

# Psychology Day (Fall 2009)

## Training for a Career in the Helping Professions

Jennifer Katz

# Some Types of Helping Professions

- Psychiatrists (MD degree)
- Psychologists (PhD, PsyD, EdD – doctoral level)
  - Clinical
  - Counseling
- Therapists/psychotherapists (master's degree or higher)
  - Social Work – counseling certification (MSW-C)
  - Mental Health Counselor
  - Psychiatric Nurse
- Working in Schools (master's degree or higher)
  - School Psychology
  - School Counseling

# Regulating Practice

- In the US, each state regulates applied practice
- To become certified or licensed, your training program should be accredited by a NATIONAL organization (suggests minimal training standards are met)
  - Find the relevant national organization (Google!) and their list of accredited programs. Some examples:
    - Clinical psychology programs should be APA accredited
    - Counseling psych programs should be ACA accredited
    - School psychology programs should be NASP accredited
    - Marriage and family therapy programs should be AAMFT accredited
    - For master's degrees in education/counseling, programs should be CACREP (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs) accredited

# Regulating Practice

- A graduate degree is not sufficient for practice!
- Plan for fees, exams, supervised practice **AFTER** you graduate (specifics vary across states).
- Experience requirements: often several years post-grad and may involve paying for supervision
- See this website for specific NYS Regulations:

**[www. op.nysed .gov/proflist/htm](http://www.op.nysed.gov/proflist/htm)**

Some examples of POST GRADUATION requirements:

- Psychologists need 2 yrs supervised full time practice
- Mental health counselors need 3 yrs of supervised full time practice (not earned within one's own private practice!)

# Responsible Practice

- Practice is a huge responsibility. Ethically, you should be as well-trained as possible before you practice
- Choose an accredited training program with
  - **A small faculty/student ratio** (how much time, attention will you get in learning to work with clients?)
  - **Faculty and training sites that match your specific interests and career goals**
    - Not all psychologists/helping professionals are trained to work with all clients. Pick programs with
      - faculty supervisors trained in your areas of interest
      - placements working with the clients you want to help
    - Different programs vary in terms of academic focus, helping orientation (e.g., problem versus process focus, psychodynamic versus cognitive behavioral)

# Applying to Graduate School

- A **broad** undergraduate course selection is valued (not just those in the social sciences!)  
Grad school is when you specialize.
- Most programs have GPA cutoffs (3.0 for many programs, 3.5 for clinical psych)
- Most reputable programs require the general GRE (see ETS website for info about test dates)
- Helpful to have some “clinical” experiences (crisis line, co-ops, volunteering, internships, Resident Assistant positions), even better if related to your interests

# Applying to Graduate School

- Professionally-focused personal statement
  - Personalize to show the match between your interests/career goals and the specific training offered by that specific program
  - Be honest but selective; revealing sensitive personal info to strangers suggests poor boundaries
- Strong letters of recommendation
  - Waive your rights to view (or not taken seriously)
  - Emphasis on interpersonal and communication skills, intelligence, reliability (so be sure to give writers enough time & info to write the letter!)

# Some Graduate School Resources

- Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical & Counseling Psychology
  - Publisher: Guilford Press - 800-365-7006 - [www.guilford.com](http://www.guilford.com)
- Getting In: A Step-by-Step Plan for Gaining Admission to Graduate School in Psychology
  - Publisher: American Psychological Association - 800-374-2721 – [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)
- The Complete Guide to Graduate School Admission: Psychology & Related Fields
  - Publisher: Lawrence Erlbaum - 800-926-6579 – [www.earlbaum.com](http://www.earlbaum.com)