



District of Columbia Association of School Psychologists

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June 2, 2009

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

To the Members of the Model Licensure Act Task Force:

I am writing to express the District of Columbia Association of School Psychologists' opposition to the proposed change to the Model Licensure Act (Section J) that removes the exemption for non-doctoral level school psychologists to use the title "school psychologist." If this exemption is removed from the current Act, the lasting effects would negatively impact the children of the District of Columbia both immediately and in years to come.

There are many reasons why D.C. is encouraging the American Psychological Association (APA) to maintain this current exemption for School Psychologists. The primary reason is that there is no supportive data that indicates that the change is for the better, or that services would improve if this exemption were to be removed. To remove the exemption would affect more than 70% of all practicing school psychologists currently working in the D.C. Public Schools. Such an action by the APA would create both additional costs and unnecessary demands on an already burdened educational system. In addition, this action by the APA would have a detrimental impact upon the already insufficient mental health services for the children of the District of Columbia.

School psychologists are trained to understand the academic, social, emotional and behavioral needs of students. School Psychologists must also know and understand the current and federal and state laws regulating the education of students with disabilities. To assume that all doctoral level psychologists have such background and training would be equally erroneous as assuming that only doctoral level psychologists can be trained to understand these issues. School psychologists have special training and skills and use those within the boundaries of the educational setting. They are uniquely trained and skilled to understand the educational and psychological needs of students in the D.C. Public Schools.

I most urgently request that the APA retain the current exemption for School Psychologists in the Model Licensure Act.

Sincerely,

Jennifer E. Penn, M.Ed., NCSP
President