

Credentialing

School Psychology Credentialing Fact Sheet

School psychologists apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. They partner with families, educators, and other helping professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments for all students.

The Every Student Succeeds Act explicitly recognizes school psychologists as “specialized instructional support personnel,” and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recommends a ratio of [one credentialed school psychologist for every 500–700 students](#). Striving to attain this ratio for fully credentialed school psychologists helps schools ensure adequate access to high-quality services and supports to foster students’ ability to learn and teachers’ ability to teach.

IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY CREDENTIALING

Credentialing for school psychologists (i.e., licensure or certification) is the process whereby a state authorizes individuals to (a) use the title “school psychologist” and (b) provide school psychological services. A state’s credentialing authority should require all providers of school psychological services and all users of the title “school psychologist” to hold a current and active school psychology credential.

School psychology certification or licensure is granted to individuals meeting established standards of graduate preparation experiences. NASP maintains a unified and integrated set of national principles and standards that guide professional practices, credentialing, graduate preparation, and ethical behavior of effective school psychologists.

Adhering to established standards ensures consistency in the qualifications of school psychologists, thereby protecting the public and ensuring access to effective services for children and youth.

GRADUATE PREPARATION AND CREDENTIALING

The [Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists](#) identify critical graduate education competencies and experiences needed by candidates preparing for careers as school psychologists. These preparation requirements also inform the criteria for initial certification or licensure, as

Appropriate graduate preparation and credentialing of school psychologists is critical to ensuring quality, effective delivery of school psychological services.

defined in the NASP [Standards for the Credentialing of School Psychologists](#). The credentialing standards serve as a model for state education and other state or local agencies that regulate school psychologists’ title and practice, with recommended criteria for both initial credentialing and renewal. The standards also define the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential.

NASP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY CREDENTIALING

- *Degree:* The specialist-level degree in school psychology represents the minimum degree. The specialist-degree (e.g., EdS, SSP, CAS, PsyS, Masters 60 hrs.)¹ is defined as:
 - an integrated and sequential course of study consisting of at least 60 graduate semester hours or the equivalent, with 54 exclusive of credit for the supervised internship;
 - completion of a sequence of supervised experiences that occurred prior to and exclusive of the internship is required; and
 - supervised internship experience, taken for academic credit, with a minimum of 1,200 clock hours, including a minimum of 600 hours in the school setting.
- *Exam:* Obtain a passing score on the national Praxis exam specific to school psychological practices.
- *Title:* The credential should authorize use of the title “school psychologist.”
- *Practice:* Provide comprehensive and integrated services across 10 domains of school psychology, as highlighted in the NASP [Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services](#) and the NASP [Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists](#).
- *Renewal:* All those holding a credential should participate in ongoing professional growth and continuing professional development, with a minimum of 75 hours of continuing professional development every 3 years.

NATIONALLY CERTIFIED SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST (NCSP) CREDENTIAL

The recommended requirements also describe the eligibility criteria for the NCSP credential. The NCSP is administered by National School Psychology Certification Board (NSPCB; established by NASP). The NCSP represents a national credential for school psychologists based upon recognized standards for advanced preparation, performance-based assessment of competency, and demonstration of positive outcomes for consumers of school psychological services.

Currently, the majority of state education agencies acknowledge or recognize the NCSP credential as contributing toward the credentialing of school psychologists. The NCSP should not by itself supplant a state’s authority to implement equivalent credentialing processes for school psychologists, though the NCSP can help promote uniform credentialing standards across states, agencies, and graduate institutions. The NCSP credential can also serve as a determinant for employment benefits (such as an annual stipend) consistent with “highly qualified” designations for other public school personnel.

PATHWAYS TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY CREDENTIALS

School psychologists must obtain certification or licensure through the state in which they intend to practice, with few exceptions. States sometimes may have different pathways, and often multiple concurrent pathways, which may include:

¹ See www.nasponline.org for an overview of differences between master’s, specialist-level, and doctoral-level degree programs in school psychology.

- requiring a specialist-level degree (as a minimum) in school psychology by completing a NASP-approved or NASP-accredited school psychology program;
- holding a degree in school psychology from a nonaccredited program;
- holding the NCSP credential;
- previously completing a graduate degree in a related field (e.g., clinical psychology, school counseling) followed by courses and field experiences to help prepare for effective school psychological practice.

A state may include any—or all—of the above possible pathways towards certification or licensure, though completion of a NASP-approved or accredited program improves the ease and portability of a school psychology credential. Regardless of the pathway, NASP maintains the importance of holding all school psychologists to a consistent set of standards and requirements, aligned with the NASP *Standards for the Credentialing of School Psychologists* to protect the public and preserve high-quality service delivery.

RIGOROUS CREDENTIALING PROMOTES EFFECTIVE SERVICES

By applying the national standards toward credentialing, employers can ensure that all children, youth, families, and schools have access to effective and high-quality school psychological services. Additionally, adhering to the standards provides confidence that all school psychologists possess knowledge and skills in their abilities to:

- conduct effective decision making using a foundation of assessment and data collection;
- engage in consultation and collaboration with families, educators, and other professionals to create supportive learning and social environments for all children;
- provide direct and indirect interventions and instructional support that focus on developing academic skills;
- provide direct and indirect interventions and mental health services to develop social and life skills;
- provide services to schools and families that enhance the competence and well-being of children, including promotion of effective and safe learning environments, prevention of academic and behavior problems, response to crises, and improvement of family–school collaboration; and
- understand diversity in development and learning; research and program evaluation; and legal, ethical, and professional practice.

Contact cert@naspweb.org with questions or for additional information.

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Please cite this document as:

National Association of School Psychologists. (2019). *School Psychology Credentialing Fact Sheet* [handout]. Bethesda, MD: Author.