

Research Assessment 9: Court Requirements for Forensic Psychiatrists

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Sources:

1. "General Requirements." American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 Jan. 2017.
2. Forensic Expert Qualifications. Working paper. N.p.: Collin County Courthouse, 2017. Print.

Analysis:

Though I learned about the basic requirements needed to become a forensic psychiatrist last year, there are many other requirements Courts have that I was unaware of. Fortunately for me, during a MHMC attorney training session that my mentor was leading, I came across many of them. Knowing what I need to do and have besides the typical medical degree, residency, fellowship, and licensure will be beneficial because I can now better prepare for the future. Here is what the Collin County Courthouse requires from forensic psychiatrists in order for them to be eligible to be an expert witness.

Currently, Collin County requires that the forensic psychiatrist is a physician licensed in the State of Texas. The expert witness also needs to have a certification from the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology with special qualifications in forensic psychiatry. According to the ABPN, "board-certified psychiatrist has

specialized skills and knowledge to diagnose and treat problems ranging from emergencies to the long-term medical management of psychiatric disorders" (ABPN, 2017). To get this certification, a psychiatrist must go through an exam issued by the ABPN. However, before even taking the test, the psychiatrist must qualify to sit for an examination. The following are the requirements of the ABPN (ABPN, 2017):

1. Must be a graduate of an accredited medical school in the United States or Canada or of an international medical school listed by the World Health Organization.
2. Complete all training in either a U.S. program accredited by the ACGME or approved by the ABPN or in a Canadian program accredited by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada as well as meet the other requirements specified in the reciprocity agreement.
3. Have an active, full, unrestricted medical license* in the U.S. or Canada as defined in the separate Board Policies Manual on this website. Applicants are required to submit copies of their active, full, unrestricted medical licenses, showing the expiration date with their applications OR update their medical licenses in their ABPN Physician Folios account.
4. Have satisfactorily completed the Board's specialized training requirements described on this website.

5. Apply online and submit an application through ABPN Physician Folios. Required documents should be mailed or faxed.

Education and training wise, the county requires that a psychiatrist have at least twenty four hours of specialized forensic training related to incompetency or insanity evaluations. Additionally, an expert must have completed six hours of required continuing education in course on forensic psychiatry, in the twenty four months preceding the appointment. Furthermore, they must have eight or more hours of continuing education relating to forensic evaluations. These eight hours must be completed in the twelve months preceding the appointment and documented with the court.

When looking at the experience an expert forensic psychiatrist needs, the expert must have at least six years of experience in performing criminal forensic evaluations for the courts. Interestingly enough, before 2005, experts the minimum amount of experience needed was five years opposed to the current six.

While all of this is beneficial to know about, there was one concern and question I had after learning about the requirements. How does a psychiatrist gain six years of experience performing criminal forensic evaluations for courts if they need experience to do exactly that? How can they get the experience if no one will hire

them until they get it? These are questions I have that I intend on asking my mentor at my next mentor visit at the Collin County Courthouse.