

PROFESSIONAL ISSUES



Biofeedback Certification Institute of America Plans for the Future With You in Mind

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Biofeedback use is growing through home trainers and media attention, yet many practitioners continue to struggle for reimbursement. The Biofeedback Certification Institute of America is engaging in strategic planning, including a survey of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, in order to better address current trends in health care and society. The certificant database also is being expanded, with additional demographic and practice information, to aid consumers in choosing the most suitable professional.

This is a challenging decade for biofeedback. Although professionals struggle for reimbursement, biofeedback has become mainstream through games like “Journey to the Wild Divine” and portable biofeedback devices like the emWave, RESPeRATE, and the StressEraser. The media has rediscovered biofeedback and consumers learn weekly about promising new biofeedback applications. The public seeks better treatment options but fears disappointment, because previous modalities did not live up to their promise and often inflicted side effects that were worse than the original symptoms. The zeitgeist of taking better care of one’s own health has fueled the growth of the vitamin and supplement, exercise, and health food industries. Biofeedback can and should be part of this growing consumer movement. In this period of rapid change, the Biofeedback Certification Institute of America’s (BCIA) mission of setting standards for professional education and clinical care has become more important than ever.

You have all heard the line: “You can’t know where you’re going until you know where you’ve been.” BCIA has taken this to heart and has gone one step further: “You can’t plan where you’re going until you know *who* you are.” BCIA has

undertaken a strategic planning process to learn more about our stakeholders, to educate the public, and to market the BCIA credential.

We began our strategic planning process with two initiatives, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) survey and an expansion of the BCIA certificant database. A SWOT survey can help an organization narrow its goals and focus its energy. It is a “big picture” analysis of where we are and where we want to go. The SWOT survey was sent to all members of the two premier membership organizations, the Association for Applied Psychophysiology & Biofeedback (AAPB) and the International Society for Neurofeedback and Research (ISNR), and to our own BCIA certificants. This survey was open-ended, asking participants for their valuable opinions regarding BCIA’s mission statement, the present and future of BCIA, and factors that might positively and negatively impact our organization.

The expanded certificant database will help us better understand who our certificants are, how they view their BCIA credential, and their challenges as biofeedback professionals. Certificants will enter the BCIA database through our Web site and provide detailed demographic and opinion data. With each 4-year recertification, certificants will update their information. This will help us to identify trends within our certificant pool and the field of biofeedback. We will use this information to better understand the needs of our stakeholders to help guide our future planning and growth. In addition, expanded professional information about our certificants will enhance each certificant’s listing on our Web site. Questions like “What is your profession?” and “Which disorders do you treat?” will enable prospective clients and referring professionals to learn more about each certificant’s

background and practice. We hear daily from prospective clients who have difficulty navigating through a maze of credentials and who are not sure how to select a provider. By listing more complete information about our certificants, we should increase the confidence of those seeking treatment that they will find a BCIA-certified therapist who can help them.

We hope that the SWOT survey and the expanded certificant database will help us accomplish the following goals:

- Establish a baseline for BCIA: How are we perceived? What does the field and our own certificants think about the credential? With a starting point established, we can chart our progress.
- Expand the demographic information on the Web site that is available to the public so they will have more useful information for choosing the most appropriate certified biofeedback provider.
- Identify and analyze trends within the field: Who is doing biofeedback? Which modalities are they using most often? How well are biofeedback providers being reimbursed by insurance companies?
- Develop strategies for future planning: Which factors might support or threaten the field of biofeedback and BCIA? What is positive about BCIA? How can BCIA do a better job?

- Develop a marketing strategy: With a better understanding of exactly who we are and how we are perceived, we will be able to plan more effectively how to market the BCIA credential and to enhance the credibility of our certificants.

Both the SWOT survey and expanded certificant database are designed to help BCIA clarify its mission and better serve its stakeholders in a decade of rapid change. With this information, BCIA hopes to promote its own growth and the growth of the field of biofeedback. As Bob Dylan wrote, "He not busy being born, is busy dying." We will publish our findings in a follow-up article so that all of our stakeholders can utilize this information in their planning. We are a community facing common challenges.



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