



# Arizona Association of School Psychologists

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American Psychological Association  
750 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC, 20002-4242

Dear Members of the Model Licensure Act Task Force:

The Arizona Association of School Psychologists (AASP) wants to add its voice to the growing number of organizations who vehemently oppose the proposed changes in the American Psychological Association's (APA) revised wording in their proposed Model Licensure Act (MLA). The AASP Board believes that these proposed changes would seriously undermine services to children, families, and schools.

At the present time the state of Arizona is facing the possibility of severe and sustained budget cuts to public education. Our member school psychologists are supporting children, families and teachers through a very difficult time. Families are facing added stress with job losses as children's services from public agencies that support disabled and low income families are experiencing drastic cuts. Teachers in Arizona schools are also confronting the possibility of job loss and increased demands from students and families under stress. This, of all times, is not the time to enact changes that could potentially reduce support and services to our schools.

In Arizona, our student population has become increasingly diverse, creating a greater need for recruitment of professionals that are themselves representative of a wide range of linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. The profession of School Psychology has been working over the years to attract a significant number of students of diverse backgrounds to serve in rural and inner city schools. The majority of these students are enrolled in specialist level programs. Arizona is a large state with many rural areas where school systems often supply one of the only supports for mental health services for children. Our state's needs are much different than the high-density population states in the eastern part of the United States. The combination of a richly diverse population and many underserved rural communities places Arizona at risk from any plan to decrease the availability of school-based psychological services.

In Arizona, the presence of school psychologists in the schools at specialist and doctoral levels is well accepted and valued. Currently, the national representation of 75% specialist and 25% doctoral school psychologists is mirrored in Arizona. The prospect of legislation that would put the positions of 75% of our practitioners in jeopardy is unacceptable.

The field of School Psychology is a unique practice that requires specialized training in how children learn, behavioral and academic interventions, and the function of educational systems.

Credentialing of school psychologists in Arizona reflects rigorous training requirements and is consistent with the national standards set forth by the National Association of School Psychologists. There is no evidence that the services provided by specialist level psychologists in our state vary from those provided by doctoral level practitioners, or that they are in any way inferior.

Changing the title of certification to work in a school at the state level is a very complicated process. The proposed APA Model Licensure Act would likely disrupt vital services to students and family while the numerous certification and legislative ramifications were sorted out. This is one of the primary reasons we oppose these unnecessary proposed changes.

Given that there is no evidence that the current exemption for school psychologists in the 1987 Model Act that allows credentialed school psychologists to use the title “school psychologist” causes any harm, the continuing presence of highly qualified specialist level and doctoral level school psychologists in the school systems is essential if Arizona is going to continue to improve academic and mental health outcomes for children and families.

For all the reasons listed above, the Arizona Association of School Psychologists must register a strong voice of opposition to the proposed revision of the Model Licensure Act.

Arizona Association of School Psychologists  
Executive Board