

Integrating Public Health Core Values Into Psychology Training Competencies

Zabin S. Patel, Kaitlyn E. Brodar, Emily Hylton, Tiffany R. Glynn, and Sannisha K. Dale
University of Miami

Introduction: Current APA psychology training competencies

To address the significant public mental health burden which disproportionately affects marginalized communities, psychology training programs—particularly those oriented toward clinical science—need to shift from a disorder management approach to one of public health promotion (Berenbaum et al., 2020).

The APA training competencies have been critiqued (Rodolfa & Schaffer, 2019) as being approached primarily from an interpersonal instead of an ecological perspective, which limits the scalability of psychological science and practice.

Aims:

1. We review APA psychology training competencies and shortcomings.
2. Introduce the Public Health Code of Ethics.
3. Reimagine the APA SoA to include 6 core public health values.

Professionalism and Trust

Training programs must focus on building community trust in the implementation of psychological services in 2 ways:

1. Help trainees understand ways in which community trust has been abused by clinical science nationally and locally via case studies.
2. Facilitate ways trainees can become better integrated into the community they serve to continue building and maintaining trust beyond direct clinical care.

“Meeting population mental health care needs will require training in health service psychology to move beyond individual treatment and toward population-level health strategies.”

Health and Safety

- Trainees should receive greater exposure to harm-reduction strategies to manage risk behaviors.
- Training programs should encourage trainees to utilize user-centered design principles that can be leveraged to co-create and adapt treatment materials with community practitioners.

Health Justice and Equity

- Psychologists should broaden their toolbox to include public policy as a psychological intervention.
- Trainees would benefit greatly from exposure to other professionals who work on similar issues from different perspectives.

Interdependence and Solidarity

- Trainees should also be informed about the potential benefits of population-level interventions and social determinants of health.

Human Rights and Civil Liberties

- Ethical considerations should include violations of human rights and civil liberties.
- Trainees should assess and address power, privilege, and oppression of clients, research participants, and communities.

Inclusivity and Engagement

- Psychology training should prioritize inclusive and reciprocal engagement with communities and strive for community capacity building.

References

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2. Rodolfa, E., & Schaffer, J. (2019). Challenges to psychology education and training in the culture of competence. *American Psychologist*, 74(9), 1118–1128. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000513>

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