All candidates for board certification in CFP must meet general eligibility requirements set by ABPP. Once approved by ABPP, candidates can choose one of three tracks depending upon their background and experience – two regular tracks or one senior track. Regardless of track, the certification process proceeds through three stages.

1. Stage I: Application and eligibility for candidacy
2. Stage II: Submission of professional statement and practice sample
3. Stage III: Oral examination

**Stage I: Application and eligibility for candidacy**

The **application** provides the primary data for determining board certification candidacy based on education and training credentials. The applicant’s doctoral degree and program verification is accomplished by requesting that official transcripts be sent from their educational institution(s) directly to the ABPP central office. Endorsements are requested by the applicant as described in the application form. Once all the materials have been received, the ABPP verifies the applicant’s licensing status.

Based on the information described above, the doctoral program’s generic requirements are reviewed by the ABPP staff for compliance with the generic degree and professional psychology program criteria. Applicants meeting the generic requirements are then reviewed by the specialty board credentials committee for compliance with the specialty’s specific doctoral and post-doctoral level education, training, and experience requirements. Applicants meeting the generic and specialty criteria become candidates for board certification. Applicants are informed of the results of the eligibility review by the ABPP central office following both parts of the evaluation.

**General Eligibility Requirements**

To attain certification in any specialty, an applicant must meet the common eligibility requirements:

- A doctoral degree from a program in professional psychology which at the time the degree was granted held accreditation by the APA, CPA, or was listed in the publication *Doctoral Psychology Programs Meeting Designation Criteria*. Applicants credentialed in the most recent directory of the *National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology* or the *Canadian Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology* will automatically meet the doctoral degree requirements. Applicants who hold the *Certificate of Professional Qualification in Psychology (CPQ)*, granted by the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards, also qualify as automatically meeting the doctoral degree requirements. Applicants who hold a doctoral degree in psychology and have subsequently earned certification as having completed the requirements of a formal, doctoral level professional program that
meets the APA accreditation requirements in clinical, counseling, or school psychology (i.e., re-education, often referred to as respecialization). Or, the applicant qualifies for an individualized exception review based on a doctoral degree granted prior to 1983, or a degree granted outside the U.S. or Canada, or for applicants claiming equivalent doctoral degree and program requirements. Such exceptions are coordinated through the ABPP Executive Office and the appropriate specialty board.

- Licensing as a psychologist - All ABPP candidates in the U.S., its territories, or Canada must hold a valid active license for independent practice as a psychologist at the doctoral level in a jurisdiction of the U.S., its territories, or Canada.
  - Limited exceptions exist for those receiving their doctoral degrees prior to 1983, or with degrees granted outside the U.S. or Canada, or with formal retraining or substantial equivalents to accreditation requirements, or who hold licensure in jurisdictions of practice for some Federal employees. [Exception criteria and procedures are available from the ABPP central office.]

Specialty Specific Eligibility Requirements

Applicants for certification in Couple and Family Psychology (CFP) may apply through one of three tracks. Each applicant is evaluated according to the requirements of the category in which she or he applies by a Specialty Evaluation Committee comprised of no less than three psychologists who are board certified in CFP; any variance from the requirements will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Specialty Evaluation Committee.

**Track 3: Senior Couple and Family Psychologist Eligibility**

Senior eligibility recognizes the accomplishments and contributions of those who have worked in the field of couple and family psychology for a minimum of 15 years after receiving their doctoral degree. Post doctoral residencies count toward this 15 year total.

In order to qualify for application under the senior track, every senior candidate must demonstrate having a professional identity as a couple and family psychologist, in addition to meeting the generic qualifications required by ABPP. Candidates may demonstrate professional identity in the specialty by submitting a concise summary of evidence, using the illustrative examples provided below as guidance for the type of evidence desired.

**Evidence of Professional Identity** as a couple and family psychologist: (for example)

- Conceptual competency in systemic epistemology (ability to use systems theory to inform CFP)
- Fellow status in the APA Society for Family Psychology
- Completion of an education or training program in CFP
- Supervised experience in CFP
- Continuing education in CFP
• Membership and service in a CFP organization
• Presentations on CFP at professional conferences
• Documented systematic and sustained engagement in social policy, programs, and legislation on behalf of CFP

The senior track is reserved for psychologists who have made substantial, recognized contributions to the field and demonstrated competence in CFP. If the applicant is deemed not to meet all requirements for senior track eligibility, he/she will be advised to seek certification via Track II.

Passing Stage I (Achieving candidacy)

Upon favorable review and verification of the candidate’s credentials by the Specialty Evaluation Committee, the ABPP central office will notify the candidate of acceptance (or rejection). Favorable review means the candidate moves on to Stage II, at which point the ABPP office will provide the candidate with the name and contact information of the CFP examination coordinator. The examination coordinator will initiate contact with the candidate to continue into Stage II.

Mentors are available to help candidates advance through the transition from Stage I to Stage II, including the development of the practice sample. The examination coordinator will facilitate contact with the chair of the Academy mentoring committee.

Steps in moving from Stage I to Stage II:
1. After passing stage 1, the ABPP central office will notify the candidate and provide contact information for the CFP examination coordinator.
2. The examination coordinator contacts the candidate.
3. The examination coordinator connects the candidate with the mentoring coordinator from the Academy.
4. The candidate submits his or her work sample and fee to the ABPP central office. The ABPP central office will forward the work sample to the examination committee chair.
5. The examination coordinator reviews the work sample with the work sample review committee.
6. The examination coordinator appoints an examination committee chair.

Stage II: The Practice Sample

The practice samples and the related professional statement represent the initial part of the examination process. The practice samples provide the candidate with the opportunity to present samples of her or his practice in the specialty in support of candidacy together with a professional statement which puts the samples in context and tells the committee more about the candidate’s philosophy of practice. Requirements vary depending on whether the candidate is applying based on the doctoral preparation (Track 1), post-
doctoral preparation (Track 2), or senior eligibility criteria (Track 3). Details for each track follow.

Overview of Steps in Stage II:

1. The candidate submits her or his work sample to the ABPP central office.
2. The work sample is received by the coordinator from the ABPP central office.
3. The coordinator convenes the work sample review committee who evaluate the practice sample for adequacy and completeness.
4. If additional information is required from the candidate, the coordinator may request this information and the candidate will have a maximum of 90 days to supply this information.
5. If the materials are determined to pass Stage II, the coordinator contacts the ABPP Central Office to let them know that the candidate has passed Stage II and is ready to move to Stage III.
6. The examination coordinator appoints an examination committee chair.
7. The examination coordinator coordinates an exam date with the candidate and the examination committee.
8. If the practice sample is not approved, the Stage II process is terminated, and the coordinator returns the materials indicating verbally and in writing the specific ways that the materials do not meet the criteria, and informing the candidate that he or she may reapply in six months (paying a new Stage II fee for evaluation of a new sample). Candidates in this circumstance will have the opportunity to request assignment of a mentor to assist them in preparing a more acceptable practice sample.

Senior (Track 3) Work Sample

Candidates for the senior track submit the following in electronic format for Stage II:

- An updated curriculum vitae
- A professional statement of one’s philosophy of couple and family psychology (see below)
- An essay that presents a strong case demonstrating competence in couple and family psychology and copies of supporting materials (see below; any questions about the suitability of supporting materials may be resolved with the exam coordinator). The board has adopted the competency framework presented in Stanton & Welsh (2011), Specialty competencies in couple and family psychology, Oxford University Press for the examination process. Other literature may extend the material provided in the book and reflect on-going research and clinical practice innovations. Candidates are encouraged to review recent issues of specialty journals (e.g., Journal of Family Psychology; Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice) in preparation for the exam.
Specific instructions for completing the professional statement

1. Tell the committee about the professional work you are engaged in at this time and how it relates to the specialty. Focus on your current employment and professional activities at the local, state, and national level; continuing professional education activities; long term plans in psychology; and reasons for seeking board certification.

2. Describe your professional theoretical framework and how researchers and theorists in the field have influenced you. If you call yourself eclectic or integrative, describe at least three major themes in your eclecticism or integrative model. Address ways in which your theoretical model informs your attitude toward individual and cultural diversity considerations as these affect your assessment, intervention, consultation, and/or supervision/teaching/management activities.

3. Describe a challenging ethical dilemma encountered in your work as a CFP. Address how relevant aspects of the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct informed your thinking and how you handled the dilemma. If applicable, address any diversity considerations that arose in resolving this dilemma.

4. Verify that no ethical/legal disciplinary action has taken place since your admission to candidacy. You may attach a one line signed statement, specifying that no disciplinary action has been taken.

Specific instructions for completing the competency essay

In this part of the work sample, senior candidates must present a strong case demonstrating their competence in couple and family psychology, using examples or descriptions, such as the illustrative examples listed below. The applicant should provide a brief summary of evidence for specific competencies, naming the competency and citing evidence demonstrating their level of proficiency or excellence. The senior candidate must demonstrate excellence in two and proficiency in one of the competencies below by providing a narrative and materials that support those levels of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for the specified competence. Please note that we intend the examples provided as illustrative only; the applicant may exhibit these or other behavior or outcomes to demonstrate competence. Actual copies of materials or publications and other supporting evidence will form part of the work sample, after admission to candidacy.

Evidence of Scientific competence in couple and family psychology:
- Articles published on couple and family psychology topics in professional refereed journals;
- Books on couple and family psychology subjects published by scholarly publishers (i.e., not self-published or published by a vanity press)
- Service on relevant professional journal editorial boards
- Service as a journal editor of a relevant peer-reviewed professional journal
- Presentations on couple and family psychology at professional conferences
- Chairing theses or dissertations in couple and family psychology
- Other evidence of application of current research to clinical practice
Evidence of Assessment and Intervention competence in couple and family psychology:
- Completion of coursework or continuing education in couple and family assessment or intervention
- Publications or presentations on couple and family assessment or intervention
- Supervision or consultation on couple and family assessment or intervention
- Qualified use of couple and family assessment instruments or application of general psychometric instruments to clinical assessment with couples, families, or larger systems
- Description of the systematic evaluation of individual clients in their relational context
- Systematic treatment plan development
- Knowledge and use of couple and family evidence-based interventions
- Knowledge and use of common factors in couple and family interventions

Evidence of Teaching competence in couple and family psychology:
- Completion of coursework or continuing education in teaching
- Teaching classes in couple and family psychology (high school, undergraduate, or graduate)
- Presenting workshops in couple and family psychology
- Delivering seminars in couple and family psychology
- Conducting psychoeducation in organizations
- Presenting on couple and family psychology at professional conferences
- Authoring articles, book chapters, or books on teaching or education in couple and family psychology

Evidence of Supervision competence in couple and family psychology:
- Completion of coursework or continuing education in couple and family supervision
- Publications or presentations on couple and family supervision
- Conducting couple and family clinical case consultations
- Supervision of graduate students or unlicensed individuals
- Consultation with independent practitioners
- Supervisee or consultee evaluations of supervision or consultation
- Supervision of supervision of couple and family assessment or intervention
- Service as an administrator of a couple and family oriented program, agency, clinic, health care center, or hospital program
- Presentations on supervision of couple and family psychology at professional conferences

Evidence of Consultation competence in couple and family psychology:
- Completion of coursework or continuing education in couple and family consultation
- Supervised experience in systemic consultation
- Publications or presentations on systemic consultation
- Conducting consultations in organizations or family businesses
- Demonstrated ability to conduct needs assessment using appropriate methodologies
- Consultation reports (needs assessment, recommendations, intervention outcomes)
Note: Assessment of the foundational competencies, such as those addressing ethical and legal, diversity, and interpersonal interaction competency will occur during Stage III, the oral examination of the senior candidate.

Passing Stage II (Work samples for Tracks 1, 2, and 3)

1. If the materials are determined to pass Stage II, the coordinator contacts the ABPP Central Office to let them know that the candidate has passed Stage II and is ready to move to Stage III.
2. The examination coordinator appoints an examination committee chair.
3. The examination coordinator coordinates an exam date with the candidate and the examination committee.
4. If the practice sample is not approved, the Stage II process is terminated, and the coordinator returns the materials indicating verbally and in writing the specific ways that the materials do not meet the criteria, and informing the candidate that he or she may reapply in six months (paying a new Stage II fee for evaluation of a new sample). Candidates in this circumstance will have the opportunity to request assignment of a mentor to assist them in preparing a more acceptable practice sample.