

MODEL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
POSTDOCTORAL PROGRAMS IN GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY AND GROUP
PSYCHOLOGY

By

Sally H. Barlow, Ph.D., Nathaniel W. Ridge, Brady Wiggins, Jeffrey Lee, and Kristy Money
Proposed Winter, 2004, and Under Revision to the Council of Accreditation (CoA) for official
Post-Doctoral Recognition Winter, 2005

INTRODUCTION

During 2003-2004 the Committee on Group Psychology and Group Psychotherapy Accreditation of Postdoctoral Training Programs reviewed the Model for the Development of Postdoctoral Programs in Family Psychology, adopted it with modifications, and applied this model to the areas of group psychology and group psychotherapy.

This revised model, viewed as aspirational, is a guide for the future development of postdoctoral training. In describing prerequisites, a middle ground has been taken because, at the present, few doctoral programs provide training in group psychotherapy and psychology beyond an introductory course. Thus, the Model states that knowledge of groups is preferable rather than required. It is hoped that in the future it can be realistically required. The curriculum requirements specify what we believe is the basic fund of information of a group psychotherapist and/or psychologist. It would be difficult to teach all this material in one year or possibly two years at the postdoctoral level. The Model suggests that this issue be addressed by setting entrance requirements (which specify previous training) or providing a more extensive program, e.g., two years in duration.

It is expected that programs will publicly state their training goals, how they expect to meet them, and how they will evaluate the degree to which these training goals are met. Programs should inform applicants of the Model for the Development of Postdoctoral Programs in Group Psychology and Group Psychotherapy. Since the Model is aspirational, the program should specify what it will and will not cover in the training. The candidates will then be informed of what knowledge base is expected of them upon entry into the program and gaps that might be expected when they complete the postdoctoral training program.

The program director should be a diplomate in group psychology and group psychotherapy (ABGP). We believe that this is the best criteria of competence available in the practice of group psychology and group psychotherapy and hope that, in the future, all psychologists directing postdoctoral programs will have achieved this evidence of excellence. For the present, we do not wish to keep anyone who is an expert in group psychology and group psychotherapy from directing a postdoctoral program.

Another major task undertaken by this committee was to review relevant issues associated with

the task of developing a postdoctoral program in group psychology/psychotherapy. We reviewed and adopted the Committee on Family Psychology Accreditation of Postdoctoral Training Programs' analysis of the National Conference on Postdoctoral Training in Professional Psychology, which evolved from the Ann Arbor conference. This committee of family psychology utilized a panel of experts to review this policy statement and identify issues that were problematic. A two-step process was used in this review. First, the panel of experts identified possible problematic issues. Second, the panel wrote pro and con statements on the relevant issues. Following this process, the family psychology committee developed recommendations that affect the accreditation of postdoctoral programs in family psychology. We slightly modified these recommendations to be applied in the group psychology/psychotherapist context:

1. If a candidate does not hold a doctorate in professional psychology from a program that is accredited by APA/CPA or designated by ASPBB/National Register he or she must first complete a re-specialization program in a degree granting institution. (This requirement is contained in the Model.)
2. One-student programs are not acceptable unless they provide some training in settings with other postdoctoral students.
3. Programs must train broadly in group psychology and group psychotherapy and not be based only on specific populations (e.g., substance abuse).
4. Postdoctoral training in Group Institutes is acceptable if they have a program (sequence) specifically in group psychology and group psychotherapy.
5. Of the two hours of supervision per week one hour can be in a group format. (The IOC and COA guidelines specify two hours of individual supervision.)
6. Some group therapy supervision may be performed by expert professionals from other disciplines.
7. Research psychologists who are not on the faculty may teach this component.

HISTORY

The Division of Group Psychology and Group Psychotherapy was accepted as Division #49 by APA in 1991 and became fully operational later that year. Its predecessors and co-existing organizations, the American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA) and the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW), have collectively existed for over 80 years under a variety of names. Group psychology and group psychotherapy was officially recognized as a specialty by the APA's Board of Specialties in 2003 when Division #49 became a member of its credentialing specialty boards.

The purpose of this document is to translate different materials into a structure, which

can guide the formation of postdoctoral training in group psychology and group psychotherapy. These guidelines, once formulated and accepted by APA Division #49, AGPA, ASGW, and the Council of Specialists in Professional Psychology, can then serve the following purposes:

1. The guidelines can be used as a model for the development of postdoctoral programs.
2. The guidelines can be used as criteria upon which to accredit postdoctoral programs in group psychology and group psychotherapy.
3. The guidelines can be used by psychologists/students wanting to evaluate a program in group psychology and group psychotherapy.

THIS DOCUMENT

This document is intended to articulate the standards for the training process in group psychology and group psychotherapy at the postdoctoral level. These standards are viewed as aspirational to guide the growth of postdoctoral training, and will continue in transition over time. The content is broad and is meant to guide individual curriculum development allowing for diversity in evolving postdoctoral training programs.

PRESUPPOSITIONS

The proposed training program that follows is based on the premise that the postdoctoral resident holds a doctorate in professional psychology from a program that is accredited by APA/CPA or designated by ASPBB/National Register. At the time of the authoring of this paper, APA accredits only in the specialties of clinical, counseling, and school psychology. Therefore, it is assumed that the resident applicant has obtained a doctorate with a focus in clinical, counseling, or school psychology, and has had some course work and clinical internship experience in group psychology/psychotherapy. If an applicant has not obtained a doctorate with such a focus first, they should be directed to a re-specialization program. It is further assumed that the postdoctoral resident completed an internship accredited by APA/CPA or listed by APPIC. As our field progresses in the future, it is anticipated that more applicants to postdoctoral programs will have substantial pre-doctoral and/or continuing education backgrounds in group psychology and group psychotherapy.

PREREQUISITES

The postdoctoral resident should enter after having acquired the knowledge and skills listed below in their pre-doctoral program, internship, and/or recognized CE training programs. Each post-doctoral program in group psychology and group psychotherapy will be responsible for determining criteria and procedures to assess competence in these substantive and clinical areas, either directly through the program or in some other acceptable academic/clinical forum, whenever necessary. Supplementation of any existing deficiencies of the applicant may be required by the program as a condition of admission.

1. Foundational knowledge in the areas of biological, cognitive/affective, and social basis of

- behavior.
2. Knowledge and skills in the area of statistics, research design, and methodology.
 3. Knowledge regarding individual differences and related appropriate professional attitudes.
 4. Knowledge regarding psychology as a profession and discipline, including the history of psychology and major systems of thought.
 5. Knowledge about ethical, legal, and professional standards of practice.
 6. Knowledge of major developmental and personality theories.
 7. Knowledge of healthy functioning and abnormal behavior in children, adolescents and adults.
 8. Knowledge and skills in assessment.
 9. Knowledge of psychological measurement, and skill in administering and interpreting psychological tests for adults, children, families and preferably groups.
 10. Knowledge and skill in intervention, using individual, family, and preferably group methods.
 11. Attitudes appropriate to the discipline.
 12. Some knowledge of group development, group dynamics, and group process.

CURRICULUM AND EXIT REQUIREMENTS FROM CONTENT TO COMPETENCIES

The postdoctoral training program consists of two objectives: knowledge and experiential expertise in core group processes; and advanced knowledge and expertise in a particular area of group work (e.g., facilitation of task groups, group psychoeducation, group counseling, or group psychotherapy). Upon completion of the postdoctoral program, the student should be skilled and tested in all the following core objectives and at least one specialization. The following standards are a revision and expansion of ASGW standards, AGPA's principles of group psychotherapy course, and the Model for the Development of Postdoctoral Program in Family Psychology:

Core Training Standards

I. Coursework and Experiential Requirements

Coursework Requirements.

Core training shall include at least one graduate course (a minimum of 12 hours) in group work that addresses such as but not limited to scope of practice, types of group work, group development, group process and dynamics, group leadership, and standards of training and practice for group workers.

Experiential Requirements.

Core training shall include a minimum of 300 clock hours of group psychotherapy as leader or co-leader and 75 hours of group psychotherapy supervision.

II. Knowledge and Skill Objectives

A. Nature and Scope of Practice

1. Knowledge Objectives. Identify and describe:
 - a. the nature of group work and the various specializations within group work
 - b. theories of group work including commonalities and distinguishing characteristics among the various specializations within group work
 - c. research literature pertinent to group work and its specializations
2. Skill Objectives. Demonstrate skill in:
 - a. preparing a professional disclosure statement for practice in a chosen area of specialization
 - b. applying theoretical concepts and scientific findings to the design of a group and the interpretation of personal experiences in a group

B. Assessment of Group Members and the Social Systems in which they Live and Work

1. Knowledge Objectives. Identify and describe:
 - a. principles of assessment of group functioning in group work
 - b. use of personal contextual factors (e.g., family-of-origin, neighborhood-of-residence, organizational membership, cultural membership) in interpreting behavior of members in a group
2. Skill Objectives. Demonstrate skill in:
 - a. observing and identifying group process
 - b. observing the personal characteristics of individual members in a group
 - c. developing hypotheses about the behavior of group members
 - d. employing contextual factors (e.g., family of origin, neighborhood of residence, organizational membership, cultural membership) in interpretation of individual and group data

C. Planning Group Interventions

1. Knowledge Objectives. Identify and describe:
 - a. environmental contexts, which affect planning for, group interventions

- b. the impact of group member diversity (e.g., gender, culture, learning style, group climate preference) on group member behavior and group process and dynamics in group work
 - c. principles of planning for group work (e.g., selection and preparation of patients)
2. Skill Objectives. Demonstrate skill in:
- a. determining proper patient selection (e.g., homogeneity vs. heterogeneity, specific diagnoses, etc.) and preparing group members
 - b. collaborative consultation with targeted populations to enhance ecological validity of planned group interventions
 - c. planning for a group work activity including such aspects as developing overarching purpose, establishing goals and objectives, detailing methods to be used in achieving goals and objectives, determining methods for outcome assessment, and verifying ecological validity of plan

D. Implementation of Group Interventions

1. Knowledge Objectives. Identify and describe:
- a. principles of group formation including recruiting, screening, and selecting group members
 - b. principles for effective performance of group leadership functions
 - c. therapeutic factors within group work and when group work approaches are indicated and contraindicated
 - d. principles of group dynamics mechanisms (e.g., defense mechanisms, transference and countertransference, scapegoating, resistance)
 - e. principles of group process components, developmental stage theories, group member roles, group member behaviors
 - f. psychodynamic, interpersonal, and process for non-process groups models
 - g. conceptualizing group models of change, therapeutic focal points, and curative factors
2. Skill Objectives. Demonstrate skill in:
- a. encouraging participation of group members
 - b. attending to, describing, acknowledging, confronting, understanding, and responding empathically to group member behavior

- c. attending to, acknowledging, clarifying, summarizing, confronting, and responding empathically to group member statements
- d. attending to, acknowledging, clarifying, summarizing, confronting, and responding empathically to group themes
- e. attending to, acknowledging, clarifying, summarizing, confronting, and responding empathically to therapeutic focal points
- f. effectively using group models of change to improve patients' level of psychosocial functioning
- g. eliciting information from and imparting information to group members
- h. providing appropriate self-disclosure
- i. maintaining group focus; keeping a group on task
- j. giving and receiving feedback in a group setting
- k. dealing with and implementing termination in group work

E. Leadership and Co-Leadership

1. Knowledge Objectives. Identify and describe:
 - a. development of group leadership skills
 - b. group leadership dimensions and approaches
 - c. group work methods including group worker orientations and specialized group leadership behaviors
 - d. leader's functions in a new group
 - e. leadership roles and functions based on type of group
 - f. common leadership mistakes in the new group
 - g. principles of collaborative group processing
2. Skill Objectives. To the extent opportunities for leadership or co-leadership are provided, demonstrate skill in:
 - a. engaging in reflective evaluation of one's personal leadership style and approach
 - b. working cooperatively with a co-leader and/or group members
 - c. engaging in empathic listening to individual patients and the group in general

- d. dealing with various fears, anxieties, and resistances to group therapy and to the role of group therapist
- e. structuring and working within group programs
- f. engaging in collaborative group processing

F. Evaluation

1. Knowledge Objectives. Identify and describe:
 - a. methods for evaluating group process in group work
 - b. methods for evaluating outcomes in group work
2. Skill Objectives. Demonstrate skill in:
 - a. contributing to evaluation activities during group participation
 - b. engaging in self-evaluation of personally selected performance goals

G. Ethical Practice, Best Practice, Diversity-Competent Practice

1. Knowledge Objectives. Identify and describe:
 - a. ethical considerations unique to group work
 - b. best practices in group work
 - c. diversity competent group work
2. Skill Objectives. Demonstrate skill in:
 - a. evidencing ethical practice in planning, observing, and participating in group activities
 - b. evidencing best practice in planning, observing, and participating in group activities
 - c. evidencing diversity-competent practice in planning, observing, and participating in group activities

Specialization Guidelines

I. Overarching Program Characteristics

A. The program has a clearly specified philosophy of training for the preparation of specialists for independent practice of group work in one of the forms of group work recognized by the

Association (i.e., task and work group facilitation, group psychoeducation, group counseling, or group psychotherapy).

1. The program states an explicit intent to train group workers in one or more of the group work specializations.
2. The program states an explicit philosophy of training, based on the science of group work, by which it intends to prepare students for independent practice in the declared specialization(s).

B. For each declared specialization, the program specifies education and training objectives in terms of the competencies expected of students completing the specialization training. These competencies are consistent with

1. the program's philosophy and training model,
2. the substantive area(s) relevant for best practice of the declared specialization area, and
3. standards for competent, ethical, and diversity sensitive practice of group work

C. For each declared specialization, the program specifies a sequential, cumulative curriculum, expanding in breadth and depth, and designed to prepare students for independent practice of the specialization and relevant credentialing.

D. For each declared specialization, the program documents achievement of training objectives in terms of student competencies.

II. Recommended Coursework and Experience

A. Coursework. Specialization training may include coursework, which provide the student with a broad foundation in the group work domain in which the student seeks specialized training:

1. Task/Work Group Facilitation: coursework includes but is not limited to organizational development, management, and consultation, theory and practice of task/work group facilitation
2. Group Psychoeducation: coursework includes but is not limited to organizational development, school and community counseling/psychology, health promotion, marketing, program development and evaluation, organizational consultation, theory and practice of group psychoeducation
3. Group Counseling: coursework includes but is not limited to normal human development, health promotion, theory and practice of group counseling
4. Group Psychotherapy: coursework includes but is not be limited to normal and abnormal human development, assessment and diagnosis of mental and emotional disorders, treatment of psychopathology, theory and practice of group psychotherapy

5. Group Work Research: coursework includes but is not limited to the study of pre-group factors, the study of group process, and the study of outcome as well as the interaction between these three factors. In addition, coursework includes but is not limited to group treatment protocols, treatment protocols for specific populations, and long term programmatic work.

B. Experience. Specialization training includes

1. Task/Work Group Facilitation: a minimum of 30 clock hours (45 clock hours recommended) supervised practice facilitating or conducting an intervention with a task or work group appropriate to the age and clientele of the group leader's specialty area (e.g., school counseling, student development counseling, community counseling, mental health counseling)
2. Group Psychoeducation: a minimum of 30 clock hours (45 clock hours recommended) supervised practice conducting a psychoeducation group appropriate to the age and clientele of the group leader's specialty area (e.g., school counseling, student development counseling, community counseling, mental health counseling)
3. Group Counseling: a minimum of 45 clock hours (60 clock hours recommended) supervised practice conducting a counseling group appropriate to the age and clientele of the group leader's specialty area (e.g., school counseling, student development counseling, community counseling, mental health counseling)
4. Group Psychotherapy: a minimum of 45 clock hours (60 clock hours recommended) supervised practice conducting a psychotherapy group appropriate to the age and clientele of the group leader's specialty area (e.g., mental health counseling)

III. Knowledge and Skill Elements

In achieving its objectives, the program has and implements a clear and coherent curriculum plan that provides the means whereby all students can acquire and demonstrate substantial understanding of and competence in the following areas:

A. Nature and Scope of Practice

The program states a clear expectation that its students will limit their independent practice of group work to those specialization areas for which they have been appropriately trained and supervised.

B. Assessment of Group Members and the Social Systems in Which they Live and Work

All graduates of specialization training will understand and demonstrate competence in the use of assessment instruments and methodologies for assessing individual group member characteristics and group development, group dynamics, and process phenomena relevant for the program's declared specialization area(s). Studies should include but are not limited to:

1. methods of screening and assessment of populations, groups, and individual members who are or may be targeted for intervention
2. methods for observation of group member behavior during group interventions
3. methods of assessment of group development, process, and outcomes

C. Planning Group Interventions

All graduates of specialization training will understand and demonstrate competence in planning group interventions consistent with the program's declared specialization area(s). Studies should include but are not limited to:

1. establishing the overarching purpose for the intervention
2. identifying goals and objectives for the intervention
3. detailing methods to be employed in achieving goals and objectives during the intervention
4. selecting methods for examining group process during group meetings, between group sessions, and at the completion of the group intervention
5. preparing methods for helping members derive meaning from their within-group experiences and transfer within-group learning to real-world circumstances
6. determining methods for measuring outcomes during and following the intervention
7. verifying ecological validity of plans for the intervention

D. Implementation of Group Interventions

All graduates of specialization training will understand and demonstrate competence in implementing group interventions consistent with the program's declared specialization area(s). Studies should include but are not limited to:

1. principles of group formation including recruiting, screening, selection, and orientation of group members
2. standard methods and procedures for group facilitation
3. selection and use of referral sources appropriate to the declared specialization
4. identifying and responding constructively to extra-group factors which may influence the success of interventions
5. applying the major strategies, techniques, and procedures
6. adjusting group pacing relative to the stage of group development

7. identifying and responding constructively to critical incidents
8. identifying and responding constructively to disruptive members
9. helping group members attribute meaning to and integrate and apply learning
10. responding constructively to psychological emergencies
11. involving group members in within group session processing and on-going planning

E. Leadership and Co-Leadership

All graduates of specialization training will understand and demonstrate competence in pursuing personal competence as a leader and in selecting and managing the interpersonal relationship with a co-leader for group interventions consistent with the program's declared specialization area(s). Studies should include but are not limited to:

1. characteristics and skills of effective leaders
2. relationship skills required of effective co-leaders
3. processing skills required of effective co-leaders

F. Research and Evaluation

All graduates of specialization training will understand and demonstrate competence in evaluating and researching group interventions consistent with the program's declared specialization area(s). Studies should include but are not limited to methods for evaluating and researching participant outcomes and participant satisfaction.

G. Ethical Practice, Best Practice, Diversity-Competent Practice

All graduates of specialization training will understand and demonstrate consistent effort to comply with principles of ethical, best practice, and diversity-competent practice of group work consistent with the program's declared specialization area(s). Studies should include but are not limited to:

1. ethical considerations unique to the program's declared specialization area
2. best practices for group work within the program's declared specialization area
3. diversity issues unique to the program's declared specialization area

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. The program will ensure that all service, research, teaching, and supervisory activities are conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the American Psychological Association (APA) or the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA).
2. The program will be committed to training personnel with due regard to psychology's

- knowledge about, and respect for, diversity. Diversity refers to, but is not limited to, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, and lifestyle.
3. The program will demonstrate high regard for human dignity. Training is provided in a respectful way that protects the civil and personal rights of each resident. Residents are afforded the same respect and dignity accorded to all staff in the setting in which the program is located. Due process procedures exist to ensure that these and other residents' rights are protected.
 4. The program should be under the direction of a psychologist who as program director has final responsibility for the program. The program director should show evidence of broad competency in group psychology by having achieved the diploma in group psychology from the American Board of Professional Psychology and other evidence of excellence and breadth.
 5. The faculty and/or staff should be qualified by experience and/or advanced training in the specific areas in which they are teaching or supervising the majority of whom should be psychologists.
 6. The program will be the equivalent of one full year of training (minimum 1500 hours) and may be completed over a one full-time or two half-time year period. This includes both didactic and clinical components. A minimum of 1000 hours should be spent in clinical activities.
 7. Graduates will be expected to acquire the knowledge and skills specified previously. If they have had previous experience or education/training in any of the substantive areas, the program will clearly articulate a method of competency evaluation before granting credit for past training.
 8. The program will provide clear guidelines for supervision. Supervision should include a wide variety of methods and be based on case presentations, written case summaries, audio tapes, video tapes, one-way mirror observation, co-therapy, and group supervision. Both direct and indirect methods should be utilized. Supervision will then be structured into the individual education plan of each resident. There should be 4 hours of supervision and/or case presentations in the clinical setting per week (at least two of these hours must be in supervision). The primary supervisor must be a licensed/certified/registered psychologist in the jurisdiction where the program exists.
 9. The program will provide clear standards for evaluation of the knowledge base of group psychology and clinical skills. It is strongly recommended that the latter take the form of a mini-ABPP examination, particularly the work sample preparation phase. The program should specify what would be done if a resident did not obtain the desired level of competency, e.g., could they be re-evaluated.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

Knowledge and skills to be acquired as well as evaluation procedures must be clearly specified. The settings where this training takes place can be varied. Acceptable settings can include mental health centers, substance abuse hospitals, psychiatry/medical departments, psychology departments, hospitals, private practices, various consortium, or off-site arrangements. The critical factor is that the program, wherever it is housed, is under the direction of a person

meeting the qualifications stated previously for a program director and that there is evidence that the specified knowledge and skills are taught, and that appropriate methods of evaluation are implemented.

The program must demonstrate that respect for cultural, religious, and individual differences is imparted to students and is reflected to the extent possible in staff/faculty diversity, student recruitment and retention, and the curriculum. The program must also demonstrate an awareness of gender differences in the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and in research interests and methodology.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

There is an assumption made that the postdoctoral resident is already academically eligible to sit for licensure with the possible exception of additional experience. A graduate of a postdoctoral training program designed in accordance with the guidelines agreed upon should:

1. Have fulfilled the educational requirements to be qualified to sit for the diploma in group psychology with the American Board of Group Psychology, an affiliate of the American Board of Professional Psychology, once he/she is licensed and has met the experience and supervision requirements;
2. Be able to function at an advanced level of competency as a group psychologist in any setting in which general professional psychologists function, as well as other specific categories which are exclusively group oriented, such as facilitation of task groups, group psychoeducation, group counseling, or group psychotherapy; and
3. Be granted a certificate when he/she passes the exit exam and reaches the desired level of competence. Those who do not pass could, if they desire, obtain further training on their own, and be re-evaluated by the initial postdoctoral residency program with another competency exam.