



Quick Study Guide

Topic: Subfields in Psychology – What is Forensic Psychology

Related Course(s): Psych 1100, 3600

What is Forensic Psychology?

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- Forensic Psychology comes from the Latin word “forensis” meaning “of the forum”, where the law courts of ancient Rome were held.
- Any application of psychological knowledge or methods to a task faced by the legal system. It is concerned with emotional and behavioral questions and issues that relate to law and legal systems.
- It is the interface between psychology and the law, so all psychological services provided for the legal community are forensic psychological services.
- It involves the usage of psychological knowledge, theory and skills to the understanding and functioning of the legal and criminal justice system.
- It is the research endeavor that examines aspects of human behavior directly related to the legal process (e.g., eyewitness memory and testimony, jury decision making, or criminal behavior).
- The professional practice of psychology within or in consultation with a legal system that encompasses both criminal and civil law and the numerous areas where they interact, provide advice to legislators, judges, correctional officers, lawyers and the police; is called upon, for example, to serve as an *expert witness*; diagnose and treat incarcerated and probationed offenders; and screen and evaluate personnel in the law enforcement and judicial systems
- A forensic psychologist is any psychologist who by virtue of training or experience may assist a court or other fact finder in arriving at a just or correct decision. For example, a forensic psychologist may assist in a wide variety of civil matters. Civil matters include but are not limited to lawsuits or insurance claims where emotional suffering is a part of the claim, determination of competency of an aged or ill person to make decisions, whether a death was an accident or a "disguised suicide" in an insurance claim case, or in a wide variety of other areas.
- According to the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, *Forensic Psychiatry* is “a medical subspecialty that includes research and clinical practice in the many areas in which psychiatry is applied to legal issues

Study Guide: This study guide provides an overview of a topic or theory in the field of Psychology. It is intended to be a supplement to your textbook and other course materials.