



American Board of Adolescent Psychiatry

Study Guide for Certification Examination Updated January 2026

The certification examination in Adolescent Psychiatry is composed of two parts, the first being a traditional, multiple choice exam encompassing child/adolescent development, diagnostic and treatment issues, and forensic & community/consultation psychiatry. The second part of the exam consists of questions based on two video-taped interviews played immediately prior. Each part carries equal weight in determining whether a candidate passes.

The material for the examination is drawn from recent review articles from major peer reviewed journals and textbooks as well as from the lectures given at the 2016-2024 annual ASAP scientific meetings. The PDF syllabi from those ASAP annual meetings are available in the online review course that we make available to any interested registrant [here](#).

In addition, beginning October of 2024, selected questions will be drawn from the core training curriculum that is optional through September of 2027 but will thereafter be required for ABAP certification as an educational requirement. We therefore encourage all registrants to utilize this core curriculum option instead of the optional self-study one that will sunset in 2027. The core curriculum may be accessed [here](#).

Any candidate preparing for the certification examination should be familiar with the following general areas within the field of Adolescent and Young Adult Psychiatry:

I. NORMAL DEVELOPMENT PRIOR TO ADOLESCENCE

- A. Physiological
- B. Psychological
- C. Sociological
- D. Unique response to medication

II. SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

- A. Medical disorders

- B. Central nervous system disorders
- C. Disorders of psychological functioning
- D. Socio-cultural factors

III. ADOLESCENT PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

- A. Current nosology
- B. Theories of pathogenesis

IV. TRANSITION TO ADOLESCENCE

V. NORMAL ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT DEVELOPMENT

- A. Physiological
- B. Neurodevelopmental
- B. Psychological, Cognitive, and Moral
- C. Sociological

VI. SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD

- A. Existence of medical disorder
- B. Existence of disorders of the central nervous system
- C. Existence of disorders of psychological functioning
- D. Socio-cultural factors
- E. Risk Taking and violence.
- F. Sexual Deviancy
- G. LGBTQ Mental Health
- H. Violence and Aggression Management
- I. Risk Taking and Substance Abuse
- J. Transgender Mental Health Issues
- K. Internet Gaming Disorder and the effects video gaming has on teens and young adults
- L. Consequences of the 2020-2022 COVID 19 Pandemic
- M. Mental Health Needs of High Performing Athletes
- I. Telepsychiatry

VII. ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

- A. Current nosology
- B. Theories of pathogenesis

VIII. PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT OF ADOLESCENTS AND TRANSITION AGE YOUTH

- A. Special considerations
- B. Evaluation

- C. Development of treatment plan including appropriate levels of care
- D. Psychological forms of therapy
- E. Defense Mechanisms evident in psychiatric interviewing and therapy

IX. PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGIC TREATMENT OF ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD

- A. Physiologic variables affecting the adolescent response to psychopharmacologic agents
- B. Use of all classes of psychopharmacologic agents.
- C. FDA (USA Food and Drug Administration) approved vs. off-label prescribing issues
- D. TMS and other new and possibly controversial therapies with teens and young adults

X. TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO YOUNG ADULTHOOD

- A. Timing of the completion of the developmental tasks of late adolescence
- B. Socio-cultural variables affecting expectations of self
- C. Primary residence
- D. Application of diagnostic and treatment interventions.
- E. College Mental Health
- F. Mental Health Issues in Military Young Adults
- G. "Aging out of the System" issues unique to Transitional Age Adults

XI. PRACTICE MANAGEMENT AND LEGAL ISSUES

- A. Juvenile delinquency
- B. Impact of custody determinations
- C. Status offenses (persons in need of supervision)
- D. Rights to treatment
- E. Right to refuse treatment
- F. Involuntary hospitalization
- G. Legal competence
- H. Legal emancipation from parental control
- I. Federal Laws
- J. Landmark Court Decisions affecting adolescents

XII. MENTAL STATUS EXAMINATION FINDINGS IN PSYCHIATRIC INTERVIEWS WITH ADOLESCENTS, INCLUDING DEFENSES EVIDENT, AFFECT, THOUGHT PROGRESSION, PERCEPTION, REASONING, ATTENTION, PSYCHOMOTOR ACTIVITY, INTELLECTUAL ABILITIES, ETC.

Textbook: Our recommendation regarding a textbook is the on-line version of the Rey's [IACAPAP Textbook of Child and Adolescent Mental Health](#) This is an open access textbook,

with chapters available to download, including normal development, clinical exam, case formulation, psychopathology, psychopharmacology, forensics, and treatments.

Another good reference is Dulcan's [Concise Guide to Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 5th ed.](#)

An additional recommended book, given the increased emphasis in the field on the needs of older adolescents and young adults, is Gilmore et al's [Emerging Adulthood: A Psychodynamic Approach to the New Developmental Phase of the 21st Century](#)

Sample Questions: Our recommendation is Costello and Schumacher's [Child and Adolescent Psychiatry for the Specialty Board Review 5th Edition.](#)

Another option is the [Study Guide to Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#)

Review Course: In response to demand and multiple requests, ABAP has now developed a self-directed review course, which is a compilation of open access lectures and PowerPoints from past ASAP annual meetings designed to facilitate study for our certification examination. This review course is offered free of charge and may be accessed [online here.](#)

With respect to Category I CME offerings, presently we are not aware of any review courses that cover the specific range of adolescent and young adult psychiatry that do not include extensive additional reviews of child and adult psychiatry. *However, a reasonable free alternative that offers CME is our core educational curriculum we recommend as an educational prerequisite for our certification.* Some questions in the Part I exam are drawn from these courses. This core curriculum may be accessed and downloaded [here.](#)

Alternatively, there are many available review courses in general psychiatry covering a portion of the field's scope (young adult psychiatry). There are also a few courses covering the adolescent psychiatry portion of the field's scope such as the two available below (there may be others; ABAP is not recommending any one in particular):

[Beat the Boards Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Review Course](#)

[AACAP Annual Hansen Review Course in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#)

2016-2026 American Society for Adolescent Psychiatry Conference Syllabi: Some of the questions on the examination are derived from each year's ASAP annual conference. While the self-directed review course mentioned above organizes all the PowerPoints by topic, the conference PowerPoints and some recent videotaped conference sessions exist by year since 2016 and are available at the [ASAP Website.](#)

It is our desire that the certification preparation and examination process is a meaningful and growth-enhancing one for you and wish you luck and success as you proceed.