

Dear NASP Members and Colleagues:

I want to share with you the latest news about the status of the American Psychological Association's (APA) proposed revisions to its Model Licensure Act (MLA). As you know, NASP has been actively engaged in a 3-year effort to convince the APA MLA Task Force to retain the exemption for school psychologists credentialed by their state education agencies—the exemption that appears in the 1987 MLA currently in place. Participation of individual school psychologists and colleague organizations has been critical to this effort and we thank you.

Since the last public comment period ended in June 2009, APA has kept the status of the revised MLA under wraps. We now have received the following news:

- APA's MLA Task Force presented their final language to APA's Board of Directors in December. The board accepted the proposed MLA for inclusion on the agenda for the APA's Council of Representatives meeting in February.
- The revised MLA proposed for adoption by APA's Council of Representatives restricts use of the title school psychologist or certified school psychologist to only those individuals who have a doctoral degree in psychology, are certified by the state education agency, and are using the terms only during their practice in the public schools. This restriction of the title to only those at the doctoral level is, of course, unacceptable to us.
- In addition, the proposed MLA includes language that individuals who are certified in school psychology by the state education agency but who do not hold doctoral degrees (that is, specialist-level school psychologists) would be permitted to use the terms "psychology" and "psychological" in their title, but not "school psychologist," and be limited in practice to settings under the purview of their state education agency. Again, this restriction of "school psychologist" is unacceptable.

APA's attempt to limit the exemption to only those holding a doctoral degree does NOT reflect the position of NASP and other school psychology organizations.

- We strongly assert that **specialist- and doctoral-level school psychologists may use the title "school psychologist"** and engage in a wide range of school psychology practices for which they are credentialed and well-qualified.
- We support the **authority of all state education agencies to credential and provide oversight** for professionals who provide services in schools, including the right to use the title "school psychologist" in the SEA credential, regulate school-based practice by school psychologists, and establish standards regarding who may provide school psychological services.
- **A change in title of school psychologists would create public confusion and potentially impact public perception** about the important services provided by school psychologists. The MLA exemption carries a 40+ year precedent and a long history of successfully serving the needs of children, families, and schools. In addition to being recognized in the 1987 MLA currently in place, we are well-recognized as **"school psychologists"** in federal and state law and regulations

(e.g., IDEA and NCLB) and almost all states use the title "school psychologist" in the credential issued by the state education agency.

- Although the MLA itself has no legal force, if it is adopted in this form by APA's Council of Representatives, **it is expected to be introduced in states and at risk will be the title of school psychologists as well as our needed services.** This could result in state-level battles to retain our title and practice—an unfortunate and costly distraction for everyone.

Many, many organizations have joined NASP in support of retaining the school psychologist exemption for individuals at the specialist and doctoral level, including other groups in the school psychology community, virtually every major education organization at the national level, many state professional organizations, and state boards of education. During two public comment periods, APA's MLA Task Force received approximately 30,000 comments from individuals and organizations supporting the retention of the school psychologist exemption.

Our hope has been that APA will genuinely take into account the extensive public comments they requested and have received. However, NASP has prepared all along for the possibility that APA's MLA Task Force might not acknowledge the importance of these issues to the public good or the significant impact in restricting the school psychologist exemption.

We wanted to share this basic information as soon as possible. The Council of Representatives has the opportunity to reject the Task Force recommendation with respect to the school psychologist exemption at its February meeting. **Be assured that NASP will once again communicate our position to the APA Council of Representatives, prior to their February vote.**

School psychologists are action-oriented professionals and so you may wonder what can be done. **Right now it appears that there is no formal opportunity for individuals or groups to send comments to APA. Mass communications to the APA Council will not be helpful and are likely to be harmful,** although people who personally know APA Council members could communicate directly with those members. Please note that it is vital that any communications with the Council of Representatives between now and the vote in February should be consistent with the **key messages** and resources found on our website.

If the Task Force recommendation becomes APA policy, be assured that NASP is prepared to assist school psychologists in protecting our title at the state level. We are currently updating our key messages, coordinating with state leaders, and preparing for strong state-level advocacy.

I have never been prouder to be a school psychologist or clearer about the vital role that school psychologists play in children's school and life success. Together we will work to ensure that title and practice of school psychologists—and our important work for children—remain strong.

Thank you for all you do for children, families and schools,

Patti L. Harrison, PhD, NCSP
NASP President, 2009–2010