



Ohio Board of Psychology

Work Disability Examinations: Forensic Psychology Competence and Resources

Forensic psychology refers to professional practice when applying the scientific, technical, or specialized knowledge of psychology to a psycho-legal issue to assist the legal decision maker in addressing legal, contractual, and/or administrative matters. Forensic psychology includes work disability examinations, consultations, and reports provided to inform private sector and public sector disability claims adjudications. Work disability programs of the Social Security Administration/Ohio Division of Disability Determination, Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation, Ohio Industrial Commission, and Veterans Administration are examples of public sector claims adjudications. Independent Medical Examinations (IME) and consultative examinations are examples of work disability examinations.

Competent work disability practice requires foundational competencies in both general and forensic psychology. Psychologists undertaking work disability practice are required to follow specialty standards and specific responsibilities of the forensic psychologist. This includes undertaking work with an understanding of their role and potential impact in legal matters affecting the rights of disability claimants and the interests of multiple stakeholders in claims adjudication. Disability claimants, referral sources, and all stakeholders are entitled to competent work disability examinations and reports, with opinions appropriately broad or limited depending on the scope and quality of case data available to the psychologist.

Psychologists understand that requests, requirements, or perceived demands by referral sources do not supplant State Board rules and professional ethical requirements. Competent psychologists seek clarification of the referral question, and educate referral sources when their requests for opinions or data conflict with ethical and regulatory requirements. Similarly, psychologists proceed with knowledge that ease of entry to this area of practice and ease of garnering referrals have no bearing on the professional requirement for documented competence in forensic psychology. The psychologist in work disability practice must remain current on the 1) specific legal criteria involved in a claim; 2) forensic psychology competencies and professional practice standards and guidelines; and, 3) state laws and Board rules of professional conduct. Psychologists undertaking practice on work disability matters are expected to have a working knowledge of the foundational competencies in forensic psychology and their application to work disability cases. Developing and maintaining professional competence in the practice of psychology are hallmarks of ethical psychological practice, client rights, and professional risk management. The following resources are offered to help strengthen and guide the ethical practice of psychologists conducting independent work disability exams and/or providing work disability claims consultation:

American Board of Forensic Psychology. Suggested Reading List for Written and Oral Examinations, June 2017.

<https://abpp.org/BlankSite/media/Forensic-Psychology-Documents/ABFP-Reading-List.pdf>

American Psychological Association (2002). American Psychological Association ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct. (Including 2010 and 2016 amendments)
<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/>

American Psychological Association (2013). Specialty guidelines for forensic psychology. American Psychologist, Vol. 68, No. 1, 7-19.
<http://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/forensic-psychology.aspx>

American Psychological Association (2017). Professional practice guidelines for occupationally mandated psychological evaluations.
<http://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/psychological-evaluations.aspx>

Committee on Psychological Tests and Assessment (2007). Statement on third party observers in psychological testing and assessment: A framework for decision making.
<https://www.apa.org/science/programs/testing/third-party-observers.pdf>

Forensic Specialty Council (constituent groups: American Academy of Forensic Psychology; American Board of Forensic Psychology; American Psychology-Law Society) Education and Training Guidelines for Forensic Psychology. November 19, 2007.
<http://www.apadivisions.org/division-41/education/guidelines.pdf>

Grisso, T. (2010). Guidance for improving forensic reports: A review of common errors. Open Access Journal of Forensic Psychology, 2, 102-115.
https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/psych_pp/282/

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