

Recommendations for Respecializing in a New ABA Practice Area

INTRODUCTION

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is both a science and a helping profession that is widely applicable to a number of different areas of practice. Although many behavior analysts acquire specialization in a practice area through their initial education and training, some may wish to respecialize at some point for various reasons. These reasons might include market trends, career flexibility, newly available funding streams, and personal factors.

This document is intended to provide recommendations on how a BACB certificant could respecialize in a new area of practice. For the purposes of this document, *competence* is considered a product of one's education, training, and supervised experience, and *specialization* is considered competence in a specific area of practice. Suggested actions and resources that might be helpful in navigating the respecialization process are provided below. It is worth noting that valuable resources in some subspecialty areas may not be exclusively behavior-analytic in nature.

RESEARCH

Determine whether respecialization is right for you and then develop a comprehensive plan for investigating the new area of practice.

- Familiarize yourself with key articles
- Explore any relevant professional organizations or special interest groups (behavioral and nonbehavioral)
- Evaluate whether there are existing job opportunities and funding sources
- Speak to experts about the scope of practice in the new area of practice and guidance they have about developing competence

PLANNING

Develop your action plan for building competence in the new area of practice.

- Identify methods for building competence such as additional certification, education, mentorship, among others
- Determine skills that are critical to the new area of practice (e.g., multidisciplinary team skills, new procedures)
- Conduct a self-assessment to identify skills you need to acquire or strengthen
- Develop a training action plan for becoming competent in the new area

Disclaimer

The recommendations provided in this document is for informational purposes only and does not represent professional or legal advice. This document in no way establishes standards of competence in any area of behavior-analytic practice. The sole intent of this document is to provide an informational resource for those considering respecialization in applied behavior analysis. The recommendations presented in this document reflect the consensus of a number of subject matter experts who provided the content, but should not be considered the only acceptable process for respecialization. The BACB does not warrant or guarantee that these recommendations apply to all areas of practice.

TRAINING

Implement your action plan to gain skills and knowledge to develop competence in the new area of practice.

- Begin training and educational activities
- Gain supervised or mentored experience
- Obtain additional certification if necessary
- Continually assess your progress in acquiring and refining skills

MAINTAINING COMPETENCE

After developing entry-level competence in the new area of practice, develop strategies to maintain your skills and continue to grow as a practitioner.

- Stay current with the relevant literature
- Continue to assess current skills and identify areas for further professional growth
- Continue to engage in professional development opportunities
- Participate in professional organizations and supervise or mentor others to help grow the area of practice
- Contribute to the dissemination of the new area of practice to behavioral and nonbehavioral audiences

For additional recommendations on respecialization, we refer the reader to:

LeBlanc, L. A., Heinicke, M. R., & Baker, J. C. (2012). [Expanding the consumer base for behavior-analytic services: Meeting the needs of consumers in the 21st century.](#) *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 5(1), 4-14.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Association for Behavior Analysis International. (2020, May 1). *Special interest groups.*

<https://www.abainternational.org/constituents/special-interests/special-interest-groups.aspx>

Association of Professional Behavior Analysts. (2020, May 1). *Licensure and other regulation of ABA practitioners.*

https://www.apbahome.net/general/recommended_links.asp

Behavior Analyst Certification Board. (2014). [Professional and ethical compliance code for behavior analysts.](#) Littleton, CO: Author.

Behavior Analyst Certification Board. (2018). [RBT ethics code.](#) Littleton, CO: Author

Behavior Analyst Certification Board (2020). [Applied behavior analysis subspecialty areas.](#) Littleton, CO: Author.

Brodhead, M. T., Quigley, S. P., & Wilczynski, S. M. (2018). [A call for discussion about scope of competence in behavior analysis.](#) *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 11(4), 424-435.

Shook, G. L., & Van Houten, R. (1993). Ensuring the competence of behavior analysts. In R. Van Houten & S. Axelrod (Eds.), [Behavior analysis and treatment](#) (pp. 171-181). Boston: Springer.

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Behavior Analyst Certification Board. (2020). *Recommendations for respecializing in a new ABA practice area.* Littleton, CO: Author