

# **Creating a New Credential for a Prescribing Psychologist**

A smart and sensible approach to increasing access to comprehensive behavioral health services while protecting patient safety.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What is a prescribing psychologist?**

A Prescribing Psychologist is a fully independent, **licensed** psychologist who has received specific training and been **credentialed** to prescribe psychotropic medication. A prescribing psychologist is eligible to obtain a DEA registration number.

### **Does a psychologist prescribe medications that are not psychotropics, like antibiotics or heart medication?**

No, prescribing psychologists are **ONLY** permitted to prescribe psychotropic medication or medications commonly used for psychiatric purposes.

### **Do any other states or jurisdictions credential prescribing psychologists?**

Yes. Seven states have passed enabling statutes:

New Mexico (2002), Louisiana (2004), Illinois (2014), Iowa (2016), Idaho (2017), Colorado (2023), Utah (2024)

The following federal agencies also credential prescribing psychologists:

Department of Defense: (Army, Navy, Air Force)

US Public Health Service Corps

Indian Health Service

### **Is it safe for patients and behavioral health consumers?**

A: Yes. Prescribing psychologists have been practicing safely in other jurisdictions for 25 years. Recent research has shown that the rate of Adverse Drug Events (ADEs) for prescribing psychologists is no greater than that found for psychiatrists or primary care providers.

Hughes et al., (in press). Assessing the safety and efficacy of prescribing psychologists in New Mexico and Louisiana. *American Psychologist*.

### **Do prescribing psychologists receive specialized education or training?**

A: Yes. To be considered for the prescribing psychologist credential, a licensed psychologist must complete the following:

- 1- Complete Prerequisites in Basic Science
- 2- Earn a Masters Degree in Clinical Pharmacology from an accredited program.
- 3- Complete a Supervised Practicum prior to graduation – typically 400 hours
- 4- Pass the national Pharmacology Exam for Psychologists  
<https://www.asppb.net/page/PEPEXam>
- 5- Obtain post-graduation supervised practice prior to obtaining an independent license.

### **How does the training of a prescribing psychologist compare to that of physicians and psychiatric nurse practitioners?**

A: The training of a prescribing psychologist is comparable to that of other non-physician prescribers. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19899140/>

### **Will a new prescribing psychologist credential change the profession for non-prescribing psychologists?**

A: No. Prescribing is another specialty area like neuropsychology, pediatric psychology, health psychology, or forensic psychology. We need psychologists practicing across the spectrum of mental health care to provide a robust and meaningful presence for our State's mental health network.

### **How does creating a Prescribing Psychologist credential improve access?**

A: There is a shortage of psychiatrists in Washington. This lack of prescribers leads to long wait times and other obstacles to obtaining care. According to researcher Dr. Phillip Hughes, if 10% of psychologists in Washington became licensed prescribers, as

they have in New Mexico and Louisiana, it would increase the available supply of prescribing by 30%, bringing the state back to the national average.

<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2024-54459-001>

**Primary care doctors and psychiatric nurse practitioners can already prescribe.  
Do we need this new credential?**

A: Yes. Prescribing Psychologists will be able to combine traditional talk therapies and medication. This will result in more integrated care, patients will need fewer appointments because one provider can provide both therapy and medication management, reducing out of pocket expenses for consumers. Most importantly it will increase access to safe and effective psychopharmacological prescribing in the state.

**What do Primary Care Providers think about prescribing psychology?**

A: Two studies surveyed primary care doctors who have worked closely with prescribing psychologists. The results show that primary care health care providers overwhelmingly view prescribing psychologists as safe, effective prescribers for their patients. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10880-012-9338-8> and <https://doi.org/10.1037/pro0000118>