

Lighting the Path to Psychology Licensure

EPPP HANDBOOK

FOR NATIVE CANDIDATES



Anita L. Mihecoby • Janet T. Thomas

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EPPP Handbook for Native Candidates

Anita L. Mihecoby • Janet T. Thomas

Society of Indian Psychologists • Logan, Utah • 2020

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Manufactured in the United States of America.

ISBN: 978-0-9988240-4-8 (print)

ISBN: 978-0-9988240-5-5 (PDF)

Cover design by Nicole Pape.

To Carolyn Barcus

Contents

Preface	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	3
The Need for Native Licensed Psychologists	5
Historical Context	6
The EPPP	7
History and Development	7
Exam Validity	7
Exam Content	9
Why Take the EPPP?	10
Benefits to Native Communities	10
Benefits to the Profession	10
Benefits to Licensees	11
Deciding When to Apply	12
Getting Ready to Take the EPPP	15
Determine Eligibility	15
Review the ASPPB's EPPP Candidate Handbook	15
Apply to the Local Licensing Authority	15
Verify Your Account	16
Pay Fees and Schedule Your Exam	16
Request Disability Accommodations	16
Self-Care	16
Studying for the Test	17
Design a Study Plan	20
Seek Counsel from Those Who've Gone Before	21
Stay Motivated	26

Preparing for the Big Day	27
Post-Licensure Mobility	29
Appendices	
Appendix A: Test Preparation Resources	30
Appendix B: Checklists	33
References	35
About the Authors	38

Preface

The Society of Indian Psychologists (SIP) held its 30th annual meeting at the University of Utah, Logan in 2017. In the years before, members spoke of the challenges of their work, the shortage of mental health professionals in Native communities, and obstacles to increasing the number of Native psychologists. Native graduate students and unlicensed mental health professionals talked of their fear of taking the licensing exam—formally, the Examination for the Professional Practice of Psychology (EPPP). Others reported they had failed the exam and feared taking it again.

Mindful of these challenges, we developed a workshop to help prospective Native psychologists prepare for the exam. Coauthor Anita Mihecoby, member of the Comanche Nation, had recently studied for and passed the EPPP. Janet Thomas had taught professional ethics courses for clinical and counseling graduate students for 23 years and been part of the EPPP ethics-item writing team since 2011.

Our workshop—*Taking the EPPP: What Aspiring Psychologists Need to Know*—provided an overview of construction, format, and content of the exam as well as sample test questions. We described criteria for eligibility, the application process, scoring, and costs and presented tips for navigating the exam process. The workshop sparked great interest in SIP attendees, who spoke of cultural factors, challenges, barriers, and needs related to passing the EPPP.

Our plan was to offer the workshop as a breakout session for graduate students and early-career mental health professionals. We were surprised when organizers scheduled the workshop as a general session, but the unexpected listing was a gift. The ensuing conversation of varied participants was one of the most helpful aspects of the workshop. Licensed psychologists and others with graduate degrees shared stories of success and fail-

ure, strategies for preparation, arrangements for study time, and approaches that worked or did not. Daniel Foster, a community elder, spoke of obtaining the licensing credential as “a rite of passage” and encouraged attendees to obtain licensure as a way to benefit their communities.

The roots of this project predate that workshop. In 2011, Carolyn Barcus, professor emeritus, University of Utah, Logan, and an early member and past president of SIP, provided a diversity training seminar for the American Psychological Association’s (APA’s) Ethics Committee. Upon its conclusion, three (non-Native) committee members and one staff member accepted her invitation to attend SIP’s annual meeting in Logan the next summer. That meeting was the start of a series of fruitful collaborations by members of the two organizations. This handbook is one more.

Much of the information in this handbook will benefit any exam candidate. Its primary goal, however, is to provide a written resource to diminish obstacles to licensure for American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, First Nations, and other Native psychology graduates. We hope this text provides both encouragement and practical strategies for passing the exam.

Acknowledgments

This handbook is the result of a collaborative effort. The authors appreciate those who generously contributed their stories of success, challenge, and learning for the benefit of future generations of Native psychologists: Laiel Baker-DeKrey, Carolyn Barcus, Mark Daniels, Daniel Foster, Merrill Jones, Teresa LaFromboise, Brian McNeill, Gayle Morse, Stephanie Parisien, and Andrea Theye.

Karlee Fellner, Joseph Gone, Iva Greywolf, and Joanna Mashunkashey Shadlow provided consultation about ways in which both historical and contemporary experiences create unique challenges for Native candidates for psychology licensure. They also offered insight as to approaches to test preparation to amplify and draw on the strengths that Native candidates bring to this work. Their wisdom informed our writing at every step.

Ellen Green of E. B. Green Editorial, Saint Paul, Minnesota, not only provided exceptional editorial skills but also executed design of the text and oversaw the publication process. We are grateful to graphic designer Nicole Pape, who created the cover design for this handbook, and to Jacque Gray for suggesting her.

Jackie Horn and Matt Turner of ASPPB contributed many hours as consultants about the history and future direction of the EPPP. They responded to numerous inquiries, reviewed and provided feedback on the text, and advised us on the procedural and technical aspects of the development and implementation of the exam.

The APA Commission on Ethnic Minority Recruitment, Retention, and Training in Psychology II (CEMRAT2) Task Force provided funding for this endeavor. Its grant covered the costs of production, editing, printing, and distribution of this publication.

Finally, the authors are thankful for the organizational support of the American Indian Alaska Native Society of Indian

Psychologists, the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards, and the American Psychological Association. We acknowledge the impossibility of this publication without such collaboration.

Lighting the Path
to Psychology Licensure

Introduction

A substantial shortage of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian as well as of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis psychologists exists in the United States and Canada today. This scarcity is significant to the shortage of culturally competent services available to members of Indigenous communities in these two countries. Several factors, including the meager number of Native* people with doctoral degrees in psychology, contribute to this disparity. Fear of not passing the licensing exam, or EPPP, is another.

Many graduate students and early-career professionals dread the exam, seeing it as a labor-intensive if not impossible challenge. They worry about cost, time commitment, and their ability to pass it. Having few role models and Native supervisors is an obstacle as well.

The concerns are not unfounded. Rumors that the test is difficult are accurate, and the cost of study materials, exam charges, and licensure fees is substantial. No matter where candidates have gone to school or how well they have done there, taking the test without substantial prep time probably will not yield a passing score. That said, the exam is surmountable for most.

Candidates who are Native may be reluctant to pursue a license because of the very nature of the exam. Its knowledge questions focus on information established and given prominence by a Western culture and value system, drawing on research and theory developed within it. Further, the EPPP's approach to assessing knowledge is built on learning preconceptions alien to many Native test takers. Daniel Foster, psychologist and clinical

* The term *Native* includes those who identify as Native American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Aboriginal, and Indigenous people in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico, all places where the EPPP is used as one criterion for licensure.

director for the Fort Belknap Aaniiih and Nakoda Integrated Behavioral Health Program and former president of SIP, described it this way:



The EPPP is an excellent example of a cross-cultural challenge. It measures capacity to memorize and recognize what powerful others deem important in a Western manner. It is didactic, linear, and exclusive. It has no place for our circular, wholistic cultural style or worldview.

Daniel Foster, Psy.D.

Clinical Director

Fort Belknap Aaniiih and Nakoda Integrated Behavioral Health Program

Fort Belnap, Montana

Dakota/Lakota culturally, Western Band Cherokee

This view likely represents the perspective of at least some Native candidates fearing the exam. Nevertheless, Foster offered Native graduates reason to consider taking the test for licensure: “The EPPP is an essential mile marker to complete if we are to take the best from both worlds and be the ones who lead and provide behavioral health services to our own or other populations.”

This handbook is meant to provide Native candidates with information helpful to navigating a path to licensure. The first part describes the history, development, and construction of the EPPP. The second is an overview of the types of questions on the test. Sections following focus on practicalities such as determining eligibility, applying for licensure, registering for the exam, paying fees, and scheduling. Approaches to preparing for the exam are next. Words of wisdom from elders and recently licensed psychologists illuminate the text. Appendix A is a list of commercial study materials and prices, and Appendix B provides personal checklists for exam prep and test-day tasks.

The Need for Native Licensed Psychologists

Native Americans and Alaska Natives comprise about 2% of the U.S. population (Schilling, 2018). Since colonization, these populations have experienced health problems at much higher rates than other Americans (American Psychiatric Association, ApA, 2010). The health disparities affecting them result in life expectancies of 5.5 years fewer than for all other races in the United States (Indian Health Service (IHS), 2019). Native Americans and Alaska Natives experience serious psychological distress at a rate 1.5 times that of the general U.S. population (ApA, 2010). Similarly, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, comprising about 4% of the population of Canada, experience significantly higher rates of mental health problems than the general population (Boska, et al., 2015).

A 1787 U.S. government treaty established IHS as the federal health care agency legally responsible for providing health care to American Indians (<https://www.ihs.gov/aboutihs/>). IHS is a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It provides comprehensive medical and health services to about 2.2 million of the estimated 3.7 million American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States (IHS, 2019). More than one-third of patient care contacts are related to mental health (ApA, 2010). These health services are provided on reservations, yet approximately two-thirds of American Indians reside in urban, suburban, and rural areas outside of reservations (ApA, 2010).

The need for psychological services in Native communities is undeniable, and the obstacles to accessing these services are significant. Despite the substantial need, few Native Americans hold doctoral degrees in psychology (Joseph Gone, personal communication, December 1, 2019). And though they are eligible, many of the individuals who have earned degrees are not licensed as psychologists. The high demand for service in Native communities and the relatively small number of Native American licensed psychologists comprise a critical health disparity (Office of the Surgeon General U.S., 2001).

Historical Context

Historical context is relevant. The colonization of Indigenous peoples in the Americas began in 1492, and by the 1850s more than 90% of that population had died as the result of war, diseases introduced by colonizers, and forced displacement. The establishment of Indian residential schools in the United States and Canada in the 1800s formalized the goal of inculcating Native peoples with European-Christian values by targeting their children—with catastrophic impact on their mental health and on that of generations to follow. Canadian researchers have found significantly higher incidents of a wide range of mental health problems in First Nations adults whose parents or grandparents attended residential schools relative to those whose parents did not (Bombay, et al., 2011, 2015; Elias, et al., 2010). Many Indigenous scholars have addressed the impact of colonization on the mental health of Indigenous people (e.g., Fellner, 2019; McDonald, 2004; Raibmon, 2005; Steckley & Cummins, 2008; Turcotte & Schiffer, 2014).

Beyond the residential schools, U.S. and Canadian government policies separated Native people from their families, communities, and land, negatively impacting them socially, financially, physically, spiritually, and mentally, affecting every aspect of their well-being. Duran and Duran elucidated the “genocidal effects of colonization” (1995), including substantial, pervasive detrimental effects on the mental health of Native people.

While IHS provides behavioral health services for these groups in the United States, not all who might benefit are using them. Many Native people find it hard to trust government providers, particularly those who are non-Native (ApA, 2010). When culturally relevant services *are* available, Native Americans and First Nations Canadians actively seek services at *greater* rates than the general population (ApA, 2010; Kahn, 2008). The need for more Native licensed psychologists to meet the needs of Native communities is clear. Ensuring that more Native graduates pass the EPPP is critical to addressing this need.

The EPPP

History and Development

The EPPP is owned by the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB), which makes the test available to state and provincial regulatory boards for use in evaluating candidates for licensure in their jurisdictions. The exam, first administered in 1965, is now used in the United States and Canada (<https://www.asppb.net>). The test may be scheduled at various times at any one of more than 275 Pearson Professional Centers.

Exam Validity

The ASPPB constructs the EPPP with help from Pearson VUE, the test vendor. The validity of the test was established using methodology recommended for this exam type by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). Some candidates have expressed that the exam should be backed by data showing predictive or criterion-related validity. Such validity, however, is not considered applicable for the EPPP or any other licensing exam.

According to the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (the *Standards*), “Criterion-related evidence is of little applicability because credentialing examinations are not intended to predict individual performance but rather to provide evidence that candidates have acquired the knowledge, skills, and judgment required for effective performance” (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014, pp. 175–176). Establishing content validity is considered appropriate for such exams. Specifically, the *Standards* recommends six strategies for establishing content validity: job task analysis, subject matter experts, test specifications, multiple levels of content review, psychometric data, and standard settings.

ASPPB has incorporated each of these strategies into the development and validation of the EPPP. Every few years, ASPPB commissions Practice Analysis studies (that is, job task analysis) to identify and validate the underlying professional knowledge base of practicing psychologists and to revise the exam to reflect this knowledge base. Blueprints or test specifications are established for each identified knowledge domain.

An Item Development Committee (IDC) comprised of subject matter experts is appointed to oversee the item-writing (question-writing) process. These experts are selected because of their credentials in the content domain to which they are assigned. Item writers with particular expertise are chosen for each domain and trained to construct items according to established criteria such as accuracy, relevance to practice, and freedom from bias.

Potential items are submitted to the IDC experts for review and, after approval, to the EPPP Pretest Item Bank. Following these multiple levels of review, the ASPPB Exam Committee constructs, reviews, and validates a draft exam. Each final form includes 50 pretest (unscored) and 175 operational items. Finally, the committee gathers and analyzes psychometric data regarding the performance of pretest items to determine which will be incorporated as operational items in future exams (Turner, 2019).

Historically, the EPPP has included a single test designed to assess *knowledge*. Being knowledgeable includes comprehension of the research, history, theories, and techniques of the profession (Welfel, 2016). According to Jacqueline Horn, ASPPB's educational affairs director, some psychologists and regulatory boards have expressed concern that knowledge of psychology is not enough to ensure competent practice (September 21, 2019). In response, ASPPB has engaged in continuous modification of the EPPP.

The newest version of the exam includes Part 1, the knowledge portion, as well as Part 2, a new section assessing skills in

the practice of psychology. The EPPP Part 2 was first launched by some jurisdictions in January 2020. Each jurisdiction decides whether or not to adopt the new version of the exam. Details about the development and availability of the two-part EPPP are available on the ASPPB website, to be updated as new information becomes available. (<https://www.asppb.net>)

Exam Content

EPPP Part 1 is a knowledge-based exam drawing items from eight different domains considered fundamental to the practice of psychology. Here is a list of those domains and the percentage of exam items drawn from each:

1. Biological Bases of Behavior (10%)
2. Cognitive-Affective Bases of Behavior (13%)
3. Social and Cultural Bases of Behavior (11%)
4. Growth and Lifespan Development (12%)
5. Assessment and Diagnosis (16%)
6. Treatment, Intervention, Prevention, and Supervision (15%)
7. Research Methods and Statistics (7%)
8. Ethical, Legal, and Professional Issues (16%)

Teams of psychologists with expertise in each of these domains work continually to create items that reflect current research and practices. Four forms of the EPPP are in use at any given time. Each year, two forms are retired and two added. As mentioned, each test contains 225 multiple-choice items; each item includes one correct and three incorrect responses. Raw scores are converted to scaled scores to ensure that passing scores on different forms of the test have the same meaning. Scaled scores range from 200 to 800, and all participating jurisdictions use the ASPPB-recommended passing score of 500 for independent practice.

EPPP Part 2 focuses on the *application* of knowledge in the form of skills, and it covers six domains:

1. Scientific Orientation (6%)
2. Assessment and Intervention (33%)
3. Relational Competence (16%)
4. Professionalism (11%)
5. Ethical Practice (17%)
6. Collaboration, Consultation, and Supervision (17%)

ASPPB publishes and regularly updates the *EPPP Candidate Handbook* on its website: <https://www.asppb.net/page/Cand-Handbook>. This publication includes a more detailed description of both parts of the exam and the content of each domain.

Why Take the EPPP?

Licensing more Native psychologists will provide benefits to Native communities, to the profession, and to licensees.

Benefits to Native Communities

The need for mental health services and the dearth of resources in Native communities is well documented (ApA, 2010; <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/native-american-communities-and-mental-health>). This dearth represents both a deficiency in the profession of psychology and a disparity that negatively affects Native communities. Increasing the number of licensed psychologists competent to serve these communities will benefit their members. More licensed Native graduates returning to work in their communities will enhance access to culturally competent practitioners. Further, the increased presence of Native psychologists may improve community trust and decrease the stigma related to seeking mental health services.

Benefits to the Profession

According to APA Workforce Studies, 88% of health service psychologists identify as White, while only 62% of the U.S.

population is White (Lin, Stamm, & Christidis, 2018). Further, Native American psychologists included in the category of “multiracial or other racial/ethnic groups” comprise only 1% of all psychologists in the country.

Increasing the number of Native psychologists will ease the overwhelming demand for services as well as the heavy case-loads of mental health professionals currently serving these communities. Further, the presence of more psychologists likely will increase job satisfaction for all Native licensed psychologists and unlicensed mental health practitioners as well as non-Native providers serving Native clients and communities.

Benefits to Licensees

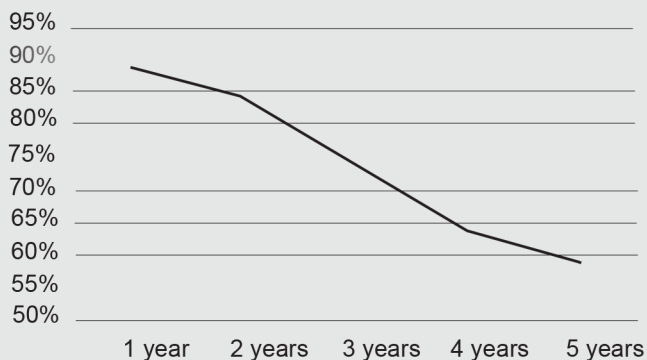
Passing the EPPP is a primary component of becoming licensed as a psychologist. Sixty-three jurisdictions—including all of the United States, four of its territories (optional in Puerto Rico), and all of the Canadian provinces but Quebec—require that the EPPP be taken as part of the requirements for licensure to practice. Job opportunities thus are more plentiful for licensed psychologists, and salaries are higher relative to practitioners without a license. Further, most private insurance policies and government programs require that providers be licensed to qualify for reimbursement.

Practicum students, doctoral interns, and postdoctoral fellows being trained at an agency, hospital, or institution require doctoral-level supervision. Generally a licensed psychologist-supervisor must provide this. Training programs, particularly doctoral psychology programs, often require that faculty members supervising doctoral students also be licensed to practice. Most jurisdictions require licensure for independent practice. Thus career options are significantly enhanced for graduates who obtain the license.

Deciding When to Apply

Regulations about when individuals may apply to take the exam vary by jurisdiction. Depending on local requirements, you may be able to apply after completing your graduate coursework, internship, master's degree, doctoral degree, or postdoctoral experience. If the two-part version of the EPPP is adopted in a particular jurisdiction, ASPPB recommends that individuals be allowed to take Part 1, the knowledge-based portion, as soon as they have completed their coursework (M. Turner, personal communication, July 10, 2019). At that point, information is fresh and study routines are a familiar part of your lifestyle, likely making preparation easier. Further, ASPPB's research with test takers indicates that pass rates decline with the passage of time after graduation. The table below illustrates these pass rates.

Pass Rates by Time from Graduation



EPPP Overview and Developments, in *EPPP Outcome and Test Taking Strategies for Graduates of Color*, webinar sponsored by APAGS. (M. Turner, October 1, 2019.)

Regardless of when doctoral-level candidates take the test for the first time, 81% of test takers from APA or CPA accredited programs pass on the first attempt. In contrast, 54% of test takers from non-accredited programs pass the first time. (M. Turner, personal communication, November 4, 2019). Further data as to pass rates related to type of graduate program and to specific programs are available on the ASPPB website (<https://www.asppb.net>).

Many recent graduates are ready for a break from the rigors of studying. Others need to focus on responsibilities deferred during their years of training. Psychology graduates also may delay taking the exam because of financial constraints or commitments related to family or demanding jobs. Some work as unlicensed mental health providers or in administrative positions. Others embark on academic careers in which they must navigate pressure to conduct research and publish to stay on track for tenure or promotion. Such circumstances leave little time to complete postdoctoral clinical work or focus on exam preparation. After years in these positions, some may want to practice but fear that the time elapsed since training will make passing the exam impossible.

Teresa LaFromboise, professor and former president of SIP, was in such a situation after completing her postgraduate education at the University of Oklahoma in 1979. She began her academic career as a tenure-track assistant professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she focused on research and writing. She continued as a visiting scholar, and then as a visiting professor at Stanford, before being hired for a tenure-track position there. During her years of teaching, LaFromboise provided some clinical services at the Stanford Counseling Institute under the supervision of colleagues, but her primary focus continued on research, publication, training, and consulting in Indian Country on issues including evidence-based suicide prevention and intervention with Native American and Alaska Native adolescents. She periodically considered taking the EPPP,

but other commitments took precedence. She shared the following retrospective thoughts on the matter:

I am sorry I didn't pursue licensure earlier in my career. As my academic career winds down, I wish that I could do clinical work. The thought of studying for the exam is discouraging, but I haven't totally given up on that goal.



Teresa D. LaFromboise, Ph.D.

Professor of Education

Developmental and Psychological Sciences

Stanford University

Stanford, California

Descendant of the Miami Nation

Though candidates who take the exam closer to the time that they become eligible consistently obtain higher scores (M. Turner, personal communication, July 10, 2019), that does not mean others cannot pass it. If you have delayed taking the exam and years have passed, do not give up! You still may be able to pass the exam. If you have the training, education, and experience required to become a candidate in your jurisdiction, you should be eligible. Whether you are completing your graduate coursework, internship, or postdoctoral training or have been earning a living, it's likely not too late to take the EPPP.

Most of us have gone into psychology because of a general interest in the science of the mind and human behavior. Studying for the exam will likely be intellectually invigorating—enhancing the depth and breadth of your current work as well as providing you with a refresher course in areas that have not been your primary focus. If that is persuasive, use this step-by-step guide to get started on your journey to completing the EPPP.

Getting Ready to Take the EPPP

Determine Eligibility

The first step toward licensure as a psychologist is to determine the criteria for eligibility in the jurisdiction in which you intend to practice. Visiting the website of the licensing authority in your jurisdiction will provide you with the information necessary to determine whether you qualify. Identify these criteria well in advance of applying to ensure that your academic training and clinical experiences are commensurate.

Review the *EPPP Candidate Handbook*

The ASPPB has published a handbook for exam candidates describing the entire exam process from anticipation to licensure. Reading all of the handbook will acquaint you with the details needed to move toward licensure. You will probably want to revisit the EPPP handbook through the process, but familiarizing yourself at the outset will help you know where to look for specific information as you need it. The handbook is available at no charge on the ASPPB website (<https://www.asppb.net>).

Apply to the Local Licensing Authority

Official determination of eligibility is made after you complete an application with the licensing authority in the state, province, or territory in which you intend to practice. Most require a doctoral degree and pre- and postdoctoral supervised experience. Some also require an APA approved program and/or internship or equivalent, though for many jurisdictions that is not necessary. The licensing authority evaluates your application to determine whether you have met its established criteria. ***(Be sure to apply/register with the exact name on the IDs you will use on the day of your exam.)*** When it is determined you have met all requirements, you will be notified of eligibility and preapproval.

Verify Your Account

Once preapproved, you can log onto the registration system, access application materials, and receive instructions for registering for the exam. ***This must be done within 90 days of notification of your eligibility.*** Next, you must review and acknowledge the “Candidate Acknowledgment Statement.” When that is done, you are eligible to take practice exams and submit your application to take the EPPP.

Pay Fees and Schedule Your Exam

Once the EPPP Application Form is completed and approved, you must pay the EPPP fee and Test Center Appointment fee to Pearson VUE, not to the licensing authority. At the time of this writing, the EPPP fee is \$600.00, and the Test Center Appointment fee is \$87.50. The exact cost is subject to change. The most current fees are listed in the ASPPB *EPPP Candidate Handbook* (<https://www.asppb.net/page/CandHandbook>).

Candidates may schedule an exam date after paying the fees. ***You must take the exam within 90 days of payment.*** You may make the testing appointment online or by calling the Pearson VUE toll-free number: 800-513-6910. Keep in mind that appointment times fill quickly, so scheduling your exam as soon as you are eligible will give you the most flexibility.

Request Disability Accommodations

Candidates with documented disabilities may receive special accommodations. The licensing authority of each jurisdiction reviews requests for accommodations and notifies ASPPB of its determination.

Self-Care

Native scholars have long published evidence of the intergenerational transmission of historical trauma (Evans, 2008). American Indians and the First Nations people of Canada carry the

weight of the colonization inflicted on their ancestors, including the use of boarding schools to strip Indian children of their culture. Given this history, some of the anxiety, distress, and aversion of Native candidates facing the EPPP is likely an echo of this ancestral trauma.

To the extent you feel historical trauma affects your preparation and test-taking experience, spiritual preparation may help you tap into the survival skills that helped your ancestors persevere. Reflecting on your reasons for pursuing this professional path and on your ultimate goals in doing so may help mitigate the impact of the trauma on your experience with the EPPP. Further, remember to avoid negativity by choosing to surround yourself with people who support you in this endeavor. Cultivate relationships with those who are positive. In any case, attention to overall self-care is supportive of any effort made under stress.

Studying for the Test

The EPPP is more comprehensive than any test you may have taken in graduate school, and preparing for it requires a different approach. Cramming for the test during the days leading to your appointment probably will not result in a passing score. That said, there is more than one right way to do this.

Many candidates find it critical to obtain study materials created and made available by various companies. Such study materials include flash cards, charts, recorded lectures, written materials, and practice tests. Look carefully at what each company offers, read the online reviews, and consider the cost. Most companies have several price points depending on which components you select for purchase. (Some of these companies are listed in Appendix A.)

Brian McNeill, a professor at Washington State University and longtime SIP member, recommended that candidates do everything they can to ensure success on the EPPP:

The best advice I have is to get licensed ASAP while the material is fresh in your mind. Because requirements across states are subject to change at any time, and the longer you wait, the more difficult it can become. Also, invest everything you need to be successful. This includes time, finances, and preparation to pass the exam. Preparation not only increases your chances of a passing score but also reduces your anxiety for this important task.



Brian McNeill, Ph.D.
Professor/Psychologist
President, National Latinx Psychology Association
Director, Pacific Northwest Collaborative for Mestizo
and Indigenous Research and Outreach
Department of Kinesiology and Educational Psychology
Washington State University
Pullman, Washington
Chicanx

Andrea Theye decided to invest in a study program to prepare for the exam, and she described how she used the materials to help her get ready:

The program I used (AATBS) was very helpful. It included online subject quizzes, sample tests, and 12 volumes of preparation books. I studied the books in depth and, when I felt confident about the content, I took the subject quizzes for each book.

Then, about 6 weeks before taking the real EPPP, I started taking a full-length practice test every Saturday. I used the results from those tests to determine which subjects to focus on during the week before taking the next test. Af-



ter reviewing my results, I took the rest of the weekend off. Although the study materials did require a significant investment of time and money, I passed the first time.

Andrea E. Theye, Psy.D.
Clinical Psychologist
Behavioral Health Optimization Program (BHOP)
Captain, U.S. Air Force
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Navajo

One author of this text purchased a set of exam prep materials. Anita Mihecoby described her process: “I purchased a study prep kit (Academic Review) and studied during my postdoctoral year. I studied 2 hours each day during the week and a full 8 hours a day on the weekends. A baseline test helped me identify my initial strengths and weakness, and the domain practice tests helped me to refine my plans. I organized the domains into the order in which I would study them, alternating between the domains I did best on and those that needed more attention. I typed notes for each domain to organize the information and started taking full practice tests. For any areas that showed as a weakness . . . I made flashcards for those topics. After 2 months of study, I applied and set the test date 2 months out.”

Nearly all of the psychologists we heard from talked about the importance of taking practice tests through the study process. Carolyn Barcus, an early member and former president of SIP, offered this advice:

I took the exam three times, and each time my score improved. My advice is to use the study materials. My scores on the practice exams correlated with my exam scores. So

do take the practice exams, and if you are not passing them, don't waste your money. When you are passing the practice tests, sign up for the exam. And don't give up!



Carolyn Barcus, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus,
Utah State University
Logan, Utah
Blackfeet

Design a Study Plan

You may work best in a study group, with one partner, or by yourself. Even if you work best alone, you may benefit from connecting with colleagues also studying for the exam. Periodically checking in on one another and sharing support and encouragement may help to keep you on track.

Consider setting some time to focus on test-taking strategies as well as to acquire knowledge of the content. Consider both the structure and setting of your study. Perhaps you learn best when you periodically devote large blocks of uninterrupted time to study. Or you may be most effective taking an hour or two at a time but studying more often. Consider whether you work best in a noisy coffee shop or in a quiet, isolated space at home.

Or you may prefer some variety as did author Mihecoby: “For me, having several comfortable spots to study in was important. I studied in my home office, library, in bed, and on the couch in front of the television. The most creative spot I used was on the treadmill where I had a treadmill desk made to hold my study materials. This way I could remain productive while getting some exercise.”

Whatever your preferences for structure and setting, preparing for the EPPP requires the allocation of a substantial amount

of study time. ASPPB has surveyed test takers about the amount of time they studied and correlated those self-reports with pass rates. Results suggest the optimal number of study hours is between 76 and 100 (Turner, 2019). So, if you decide to study over an 8-week period, for example, you must allocate between 9.5 and 12.5 hours to exam preparation each week. Designing a schedule and assigning topics to particular time periods will help ensure a realistic plan.

Of course, you may need to modify your plan along the way. Given that life is not always predictable, build in some study-free days that may double as catch-up days should unforeseen circumstances intervene.

As you design your study plan, consider how much time you can realistically spend studying, how you might temporarily reduce your personal and professional responsibilities, and whom you might enlist to help you. Sometimes an employer will allow release time. Perhaps a friend or family member will help with childcare or meal preparation. Be creative in thinking about who and what might best help you move toward licensure.

Seek Counsel from Those Who've Gone Before

Following are some examples of strategies that have worked for earlier test takers. One of the authors, Janet Thomas, described her experience:

“A friend from graduate school and I teamed up and met every other Saturday for 4 months. We each had a set of study materials and selected particular knowledge domains to focus on during each 2-week interval. Practice tests helped us track our progress and identify areas that needed more attention. At each meeting, we reviewed items that we got wrong and discussed material we found confusing. We allocated a maximum of 15 minutes for complaining after discovering that we were wasting far too much time on that. We tracked the upward trend in our practice tests until we were regularly exceeding the passing score. Ultimately, we both passed with a comfortable margin.”

In some situations, life circumstances weigh more heavily than learning style or personal preferences in determining an approach to study. Gayle Skawennio Morse is a full-time academic also maintaining a part-time private practice. Early in her career, she wanted to obtain a license but did not see how she could carve out time in her busy days to study. Finally she enlisted the help of her family:

I had my doctorate and was on a tenure track. As the single parent of a toddler, busy with launching a career in academia, finding time to study for the EPPP seemed impossible. Ultimately, my mom came to stay with my daughter for 2 weeks. I went to my sister's place, where she took care of me. All I did was study. I took at least two practice exams each day. That gave me invaluable learning about how to understand the complex questions. I passed the exam the first time I took it. I never gave up, despite the grueling monotony, because I knew I would be the first person from my reservation to be a licensed psychologist.



Gayle Skawennio Morse, Ph.D.
Professor, Licensed Psychologist

Program Director, Counseling and Community Program
Psychology Department, The Sage Colleges School of Health Sciences
Troy, New York
Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk)

Investing too little time and effort in preparation for the exam is expensive and discouraging, yet many candidates end up taking (and paying for) the exam more than once. According to Matt Turner, ASPPB's senior director of Examination Services,

once candidates do pass, they often can identify flaws in previous strategies. Mark Daniels described his journey to passing the EPPP exam:

I was a new faculty [member] at the University of South Dakota. My colleagues told me that preparing for the EPPP was a serious commitment. I leafed through the study guides they shared with me, and about 6 weeks before the exam date I started studying. I thought I would do it in my free time in my office. I forgot that being a first-year faculty member doesn't offer much free time.

As the test date drew closer, I realized I wasn't going to get through the 13 study guides and sample tests, so I focused on those [relating to] classes I had not taken in grad school. I took the test, and I scored just a few points short of passing.

I knew I had to take this seriously. I reserved a faculty study room at the USD library. I made a formal calendar and scheduled several hours at the library for every day of the next semester. I went through each study guide several times, making certain I could score well above the required 70% on each practice subtest.

Taking the test a second time, I had a sense of competency in each of the areas and knew I had put in enough time studying and completing the practice tests. When I got the results back a few weeks later, I had indeed passed!



Mark Daniels, Ph.D.
Integrated Health Therapist
Sanford Health
Vermillion, South Dakota
Ho-Chunk, Diné, Nooch

Having to take the EPPP more than once is not uncommon. As illustrated by Daniels's story, candidates who do not pass the first time often try a different approach the next time. One individual relates that having attended one of the top graduate programs in the country, she had erroneously determined she would not need to spend much time in preparation. She was surprised when she did not pass, but she recalculated her plan and devoted significant time to study. She passed with a comfortable margin on the second try.

In contrast to those who determined that they did not study long enough, Laiel Baker-Dekrey, clinical director at a private mental health clinic, identified a different flaw in her first approach to taking the EPPP:

"I took the exam for the first time during the spring of my postdoctoral fellowship year. My work site provided 4 hours each week for EPPP study. [But] I found myself feeling burnt out from graduate school and falling into habits that prevented good self-care. I worked long hours [that] left little time for things that once rejuvenated me. Nevertheless, I thought I had prepared well enough by reviewing and studying materials. In retrospect I can see that I went into that exam lacking the mindset and overall balance needed to succeed."

Thinking she had expended an adequate amount of time and effort in test preparation, Baker-DeKrey was disappointed to find she would have to take the exam again. Keeping her position was contingent on getting her license. After some serious self-reflection, she concluded she had overextended herself professionally at the expense of her personal wellbeing. She needed a better strategy:

This time I scheduled more time for self-care and focused on finding balance in my mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional wellness, something I had neglected while preparing the first time. I made more time to attend ceremony, to exercise three times a week, and to eat a balanced diet,

and I prepared meals. I spent more quality time with family and in community, and I intentionally focused on my mental health (for example, seeking treatment for test anxiety). Be-



sides taking a few more practice tests and driving to the testing site once beforehand, I believe these were the main factors that helped me to succeed the second time around. While sitting in that second exam, I felt so much more calm, oriented and focused, balanced and connected to myself.

Laiel Baker-DeKrey, Ph.D.

Licensed Psychologist/Clinical Director

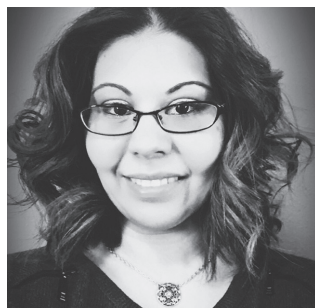
Lorenz Clinic of Family Psychology

Victoria, Minnesota

Hidatsa and Nueta of the Three Affiliated Tribes of North Dakota
Knife Clan

Like Baker-DeKrey, Stephanie Parisien found self-care critical to her preparation for the exam. In addition to using study materials (AATBS) and following a schedule, she reported:

Having the support from my family, friends, and colleagues increased my confidence that I would do well. Making time for fun throughout study time also eased the process, making it much more enjoyable!



Stephanie Parisien, Ph.D.

Clinical Psychologist, Private Practice

Belcourt, North Dakota

Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa

Readers can distill many lessons from the stories of these psychologists. Clearly no single approach works for everyone, but five themes emerge:

1. Set personal goals. Create a plan taking into account your learning style, personality, life circumstances, and resources.
2. Invest in a study program.
3. Enlist the help and support of your family, friends, colleagues, and employer.
4. Carve out and commit time in your schedule to study, and follow through.
5. Take care of yourself physically, emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically through the process.

However you approach your test preparation, making a clear and realistic plan tailored to your personality, learning style, needs, and circumstance is essential.

Stay Motivated

If you have read this far, you likely understand that preparing for the EPPP requires strong commitment and sustained effort. Inevitably, you'll wonder whether you can pass the exam and what you will do if you do not pass. You may also find yourself ruminating about whether or not the exam is necessary or fair or relevant.

Certainly these thoughts may warrant consideration. Nevertheless, giving them much airtime while you are trying to study is, at best, a distraction and poor use of your limited time. At worst, it is self-defeating and likely to undermine your effort to succeed.

All candidates have unique sources of motivation. Identifying yours will help to sustain your efforts. Merrill Jones reported that the only thing motivating him to study seriously was the exam fee. Andrea Theye shared these insights about maintaining inspiration:

“One of the hardest things for me was to remain positive and hopeful that I had what it took to pass the exam. We all have a different journey [in] ascending the mountain of licensure. But rest in the knowledge that it is worth it, and it is so, so important. This is especially true for those of us who entered this field to advocate for the lesser heard and to make a positive difference for our population for generations to come.”

Preparing for the Big Day

All preparation leads to the test day. Think about a time you felt at your best—mentally sharp, physically sound, emotionally grounded, psychologically centered. What things came together to create that? How do you get to that space? Healthy eating, good sleep, exercise, yoga, participation in ceremony, and time with family and community may be helpful. Try to capture that you-at-your-best feeling, acknowledging that this is a goal, not a requirement. Most candidates pass the test even if they are not completely calm. Many who have passed the exam suggest visiting the test center in advance. If you’re traveling some distance, consider spending the preceding night nearby. Merrill Jones took such a step to clear the way:

Because I am married and have kids, I stayed by myself in a hotel the night before my exam. I did not do this to cram but to clear my mind and to be without distractions.



Merrill Jones, Ph.D.
Licensed Clinical Psychologist
Southern Utah University
Cedar City, Utah
Diné Member

Be sure you have everything you need when you arrive, and do not bring any prohibited items to the test center. For example, you will need a valid, government-issued identification that includes a photograph. A passport or driver's license will suffice. A second form of identification with a signature or photograph is also required. ***The name listed on each must match exactly the name listed on the "Authorization to Test" email you received.*** Conversely, cell phones, papers, cameras, and certain clothing items are prohibited (hats with bills, for example). Carefully review the *ASPPB EPPP Candidate Handbook* right before the test day so that you do not miss any requirement.

Arranging for someone to drive you to the test center and pick you up may alleviate anxiety. Arrive early to allow time to sign in and get settled and centered before starting the exam.

When you sit down to take the exam, plan your time carefully. You will have 255 minutes to complete the 225 items on the test—just over a minute for each. Staying focused is essential. Replicate the conditions for practice tests that most closely resemble those of the exam to help manage your test time most effectively.

Read questions carefully. Identify the knowledge domain and key terms. Remember that all of the information you need to answer each item is contained in the question itself. Before reviewing the options, try to answer the question. Then read all of the choices and eliminate incorrect options to select the best answer. You will not be allowed to bring in scratch paper or writing implements, but the testing site will provide a whiteboard for taking notes during the tutorial (provided just before the exam to help you eliminate options).

After completing the exam, you will immediately obtain your unofficial score. Again, each jurisdiction determines its own passing scores. Whatever the outcome, do something to reward yourself and optimize your recovery.

Taking and passing the EPPP is a monumental achievement—daunting for every psychologist who takes on one of the most

difficult challenges on the path to licensure. But taking the test and getting your license will open doors for you in your career. The profession of psychology will benefit from your contributions, and your community will reap the benefits of your efforts. Thank you for your willingness to take the EPPP. Your professional community is behind you.

Post-Licensure Mobility

ASPPB offers many services for licensed psychologists to facilitate their mobility should they wish to apply for a license in another jurisdiction. One such service is the Certificate of Professional Qualification in Psychology, or CPQ. The CPQ offers a way for doctoral-level psychologists to demonstrate to psychology boards (or colleges in Canada) in new jurisdictions that they have met the standards required for licensure. Find specific requirements at: <https://www.asppb.net>

Appendix A

Test Preparation Resources

Association for Advanced Training in the Behavioral Sciences (AATBS)

<http://www.aatbs.com>

Study volumes alone (\$349)

Exam Simulator—Access for 3 months (\$745) to online materials including:

- Assessment exam
- Domain quizzes

Basic Package—Access for 4 months (\$929), including:

- Comprehensive study volumes
- Strategies package
- Assessment exam
- Section quizzes
- Self-paced workshop

Essentials Package—Access for 6 months (\$1,129), including:

- All of the above components, plus
- One-on-one coaching
- Package protection guarantee

Pro Package—Access for 9 months (\$1,529) including:

- All of the above components, plus
- Online flashcards
- Domain quizzes
- Onsite 4-day EPPP comprehensive workshop
- Statistics and text construction webinar
- EPPP pass guarantee

* This is neither a comprehensive list of nor a recommendation for companies offering EPPP study materials.

Premium Package—Access for 12 months (\$1,829) to online materials, including:

- All of the above components, plus
- Color-coded flashcards
- Final exam
- Small-group coaching webinar

Academic Review

www.academicreview.com

All packages—1 month \$359, 3 month \$759, 6 month \$1,049—include:

- E-books
- Virtual flashcards
- Assessment
- Domain quizzes
- Mock EPPP exams

Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB)

www.asppb.net

For candidates approved by their licensing boards and authorized to take the EPPP:

- Practice Examination for the Professional Practice of Psychology Online (PPPO) (\$63.50 per attempt)
- Practice Examination for the Professional Practice of Psychology (PEPPP) (\$115 per attempt, can be taken at a Pearson VUE test center).

Each test contains 100 retired items from the EPPP item bank. They do not help you know where to focus your study, but they do familiarize you with the types of items on the test.

(continued on next page)

Mometrix Test Preparation

www.flashcardsecrets.com

EPPP packages regularly \$121.99, on sale at time of this writing for \$69.99, include:

- Practice test questions
- EPPP Flashcard Study System
- Study secrets
- Overcoming test anxiety
- EPPP Quick Reference Guide

PsychPrep

<https://psychprep.com>

EPPP study materials and online test subscription, including expert feedback, 6 months:

- Hard copy and digital eBook (\$750)
- All digital (\$700)

Online test only, no study materials:

- 4 month subscription (\$500)
- 1 month subscription (\$350)

EPPP comprehensive audio and chapter quiz online, 4 months

- 38 CD set (\$275)
- Mp3 download (\$225)

Weekend workshop

- Live (\$500)
- Home study
 - 9 CD set (\$350)
 - Downloadable audio (\$300)

Premium packages starting at \$1,500, include:

- All materials listed above, plus
- 15 Week Seminar (audio available)

Appendix B

Personal Checklists

Exam Preparation Checklist

- _____ Familiarize yourself with exam content.
- _____ Determine your eligibility.
- _____ Review the ASPPB *EPMP Candidate Handbook*.
- _____ Apply to the licensing authority (with exact name of the IDs you will use on day of exam).
- _____ Verify your account.
- _____ Pay fees.
- _____ Schedule your exam.
- _____ Request accommodation if appropriate.
- _____ Obtain a set of study materials.
- _____ Design your study plan.
- _____ Create a study schedule and stick to it.

Test Day Checklist

- _____ Visit the test site if you can.
- _____ Arrange for transportation.
- _____ Bring government-issued, photo identification (with the exact name you registered with).
- _____ Bring a secondary form of identification with signature.
- _____ Leave phone, papers, camera, and other prohibited items in the car.
- _____ Arrive early.

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ISBN: 978-0-9988240-5-5



\$15.00