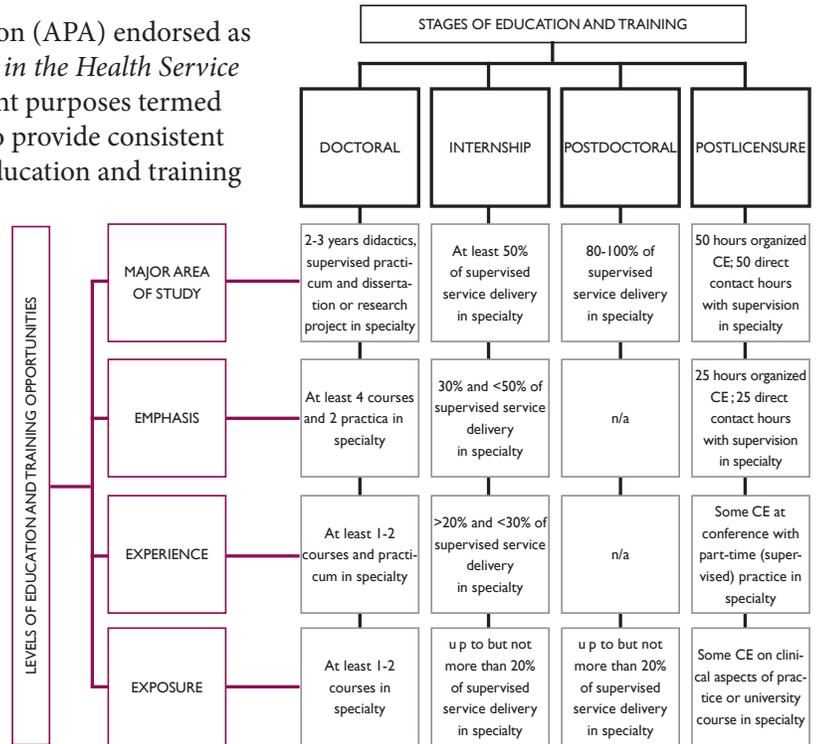**What is the Taxonomy for Health Service Specialties?**

In 2012, the American Psychological Association (APA) endorsed as policy *A Taxonomy for Education and Training in the Health Service Specialties in Professional Psychology* (for current purposes termed **The Taxonomy**). The Taxonomy is designed to provide consistent descriptions of specific program offerings in education and training programs in health service psychology. The need for such consistency developed from observations that training programs used numerous labels to describe very different program offerings. Such labels (referred to inconsistently as track, concentration, emphasis, subspecialty, special strengths, area of specialization, certification, or area of emphasis, to name a few) have described a grouping of offerings in a specialty. Inconsistent labels are confusing to the profession and the public, especially to students seeking to evaluate doctoral program offerings beyond the program's declared specialty.

STAGES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING			
DOCTORAL	**INTERNSHIP**	**POSTDOCTORAL**	**POSTLICENSURE**
MAJOR AREA OF STUDY — 2-3 years didactics, supervised practicum and dissertation or research project in specialty	At least 50% of supervised service delivery in specialty	80-100% of supervised service delivery in specialty	50 hours organized CE; 50 direct contact hours with supervision in specialty
EMPHASIS — At least 4 courses and 2 practica in specialty	30% and <50% of supervised service delivery in specialty	n/a	25 hours organized CE; 25 direct contact hours with supervision in specialty
EXPERIENCE — At least 1-2 courses and practicum in specialty	>20% and <30% of supervised service delivery in specialty	n/a	Some CE at conference with part-time (supervised) practice in specialty
EXPOSURE — At least 1-2 courses in specialty	up to but not more than 20% of supervised service delivery in specialty	up to but not more than 20% of supervised service delivery in specialty	Some CE on clinical aspects of practice or university course in specialty

LEVELS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Why implement it?

APA-accredited doctoral programs must provide general training in the core of professional psychology, regardless of their specialty label. The Taxonomy recommends these specific labels for specialty areas: *Major Area of Study, Emphasis, Experience, and Exposure* to describe the amount of training offered in a specialty content area. For example, a doctoral program *Major Area of Study* could be 2-3 years of didactics, supervised practicum, and dissertation or research project in the specialty; an *Emphasis* may be represented by at least 4 courses and 2 practica in the specialty; an *Experience* would be 1-2 courses and practica in a specialty; and an *Exposure* could be at least 1-2 courses in a specialty. In addition to the specialty labels, a *Focus* could be an offering in an area that is not a recognized specialty in psychology (e.g., multiculturalism, neuroscience, assessment, PTSD, trauma, diabetes, autism, addiction), and can be as specific as a certain number of courses or as broad as a topic that is integrated across the program (e.g., social justice).

How can it be useful?

The Taxonomy is particularly beneficial for students and also creates added value for programs by allowing them to differentiate themselves from other programs. For one, it standardizes the programs available for potential students, thus making it easier for students to be informed consumers and choose a program more likely to aid them in reaching their personal and professional goals. In addition, outlining clear expectations for advancement in a particular area of study will aid students with career planning and specialization in the current workplace environment where the roles of psychologists are continually evolving. Lastly, this system ensures standards for consistency at all levels of training which protects consumers of mental healthcare and applied psychology services.

What is an example for our marketing materials?

The website description of a fictitious doctoral program could read: "In our APA accredited doctoral program at Our University, we offer a *Major Area of Study* in Clinical Psychology with at least three years of didactic coursework and supervised clinical training in that *Major Area of Study* which includes a dissertation or research project. We offer students an *Exposure* to Clinical Neuropsychology with one course in that area and an *Experience* in Child Clinical Psychology with two courses and two semesters of supervised practicum in that area. We offer a *Focus* in personality assessment as part of our advanced practicum wherein an advanced assessment course and two additional practica semesters are available" (Rozensky, Grus, Nutt, Carlson, Eisman, & Nelson, 2015, p.30).