

# ABPsa Newsletter

Special Edition:

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## Inclusive, Research-based Update of Core Competencies at the Heart of Board Certification in Psychoanalysis

### What constitutes competent psychoanalytic work?

#### Agreement Across Theoretical Orientations, Ethnicity, Age and Gender

The answer to the question: “What constitutes a competent psychoanalyst?” is enduring and viewed similarly by a wide swath of analysts who participated in the research process. That’s over one hundred analysts, who, during thoughtful conversations, were aligned in their perspectives about essential psychoanalytic competencies.

The research results were counter to the predictions of a number of the focus group participants themselves, who anecdotally mentioned that they thought analysts from different theoretical orientations would have differing points of view as to the key attributes of a competent analytic work.

The multi-year research initiative, a descriptive, qualitative study, looked at what psychoanalysts believe constitutes competent psychoanalytic work today. Begun in 2017, the targeted focus group-oriented research project culminated in the Spring of 2022, when the data analysis process began and the research results were developed into an examination tool. The process is summarized on the other side.

Are there changes and updates to the core competencies list? Yes. A comparison between the existing and updated competencies appears below. Highlights of the changes begin below and continue on the other side.

Current and prior ABPsa Certification Examiners, who have reviewed the new competencies list from the examiners’ perspective, are confident that the updated list and new format will enhance the fair and meaningful discussions of clinical work central to the examination process.

The comprehensive list will be available at [www.abpsa.org](http://www.abpsa.org) on February 7th.

The core competencies are used by the ABPsa Certification Examiners to consistently assess the competency of analysts sitting for the Board Certification in Psychoanalysis exam.

Note: The updated competencies take effect for Board Certification in Psychoanalysis examinations in February, 2025.

### Highlights: Key Updates to the Core Competencies

Changing the Emphasis, Increasing Clarity, Filling in Gaps

It is intended that the competencies be presented absent deeply technical language specific to a single theoretical model while retaining their uniquely psychoanalytic qualities. The language was reviewed by groups with multiple theoretical orientations.

#### EVOLUTION OF THE CORE COMPETENCIES

EXISTING CORE COMPETENCIES	UPDATED CORE COMPETENCIES
<div>1. Assessment and Diagnostic Skills.</div> <div>2. Conceptualization and Formulation.</div> <div>3. Psychoanalytic Attitude and Attunement.</div> <div>4. Technique</div> <div>5. Transference</div> <div>6. Resistance</div> <div>7. Role of the Analyst</div> <div>8. Psychoanalytic Progress and Process</div> <div>9. Ending of the Analysis</div> <div>10. Ethical Considerations</div> <div>11. Race and Ethnicity</div> <div>12. The Role of Sexuality and Gender</div> <div>13. Overall Competence of Analyst</div>	<div>Category I – How Analyst Approaches Psychoanalysis</div> <div>1. Analytic Mind and Attitude (3,7)**</div> <div>Category II – Knowledge</div> <div>2. Theory and Application of Psychoanalytic Knowledge**</div> <div>Category III - Assessment</div> <div>3. Diagnosis, Assessment, and Formulation (1,2)</div> <div>Category IV – Elements of Psychoanalytic Treatment (4)</div> <div>4. Ethics (10)</div> <div>5. Frame</div> <div>6. Focus on Unconscious</div> <div>7. Affect Tolerance and Management</div> <div>8. Attunement &amp; Development of Complex Relationship (3,7)</div> <div>9. Deepening Treatment &amp; Analytic Process (8,6)</div> <div>10. Transference (5)</div> <div>11. Countertransference (7)</div> <div>12. Enactments</div> <div>13. Termination (9)</div> <div>Category V – Overall Consistency</div> <div>14. Consistency and Coherence (13)</div> <div>Category VI – For Child Applicants Only</div> <div>15. Child &amp; Adolescent Specific Competencies</div> <div>** ALL NEW competency categories, though they may have been subsumed or addressed under other categories in pre-existing list.</div> <div>** Pre-existing competencies identified either by name or number in blue</div> <div>All items have diversity competencies from pre-existing competencies integrated, and can be seen in the detailed version</div>



# Highlights: Key Updates to the Core Competencies

## Continued from Previous Page

Taking the lead from the research data, changes and additions to the list were made to help the examiners and applicants by:

- Categorizing the competencies into four sections of thematically linked items:
  - Category I: What the analyst brings to the situation (an analytic attitude, mind, or stance)
  - Category II: What knowledge is required
  - Category III: Assessment
  - Category IV: What the analyst does
  - Category V covers the broader question of the analyst’s capacity to work analytically, consistently across cases, with coherence of thought and practice
  - Category VI introduces Child and Adolescent Analytic Competencies.
- Incorporating components reflecting the capacity to work with Diversity (previous 11 & 12) into each competency domain. It should also be noted that while issues of diversity were in the forefront for the groups specifically gathered for their special interests in that area, awareness of sociocultural issues as well as race, ethnicity, sexuality and gender were articulated by analysts in all of the focus groups.
- New competency domains: Attunement & Development of Complex Relationship, Affect, Countertransference, Enactment, Frame, Knowledge, and a Focus on Unconscious
- Prior items including Resistance, Technique, Assessment and Conceptualization were combined into the new domains.

### Child and Adolescent Competencies– A Much Needed Addition

What additional skills are required primarily or only of Child and Adolescent analysts? The Competencies Initiative addressed this question. As a result, a list of core competencies specific to child and adolescent analysis has been developed. Per the adjacent research process summary, the Child and Adolescent Competencies received an additional level of review by the child analysis focus group participants and other child analysts.

# Thank You

This is a monumental "thank you" moment. The entire board of the ABPsa extends its heartfelt gratitude to each of you: the research participants, funders, and data analysts who made the Competencies Initiative possible. You played a pivotal role in producing an updated set of core competencies that reflect psychoanalysis as it is practiced today. Your commitment to the project has been nothing short of extraordinary, and the success of this research is a testament to your passion and expertise. Thank you so very much for your time, energy, and enthusiasm. You are the backbone of this endeavor.

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# Competencies Initiative Research Process Summary

01

## Preliminary Information Gathering:

- Several profession-wide open forums were held to obtain feedback about the previously existing competencies
- A literature review
- Competencies lists from other sources were explored
- Consultations with accrediting agencies and researchers provided information about competencies development methodologies

02

## Development of Focus Group Questions & Trial Groups:

- Online interactive platform (approx. 50 analysts) to begin data collections and develop questions
- Trial in-person focus groups with Subject Matter Experts to fine-tune the process

03

## The 12 Focus Groups encompassing:

- Multiple theoretical orientations, e.g., Relational, Kleinian,...
- Varied training settings, e.g., Austen Riggs, Int’l. Institute for Psychoanalytic Training,...
- Special interests and demographics, e.g., Early career, child analysts, diversity,...

04

## Data Analysis

- Recordings reviewed and transcribed by research assistants blind to the purpose of the project
- Thematic analysis of the transcripts
- Categorization

05

## Converting the Research into an Examination Tool

- Comparisons of existing and “new” competencies lists
- Special review of the Child Focus Group results and follow-up with participants and other child analysts to refine the child competencies list
- Interviews with experts in theory and special topics for fine-tuning the new competencies
- Consultations with Board Certification Examiners to address user experience
- Final reviews with Competencies Initiative Committee and the ABPsa Board