

## **Board of Psychology**

### **Guidance on Use of Assessment Titles and Signatures**

Conducting client evaluations or assessments pertaining to diagnosis and psychosocial or mental health functioning is within the scope of practice of several licensed mental health professionals. Although some jurisdictions have attempted to define by regulation or statute what types of assessments may be done by what specific mental health professionals, Virginia has not taken that approach. In Virginia, each profession is regulated by its own regulatory body, and each takes its own approach to training and standards of practice.

Just as different healthcare specialists may rely on similar but not identical assessment procedures, different behavioral health professionals may approach assessment practice with both shared and distinctive skills and tools. Historically, protection of the public has relied upon each profession's Board oversight to hold its own members to its own discipline's standard of practice, with the expectation that each licensee practice within areas of professional competence.

In the case of shared or overlapping services across professional licenses, there can be considerable public confusion regarding the work of different licensees and what regulatory board oversees their work. Accordingly, as a further public safeguard, each licensure board may want to encourage its own licensees to represent themselves and their work unambiguously by labeling their work and themselves in accordance with their own licensure board's current license/regulatory language. Within the Board of Psychology, our recommendations for licensees of this Board are as follows:

- **Use an Unambiguous Work Product Heading**
  - Label work products with language that is parallel with and specific to the practitioner's license.
  - Suggested Work Product headings are included in the Table below.
  
- **Use an Unambiguous Examiner Title**
  - The title in a signature block or other relevant self-designation on a document summarizing an assessment work product should clearly convey the examiner's professional identity and field(s) of licensure.
  - Listing the Examiner's specific License number is optional.
  - Suggested Signature Titles are included in the Table below.

Virginia License	Suggested Report Heading	Suggested Signature Title
Clinical Psychologist School Psychologist Applied Psychologist	“Psychological Assessment” “Psychological Evaluation” “Psychological Report”  Note: Additional, more specific, terms may be added, depending on the focus of the report and the Psychologist’s area(s) of further post-doctoral training and competence (e.g., Forensic Psychology Evaluation, Geriatric Psychology Evaluation, Medical Psychology Evaluation, Neuropsychological Evaluation, Pediatric Psychology Evaluation, etc.).	“Clinical Psychologist” or “Licensed Clinical Psychologist”  “Licensed School Psychologist” or “Licensed School Psychologist, Limited” <sup>1</sup>  “Applied Psychologist” or “Licensed Applied Psychologist”  Note: Board Certification or other credentials may be added underneath the Psychologist’s licensure category (e.g., “Board Certified in Neuropsychology”) and associated initials may be added after the Psychologist’s degree (e.g., John Smith, Ph.D., ABPP), especially if relevant given to the heading and focus of the document.  However, terms such as “forensic psychologist,” “neuropsychologist,” and others hold no legal standing in Virginia. Therefore, reports still should carry the appropriate signature title listed above in order to indicate to the public the licensure category and state Board regulating this practice.

**Clarify conflict with required labels:** When a psychologist’s employer, work setting, or legal work context requires that a particular label be used for assessment work products that differ from those listed in the guidelines above, the psychologist should clarify his or her professional identity to the client at the outset of the evaluation and make this explicit within the report and

<sup>1</sup> This Guidance Document does not apply to persons certified by the Virginia Department of Education to provide school psychological services who are not licensed by the Board of Psychology.

in the signature block (e.g., “Psychological Evaluation” by XXXXXXXX, Clinical Psychologist [or Licensed Clinical Psychologist]).

In offering this collective guidance to its licensees, the Virginia Board of Psychology is adding no regulatory restrictions to the use of various professional titles/terms beyond existing protected titles in Virginia statutes and respective regulations. Rather, this document provides best practice guidelines for its regulated members to minimize public confusion and clearly communicate to their clients what licensure Board governs the licensed examiner’s practice. The Board of Psychology believes this guidance will best represent its members to the public and best direct service recipients to the examiner’s specific practice standards.