
Wisconsin Legislative Council

ACT MEMO



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2021 Wisconsin Act 22
[2021 Assembly Bill 63]

Psychologists

2021 Wisconsin Act 22 revises certain aspects of the regulatory oversight of psychologists.

PRACTICE

Among other aspects of regulation, the act redefines the practice of psychology to mean the observation, description, evaluation, interpretation, prediction, or modification of human behavior by the application of psychological principles, methods, or procedures, in exchange for a fee, for assessing and preventing maladaptive behavior and promoting adaptive behavior or psychological functioning, or for assisting in legal decision-making.

The act redefines the practice of psychotherapy to mean the diagnosis and treatment of mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders, conditions, or addictions through the application of methods derived from established psychological or systemic principles, including to assist individuals with modifying their behaviors, cognitions, emotions, or personality characteristics, or to understand unconscious processes or intrapersonal, interpersonal, or psychosocial dynamics.

CREDENTIALING

The act revises certain categories of licensing status for psychologists, including:

- Adding an interim licensing status for a person who has completed the educational requirements, 1,500 hours in a supervised doctoral internship, and an examination on state law related to the practice of psychology.
- Removing separate licensure status for a private practice school psychologist (but allowing grandfathering for renewal of a prior license in this category).
- Removing a limitation that had allowed a reciprocal license to be granted only if the other state also offered a reciprocal license.
- Revising the method of counting the number of days a psychologist from out of state may temporarily practice in Wisconsin.
- Specifying that state licensure is not required for various circumstances, including a psychologist who is a fellow in a formal psychology fellowship program, or is from out of state and is only testifying in court.

For initial licensure, the act removes the prior requirement of one year of post-doctoral supervised experience and instead requires 3,000 hours of total supervised experience. The supervised experience must include at least 1,500 hours in a supervised doctoral internship, and 1,500 hours in other supervised experience, which may include pre-internship practicum or other hours.

Also for initial licensure, the act removes the consideration of an arrest record, but continues to allow consideration of a conviction record if substantially related to the practice of psychology.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

For renewal of a license, the act allows professional activities to be considered in lieu of continuing education hours. The act specifies that the Psychology Examining Board may establish the standard, by rule, for professional activities to meet the continuing education requirements.

The act also allows the board to make individual exceptions that postpone or waive continuing education requirements in cases of extreme hardship, including prolonged illness or disability, and allows the board to exempt a person who is retired from the active practice of psychology from continuing education requirements.

PSYCHOLOGY EXAMINING BOARD

Lastly, the act revises certain aspects of the board's membership and powers. For example, the act specifies that board members must represent different specialty areas "to the extent possible," rather than requiring each board member to represent a different specialty area in the field of psychology. The act also allows the board to approve accrediting organizations, removes the requirement for the board to give an examination twice per year, and allows the board to set passing scores for examinations without rulemaking. The act removes the board's authority to establish a code of ethics, but maintains the unprofessional conduct identified by statute.

Effective date: June 1, 2021

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