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March 4, 1992

663-91-0327

465-2398

Associate
licensing
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Board of Psychologist
and Psychological
Examiners
questions

Two questions have been posed to the Department of Law by the board. We will treat both in this memorandum.

First, we have been asked if the board could drop the specialty designation mandated by AS 08.86.164(a) by virtue of the provisions of AS 08.86.162(2). We conclude that it could not, absent a change of the statute (AS 08.86.164).

AS 08.86.162(2) deals with criteria for an individual to be eligible to take an associate's examination; it has nothing to do with the requirement for licensing in specialty areas. Section 164, however, is clear and unambiguous in requiring a psychological associate to be "licensed for specific activities or areas of competence" and that those areas "be specified on the license." AS 08.86.164(a).

Where the language of a statute is clear and susceptible to no more than one meaning to two or more reasonable persons, it is not subject to interpretation and can only be given that meaning. See generally 2A Norman J. Singer, *Sutherland Statutory Construction* •• 46.01 - 46.07 (5th ed. 1992).

We have also been asked whether the board has the latitude to designate certain undergraduate courses as meeting the requirements for an individual to be eligible to take an associate's examination. We conclude that it does not.

AS 08.86.162(2) requires that a candidate for a psychological associate examination have a master's degree and that the "program of graduate study" have "the equivalent of at least 24 semester hours of graduate course work directly related to a specialized area in which licensure is requested." (Emphasis added.) We are informed by the University of Alaska that a student must complete 50 semester hours of course work in order to earn a master's degree in the field of psychology; the national range for this requirement is 36 to 60 semester hours.

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We are also informed that on a relatively infrequent basis, a master's degree candidate may be permitted to substitute certain undergraduate course work for credit in the master's program. We believe, however, that because AS 08.86.162(2) requires only a portion of the total course hours be devoted to a specialty area, and that those hours must be at the graduate level, no substitution of undergraduate course work for those 24 hours could be made. Effect must be given to *all* the words of a statute and the entire statute must be read as a whole. See 2A Norman J. Singer, *Sutherland Statutory Construction* •• 46.05, 46.06 (5th ed. 1992).

VLU:prm