



Alaska School Psychologist Association

May 21, 2009

Melba J. T. Vasquez, PhD, Chair  
Anderson House at Heritage Square □  
2901 Bee Cave Road, Box N □  
Austin, TX 78746

Dear Dr. Vasquez:

I am writing, as president of the Alaska School Psychologist Association (ASPA), to inform the task force on the Model Act for State Licensure of Psychologists that our organization is deeply concerned over the changes proposed in this document.

The proposed change to section F, item 3 with the statement, *“This version restricts the use of the term school psychologist or certified school psychologist to individuals who: 1) have a doctoral degree in psychology; 2) are certified by the state educational agency; and (3) are using the terms only during their practice in the public schools.”* has the potential to create severe shortages of qualified help available to the children of our state. Our state already experiences a shortage of available personnel to provide services to children in our vast rural areas. The removal of the exemption has the potential to remove the only mental-health intervention services available to many Alaskan youth and families. Current Alaska state law requires candidates for an endorsement in school psychology have: *a master’s or higher degree in school psychology; be recommended by an institution whose school psychology program has been approved by NCATE, the National Association of School Psychologists, or the American Psychological Association; and have completed a 1200 hour internship (with 600 of the hours in a school setting); or be certified under the certification system of the National Association of School Psychologists.* Therefore, the only personnel using the term school psychologist in Alaska at this time are highly trained and highly qualified to address the unique needs of Alaskan children and families.

Our organization is equally alarmed by the removal from section J the statement, *“on the basis of having completed a program for the preparation of school psychologists that is accredited by a specialized professional accrediting body recognized by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation.”* Possession of a doctoral degree in psychology does not prepare a psychologist to practice in a school environment. Very few doctoral level programs in clinical or experimental psychology require in-depth knowledge of federal and state regulations within special education or focus on public school related issues. All

of the National Association of School Psychologist approved university programs require a highly specialized, comprehensive course of study designed to prepare graduates to provide, *“a continuum of services to children, youth, families, and schools”*, knowledge in the, *“identification of professional practices that are empirically-based, data driven, and culturally competent”*, and how to advocate, *“for appropriate research-based education and mental health services, among other important initiatives.”* (<http://www.nasponline.org/certification/NASPAapproved.aspx>) The general acceptance of any doctoral level psychology course of study as sufficient to practice within the school environment is highly detrimental for the welfare of children with disabilities and families in need of highly knowledgeable assistance in negotiating the educational process.

The Alaska School Psychologist Association views the changes proposed in the draft Model Act for State Licensure as recommendations that are highly damaging to the future of Alaskan children, youth, and families.

Our organization welcomes close collaboration and communication with the American Psychologist Association and the Alaska State Psychologist Association. I would like to thank you for providing an opportunity to comment on the draft Model Licensure Act.

Sincerely,

Judith L. Davis  
2008-2009 President  
Alaska School Psychologist Association

cc. American Psychological Association  
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