

# Final Report of the Practice Analysis of Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner



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## Executive Summary

The American Academy of Nurse Practitioner Certification Board (AANPCB) will offer a new entry-level advanced practice nursing certification program for Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners (PMHNPs). In 2022, AANPCB contracted with ACT to conduct a practice analysis to support development of the new program. Certifying bodies conduct practice analysis (aka role delineation, job analysis) studies to define the content domains of their credentialing examinations.

The practice analysis performed on behalf of AANPCB was designed to align with the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, NCME, 2014) and with industry accreditation criteria promulgated by the National Commission on Certifying Agencies (NCCA, 2021) and Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC, 2019).

A mixed methods approach was used to delineate and validate domains of practice, tasks, and knowledge areas related to PMHNP practice. The first, qualitative phase of the study began with ACT performing a review of extant literature describing PMHNP practice. Then, over the course of two face-to-face meetings, a 10-member Task Force of PMHNP subject-matter experts (SMEs) created a description of domains of practice, tasks performed, knowledge areas required, and disorders seen by PMHNPs (collectively referred to as the content outline). Their work was augmented through an independent peer review of a draft version of the delineation by a group of 17 external SMEs.

In the second, quantitative phase of the study, validation evidence for the domains, tasks, knowledge areas, and disorders was obtained through a survey of practice. An online survey was conducted with PMHNPs who were asked to make several ratings related to the elements of the content outline. They rated how frequently they performed each task and how important the task was to protecting patients from health-related harm. They rated how much time they spent in each domain of practice and how important it was. They rated how important it was for a newly certified PMHNP to possess each knowledge area. Finally, they rated how frequently they encountered different categories of mental disorders.

Data collected in the validation survey was evaluated to make decisions regarding the content outline and test specifications for the new PMHNP certification examination. The final outline included 28 validated tasks within four domains of practice, and 50 validated knowledge areas, as well as 22 disorders. Test specifications based on domains of practice and patient ages were developed to guide item and examination form development, and additional guidance was developed regarding content coverage of the different disorders.

Data from the survey suggest that the practice analysis should be updated in the next 3.5 to 5 years. This will ensure that the content outline and test specifications reflect the evolution of PMHNP practice.