

PROFESSIONAL ISSUES



Education: BCIA's Core

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Keywords: accreditation, certification, continuing education

The mission of the Biofeedback Certification International Alliance (BCIA) is to certify applicants who demonstrate entry-level knowledge and to progressively recertify them progressively as they expand their knowledge base and skill set through continuing education. BCIA requires accredited coursework to ensure the credibility of its credentials within the insurance and medical communities. Accreditation is provided by regional accrediting bodies, professional organizations, licensing boards, and BCIA itself. BCIA has developed flexible and inexpensive options for earning continuing education to better serve its North American and international audience.

The most important phrase in the Biofeedback Certification International Alliance's (BCIA's) language is "standards of education," and education is the core of BCIA's mission:

BCIA certifies individuals who meet education and training standards in biofeedback and progressively recertifies those who advance their knowledge through continuing education.

BCIA has constructed certification programs in biofeedback, neurofeedback, and pelvic muscle dysfunction based on Blueprint of Knowledge statements that outline the fundamental science, history, and theory of each specialty area. BCIA regularly revises these blueprints to keep pace with scientific advances, expanding evidence of efficacy, and the evolution of best practice.

BCIA can add modalities and applications to its blueprints only when efficacy has been scientifically established. LaVaque and colleagues' (2002) "Template for Developing Guidelines for the Evaluation of the Clinical Efficacy of Psychophysiological Evaluations" provides an invaluable framework for evaluating biofeedback and neurofeedback interventions. Yucha and Montgomery's

(2008) *Evidence-Based Practice in Biofeedback and Neurofeedback* rates important clinical applications using these evaluation criteria.

Further, BCIA blueprints must be free of commercial bias and parochial perspectives to ensure objectivity.

Whereas didactic training programs teach entry-level information, continuing education through teleseminars and workshops can provide intermediate and advanced content to help certificants develop their expertise.

Continuing Education

Experienced biofeedback and neurofeedback professionals recognize that the completion of a basic didactic course is only the beginning of their educational journey. BCIA certificants are committed to lifelong learning and eagerly seek continuing education opportunities. Continuing education enables certificants to expand their knowledge base and skill set so that they can add new clinical or performance applications to their practice.

For professionals who have earned the Board Certified in Biofeedback (BCB) or Board Certified in Neurofeedback (BCN) designation, BCIA requires documentation of 55 hours of accredited continuing education that include 3 hours of ethics or professional standards topics across the next 4-year period to maintain their certification. For those who have achieved the Board Certified in Biofeedback Pelvic Muscle Dysfunction Biofeedback (BCB-PMDB) designation, BCIA requires 36 hours that include the 3 hours of ethics or professional standards across the next 3-year period to maintain their certification. Licensed professionals in many states are required to complete continuing education to maintain their license, and coursework in ethics or professional standards may be part of those requirements.

BCIA rewards the many years of work and study in the field by those who have reached the Senior Fellow status by reducing their continuing education requirement to 30 hours, while still requiring those 3 hours of ethics courses.

Accreditation

BCIA requires accredited continuing education to ensure the academic rigor that the health care community demands. Accreditation means that an outside entity has reviewed the speaker's expertise specific to the topic, the listed educational goals, and the material to be presented to ensure that prescribed standards are met. BCIA accepts coursework offered by a regionally accredited academic institution, a national professional organization, or BCIA itself.

Regional Accreditation

Colleges and universities in the United States are accredited by six regional groups that are subject to the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Education. These recognized bodies are the following:

- The Middle States Commission on Higher Education
- The New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
- The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, The Higher Learning Commission
- The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
- The Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities
- The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges

Early in its history, BCIA adopted the regional accreditation standard because this is how the health care community evaluates university-based education. For example, state boards require that applicants document their completion of degrees from accredited institutions before issuing a license to independently treat medical and psychological disorders.

Certificants may use graduate-level courses taken at regionally accredited institutions to fulfill BCIA's continuing education requirements. Certificants receive credit for only those classroom hours that cover their Blueprint of Knowledge. For example, if only 15 of 45 hours covered the blueprint, a certificant would receive 15 hours of continuing education credit.

Accreditation by Professional Organizations and Licensing Boards

The second type of accreditation is granted by the national organizations that regulate professions and the boards that

offer state licensure. Examples of these organizations include, but are not limited to, the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, and the American Occupational Therapy Association. Many state licensing boards require a specific amount of continuing education to maintain their credentials. BCIA has always accepted this type of accreditation because it helps professionals maintain their license and certification without taking separate courses. Many certificants are surprised that they can largely complete their continuing education through the coursework required for licensing renewal due to the breadth of BCIA Blueprints of Knowledge.

If you haven't read the blueprint specific to your certification recently, now is the time! Go to www.bcia.org—Become Board Certified. A drop-down menu will appear where you can select the program of interest: Biofeedback, Neurofeedback, or Pelvic Muscle Dysfunction Biofeedback. Next, a fly-out to the right will give you the option of selecting "Common Documents." That is where you will find the blueprint that will guide you as you select appropriate continuing education courses.

The Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback (AAPB) offers American Psychological Association (APA)-accredited continuing education courses and workshops at its annual conference, as well as teleseminars during the year. AAPB also extends APA accreditation to state or regional biofeedback organizations that fall under its umbrella. Starting in September 2013, the International Society for Neurofeedback and Research (ISNR) will offer both APA and continuing medical education credit for conference workshops.

If you take a blueprint-related workshop accredited by your national professional organization, BCIA will count those hours toward your recertification. BCIA encourages you to visit the Recertification area under the Certificants tab for more information.

Accreditation by BCIA

BCIA follows the APA model in accrediting workshops offered by independent training providers. Applicants for accreditation must specify the educational objectives of the workshop and the credentials of their faculty. BCIA requires that each attendee complete an evaluation of how closely the workshop followed its syllabus and take a brief exam about the workshop's learning objectives.

Who provides BCIA-accredited workshops? Several equipment vendors, who teach our biofeedback and neuro-

feedback didactic courses, also offer workshops on advanced topics. Visit their Websites to see what they have to offer.

Several related health care organizations also provide continuing education courses. For example, ASET (The Neurodiagnostic Society) offers many BCIA-accredited online courses. These accessible inexpensive classes cover fundamentals such as the 10–20 System of Measurement and Application Techniques, EEG in Neurological Disorders, or Neuroanatomy and Neurophysiology. Visit their Website for a complete list (<http://aset-edu.org/>).

For pelvic muscle dysfunction biofeedback, groups such as the Society for Urologic Nurses and Associates and the National Association for Continence provide courses themselves or advertise relevant educational opportunities.

You are the best judge as to which courses would best contribute to your continuing education. Use the criteria of accreditation and blueprint relevance for selecting these classes.

Flexible and Inexpensive Continuing Education Options

The growth of international certification has increased the demand for accessible continuing education coursework. BCIA has created many affordable options to earn the hours required for recertification.

First, AAPB members can read designated articles in *Biofeedback* and then take brief online exams that will earn 1 hour of credit for \$15 each.

Second, BCIA teleseminars on exciting topics such as “LORETA Neurofeedback and Neural Mechanisms of Self-Regulation” cost \$25 for one computer connection, which can serve several participants, and \$15 per certificant for a short quiz to earn a continuing education certificate. The growing popularity of these 90-minute teleseminars has forced BCIA to graduate to the GoToWebinar platform to accommodate as many as 99 attendees. Even with expanded capacity, a recent neurofeedback program sold out! The teleseminar audience is increasingly international, including professionals from Egypt, Germany, Israel, New Zealand, and South Africa.

Third, BCIA has recorded most of its teleseminars so they can be purchased from the Website at the live price. Recent programs cover exciting topics such as addictive disorders, active surface electromyographic biofeedback training for pain, ethics, heart rate variability (HRV) biofeedback training protocols, LORETA (low-resolution brain electromagnetic tomography), neural connectivity, and pelvic muscle dysfunction biofeedback. After completing a recorded presentation, you may pay \$15 to take a brief

quiz that will provide you a continuing education certificate for proof of participation.

If you have an idea for a topic or speaker, please contact BCIA. This will help build a diverse schedule with high-demand speakers and topics.

Fourth, biofeedback certificants may earn 15 hours of continuing education by successfully completing BCIA's new HRV Biofeedback Certificate of Completion. This requires enrolling in an accredited workshop that teaches the BCIA HRV Blueprint of Knowledge and passing an online exam.

Fifth, BCIA awards continuing education hours for a range of professional activities including book authorship (40 hours), course instruction at an accredited institution (45 hours for a 3-credit course), dissertation (40 hours), journal article (10 hours), master's thesis (20 hours), and presentation (3 hours for a 1-hour talk). BCIA counts enrollment in clinical workshops offered at AAPB chapter, state, and regional biofeedback meetings. You may earn 5 hours of continuing education for a minimum of 15 hours of mentoring. Finally, you may earn up to 20 hours per recertification period by studying references from your blueprint's recommended reading list and submitting a total of 40 multiple-choice questions.

How Do I Learn About Educational Opportunities?

Check the AAPB, BCIA, and ISNR Websites for educational programs, and watch BCIA e-blasts for teleseminar and workshop announcements. If you are an educator, submit your workshop to BCIA for accreditation so that we can successfully promote it. Early submission gives BCIA staff more time to help you market your program. Stay abreast of the offerings of your professional organizations, either local or national. You may be surprised to see biofeedback topics on their program. Remember, if you don't see these topics, maybe you can be the one to suggest them!

Conclusion

Certification establishes that an applicant has demonstrated entry-level knowledge of biofeedback or neurofeedback. Progressive recertification encourages BCIA certificants to continuously build on that solid foundation by expanding their knowledge base and skill set. BCIA's founders understood that our field's credibility within the insurance and medical communities depends on the maintenance of uncompromising educational standards. BCIA is committed to promoting the best accredited continuing education opportunities the field has to offer so that its certificants will be “more than qualified—BCIA certified!”

References

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