) | | Number of Accredited Programs* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | PhD | | PsyD | |
| | Area | Full | Cont. | Full | Cont. |
| **Doctoral Programs** | Clinical | 173[3] | 4 | 65 | 8 |
| | Counseling | 65 | 0 | 9 | 2 |
| | School | 59 | 2 | 8 | 3 |
| | Combined | 7 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| | **Total Doctoral Programs** | **414** | | | |
| | | | | | |
| **Internship Programs** | | Full | | Contingent | |
| | | 630[4] | | 16 | |
| | **Total Internship Programs** | **646** | | | |
| | | | | | |
| **Postdoctoral Residency Programs** | Area | Full | | Contingent | |
| | *Traditional – Clinical* | 94 | | 3 | |
| | *Specialty - Clinical Child Psychology* | 8 | | 1 | |
| | *Specialty - Clinical Health Psychology* | 11 | | 1 | |
| | *Specialty - Clinical Neuropsychology* | 33 | | 9 | |
| | *Specialty - Forensic Psychology* | 1 | | 0 | |
| | *Specialty - Geropsychology* | 3 | | 0 | |
| | *Specialty - Rehabilitation Psychology* | 10 | | 1 | |
| | **Total Postdoctoral Residency Programs** | **175** | | | |
| **Total** | | **1,235** | | | |

*As of December 31, 2021

## Addressing Complaints made against Accredited Programs

The Complaints work group received, reviewed, and made decisions on: 1) 14 complaints that were filed against accredited programs, 2) reporting requirement documents submitted by two accredited programs that were generated from a prior complaint submitted against the program, and 3) one complaint concerning site visitor behavior that was filed by a program.

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3        This count includes one Clinical PhD program that is currently "Accredited, on probation".
4        This count includes one internship program that is currently "Accredited, on probation".

TOPIC: **Policy Changes**

## Modifications to the Accreditation Policies

The current Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology (SoA) used to evaluate doctoral, internship, and post-doctoral residency programs, were approved in 2015 with an effective implementation date of January 1, 2017. As the SoA has not been subject to review since it was approved, the CoA initiated an examination of the Standards to explore elements that may need to be updated. This process was begun in 2021 and will continue during 2022. When any changes have been made final by the CoA, the SoA will be put forward to the public for comments. Comments received will be reviewed by the CoA prior to the Commission's approval and/or further modification of the revised accreditation Standards. When the CoA has approved a version of the revised Standards, the documents will be submitted to the APA for approval and an adoption date will be set.

## Modifications of Procedures and Regulations

The CoA dedicated time at each of their four meetings in 2021 to review policy and procedures, from which changes in the Accreditation Operating Procedures (AOP) and Implementing Regulations (IR) were determined.

Thirteen IRs were either reviewed and modified for public notice or comment and/or were reviewed following public comment for further revision or adoption. All IRs put forward for public comment in 2021 were revised and adopted. In addition to modifications made to the AOP to maintain compliance with external regulatory requirements, these IRs' topics were:

1.  notifications of changes to accredited programs (IRs C-27 D, C-24 I, and C-20 P),

2.  aspects of a program's curriculum or training relevant to acquisition and demonstration of profession-wide competencies at the postdoctoral level (IR C-9 P),

3.  clarification of the time a program is required to keep materials pertaining to any complaints/grievances filed against it (IRs C-6 D, C-7 I, and C-7 P),

4.  requirements for disclosure of information to the public by accredited programs (IR C-26 D, C-27 I, and C-23 P),

5.  aspects of a program's curriculum or training relevant to acquisition and demonstration of specific competencies at the doctoral level (IR C-8 D),

6.  separation of the Level 3 specialty competencies required of postdoctoral residents (IR C-9 (a-h) P),

7.  changes in the Level 3 specialty competencies required of postdoctoral residents in all APA-accredited programs in Clinical Neuropsychology specialty programs (IR C-9(d) P),

8.  changes in the Level 3 specialty competencies required of postdoctoral residents in all APA-accredited programs in Geropsychology specialty programs (IR C-9(f) P),

9.  the addition of Level 3 specialty competencies and corresponding elements for the specialty area of Group Psychology and Psychotherapy (IR C-9(j) P),

10. the addition of Level 3 specialty competencies and corresponding elements for the specialty area of Police and Public Safety Psychology (IR C-9(k) P), and,

11. the introduction of a new specialty practice area in serious mental illness psychology (IR  C-5 P and C-9(i) P).

## Accreditation of Master's Programs in Health Service Psychology (HSP)

The CoA established a work group comprised of CoA commissioners that examined policies and procedures for the accreditation of programs in HSP offered at the master's degree level of education. Following the approval of the Standards of Accreditation in Health Service Psychology for Master's degree programs (SoA-M) by APA governance in February of 2021, the Master's Accreditation work group drafted a first set of eleven IRs related to the SoA-M, and the CoA put them forward to the psychology public for comment. At the end of 2021, the work group also completed drafting operating procedures for the ac-

creditation of eligible master's degree programs in health service psychology, and the CoA put out the Accreditation Operating Procedures to the psychology public for comment.

## Training of Site Visitors and Chairs of Site Visit Teams

The Commission conducted all trainings virtually in 2021. These workshops were focused on the training of site visitors and providing information on how to complete a self-study. The number of attendees of the site visitor trainings was 126, while there were 221 attendees of the self-study trainings. In 2020, all in-person site visits scheduled to be held on or after March 12, 2020, were postponed in order to limit exposure to COVID-19. At that time, following guidance from the US Department of Education, the CoA started offering virtual site visits on a limited basis and has since continued to complete visits virtually. To maintain compliance with regulations of the US Department of Education, all programs reviewed using virtual methods will also have an in-person verification visit when it is practicable.

The CoA continues to provide continuing education credit to CoA site visitors for participating in a site visit. The total number of CE credits awarded per year for a site visit is 25. Additionally, the CoA continues to award journal credit to the site visitors who would prefer this professional recognition.

## Informing the Public About CoA Decisions and Actions

Among a number of activities, the CoA's Communications work group prepared content for four issues of the *CoA Update*, which is published on the APA accreditation website. CoA decisions were shared after each Program Review meeting via the Notice of Actions posted on the website  thirty days post meeting (or ten days post meeting for withdrawal notices) and updates to the online directory with the US Department of Education for accredited programs. In addition, the OPCA website has both a searchable database of accredited programs and an annual list of accredited programs was prepared.

The CoA granted programs flexibility in the use of methods and practices such as telesupervision, telepractice, and distance education to minimize COVID-19 exposure. These flexibilities follow guidance provided by the Office of Postsecondary Education at the US Department of Education. This guidance and support for programs was made available on the APA accreditation website but was also emailed to program's training directors, active site visitors, and CoA constituents as soon as possible to keep all affected parties informed.

## Research and Accreditation Decisions

With support from OPCA staff, the CoA conducted research activities in 2021. These activities included an analysis of program outcomes from the ARO in accord with the data thresholds established to monitor student achievement and compliance with accreditation standards, as noted in the program review summary. In addition, the CoA prepared a survey to measure perceived values of APA accreditation which will be administered to program training directors in 2022.

# TOPIC: Recognition of the APA as an Accrediting Agency

The CoA is recognized by the US Department of Education (ED) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

## US Department of Education Recognition

Since 1970, the APA has been recognized by ED as a programmatic accrediting agency, with accreditation actions most recently reviewed in the last two years. In 2020, the required periodic submission of a petition for continued recognition was submitted by the APA. This petition was initially reviewed by ED staff, who conducted an initial assessment; the report, termed a draft staff analysis was received by the APA in the fall of 2020. Per the ED review process, the APA was able to respond to this report and did so in the spring of 2021 (May 2021), after which the ED analyst prepared a final report. All materials were then reviewed by the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI). The NACIQI review occurred at their July 27-29, 2021 meeting, following which the committee provided a recommendation to the ED Deputy Undersecretary for their final decision. Although the NACIQI noted continued recognition with an issue of compliance to be reported on in one year, the APA submitted comment and in October 2021, ED Deputy Undersecretary Jordan Matsudaira granted the

Commission continued recognition for a 5-year period with no compliance issues. The five-year period is the maximum length awarded between periodic reviews.

## CHEA Recognition

As with the ED, the APA is recognized as an accrediting body by the CHEA for accreditation actions completed by the CoA. The APA-CoA CHEA-recognition currently expires on December 31, 2023. As the recognition review process may take 12-18 months, the *office* has initiated the pending review by consulting with CHEA to determine eligibility, establish a review timeline, and understanding the effects of the 2021 CHEA Standards and Procedures for Recognition. In addition, the office has submitted a formal application for the review process along with the required recognition fee, both of which have been accepted. The APA-CoA will be reviewed by submitting a petition in 2022 with CHEA Committee on Recognition review and CHEA Board of Directors decision occurring in 2023.

# APPENDIX

**GROWTH OF ACCREDITED PROGRAMS BY DECADE**

| Year | Doctoral | Internship | Postdoctoral | Total |
|------|----------|------------|--------------|-------|
| 1948 | 36 | — | — | 36 |
| 1958 | 78 | 62 | — | 140 |
| 1968 | 97 | 102 | — | 199 |
| 1978 | 140 | 138 | — | 278 |
| 1988 | 246 | 347 | — | 593 |
| 1998 | 312 | 450 | 2 | 764 |
| 2008 | 374 | 469 | 48 | 891 |
| 2018 | 406 | 630 | 144 | 1180 |
| 2019 | 395 | 642 | 164 | 1201 |
| 2020 | 396 | 645 | 174 | 1215 |
| 2021 | 414 | 647 | 175 | 1235 |