



The Practice of Psychology

- Psychologists are licensed by every state and the District of Columbia. Psychologists have been licensed in Pennsylvania since 1973. Currently, Pennsylvania licenses about 5,800 psychologists.
- Psychologists evaluate, diagnose, and treat nervous and mental disorders and substance abuse, and help patients suffering from the emotional consequences of physical diseases. Many psychologists specialize in childhood disorders, mental retardation, neuropsychological problems, behavioral medicine, or other areas. Psychologists are the experts in the administration and interpretation of psychological tests.
- Most psychologists have a doctoral degree, which requires five years of graduate training in the different theories, diagnostic tools, and psychological treatment approaches that have proven successful. About one-fifth of psychologists in Pennsylvania have master's degrees, although the opportunity to become licensed for independent practice with less than a doctorate ended in 1995.
- All psychologists must pass a rigorous examination on the core of psychological knowledge and undergo at least two years of supervised experience. Psychologists must adhere to a Code of Ethics enforced by the State Board of Psychology and must obtain continuing education credits in order to retain their licenses.
- Psychologists commonly work in independent practices, community mental health centers, outpatient clinics, hospitals, schools, colleges, universities, and residential treatment centers. Psychologists primarily work in cost-effective outpatient settings.
- Currently, psychologists are recognized under Medicare, CHAMPUS, FEHBP, and most private insurance plans. Psychologists are recognized as participating providers by commercial insurers. Pennsylvania law also requires private insurance companies that provide mental health coverage to allow patients the freedom to select psychologists.