



West Virginia School Psychologists Association

May 15, 2009

Task Force on Model Licensure Act
c/o Lynn Bufka
American Psychological Association
750 First Street NE
Washington, D.C. 20002-4242

To the Members of the Model Licensure Act Task Force:

The West Virginia School Psychologists Association (WVSPA) strongly opposes the proposed changes to the APA Model Licensure Act. Removing the exemption for specialist level school psychologists to use the title of “school psychologist” and the elimination of “school psychology” as an area of specialization will negatively impact services to students in West Virginia. The proposed change by APA will affect more than 90 percent of current practitioners in West Virginia.

West Virginia has two credentialing agencies for school psychologists: (1) The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), which has set rigorous standards for the certification of school psychologists at the specialist level; and (2) the West Virginia Board of Examiners of Psychologists (WVBEP), which licenses school psychologists at two levels, Level 1 – “Licensed School Psychologist,” and Level 2 – “Licensed School Psychologist Independent Practitioners.” Both WVDE and WVBEP recognize the right of non-doctoral level school psychologists who meet the credentialing requirements to use the title of “School Psychologist.” Since over 90 percent of practitioners are non-doctoral level school psychologists, removal of this title would result in a significant reduction of staff to provide psychological services to students, and school districts would be at risk of being out of compliance.

In addition, Marshall University is the only school psychology training program in West Virginia. The Marshall University School Psychology Program has received full approval from NASP to train school psychologists at the specialist degree level. Students completing the Ed. S. program will have met all requirements for permanent certification as a “school psychologist” by the West Virginia Department of Education. If the exemption is removed, not only would we lose these qualified individuals as “school psychologists;” it would be impossible to replace these individuals with doctoral level school psychologists since our state does not produce any doctoral level school psychologists. Again, services would be cut and students would suffer.

WVSPA is also concerned that the proposed MLA changes school psychology from an area of specialization to a foundation of psychology. Both WVDE and WVBEP recognize school psychology as an area of specialization. These credentialing agencies recognize that school psychologists practice within the boundaries of specific competences related to school psychology, including, but not limited to, school-based consultation, psychological and psychoeducational assessment, school-based intervention, education, facilitation, research, program planning and evaluation, and supervision. By maintaining that school psychology is an area of specialization with specific competencies, the public is protected from services being provided by individuals not adequately trained in school psychology. Allowing professionals who lack the proper training and experience in these specific competencies to work in West Virginia may result in putting our children at risk for receiving inappropriate services.

Another point worth considering is that West Virginia is a rural state. There are few psychological resources for children. In some counties, school psychologists are the only psychologists that are available to provide psychological services. If the exemption for school psychologists is removed, many West Virginia children would receive either no services or services provided by unqualified individuals.

For the reasons cited above, WVSPA urges APA to retain the exemption for practice of school psychology by qualified non-doctoral practitioners.

Sincerely,

Helen Wells
President, WVSPA

Ed Morgret, Ph.D.
President-Elect, WVSPA
Member of APA, Division 16