



Minnesota School Psychologists Association

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

Dear Members of the Model Licensure Act Task Force:

As the Board of the Minnesota School Psychologists Association, we are writing to urge the Task Force to continue the exemption for school psychologists – both Specialist level and Ph.D. level - in the proposed revised APA Model Act for State Licensure of Psychologists.

The Task Force is undoubtedly aware that the field of Special Education has been intricately shaped by legal and legislative mandates. The process of evaluating, identifying, and placing school children with special education needs has grown from such mandates. For 50 years Minnesota school psychologists have used their skills to address the needs of children and families at each step of this due process.

School psychologists are also experts in creating academic instructional programs to be used as part of pre-referral plans, Individual Education Programs (IEPs), or Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs).

Finally, school psychologists know mental health. The state of Minnesota has paid particular attention to the mental health of children (see 'Mental Health Matters', Training module #1, MN State Department of Education). Over the last five years Minnesota teachers have been trained to recognize behaviors that might be a manifestation of an emotional or behavioral disorder (see 'Understanding Children's Mental Health Disorders and the Impact on Learning and Everyday Functioning', Training Module #2, MN State Department of Education). In Minnesota, when teachers have questions about the mental health status of a child they turn to the school psychologist. School psychologists are the only multi-disciplinary team member to have training in the following areas:

- diagnostic criteria
- systematic classroom observation
- how to evaluate and use assessment tools designed to measure emotional or behavioral disorders
- how to create evidence-based social/behavioral interventions
- how to evaluate program effectiveness
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Specialist-level school psychologists are particularly important to rural school districts in Minnesota. Without them rural areas are at risk of losing a vital resource for children's mental health.

In summary, services to children and families in Minnesota schools are strengthened by the well-established practice of school psychology. We urge the Task Force to continue the school psychologist exemption in the APA Model Licensure Act.

Respectfully,

Jason Welch, President