ERICA PERKINS
State Delegate Candidate: Rhode Island

Statement 1

What are your qualifications that make you a strong candidate for delegate?

I remain committed to our state association, Rhode Island School Psychologists Association, despite our ongoing struggles as a small state association. I continue to work alongside a core group of resolute RISPA Executive Board members to focus on membership, challenges in growing new leadership, and most importantly on the community and connectedness of our local school psychologists. It has been a particularly challenging over the past two years as we all face workload challenges with shortages in our state schools as well as try to meet the mental and behavioral health needs in our schools that the pandemic has exacerbated. I am both a school-based practitioner and an outpatient provider and these lenses help me to advocate for school psychologists in both traditional and non-traditional roles. I am hopeful about school and community partnerships and potential collaboration among the allied mental health professional organizations to strengthen our resources in the state and allow schools and nonprofit organizations to access school-based mental health grants. As a newer delegate who began serving just before the building closures due to Covid-19, I feel that I have so much left to learn from the NASP Delegate experience to support our state. I look forward to the opportunity to coalesce around the issues face-to-face again with other state delegates across our region.

What is the most pressing issue in your state? As NASP Delegate, how do you see your role in working with your state association to address this issue?

I believe that shortages in school psychology, both in practitioners and in graduate education programs, is the most pressing issue in Rhode Island. We have multiple openings in our city schools and have only one graduate education program remaining in the state. Moderate numbers of graduates leave the state after completion of their program and work in other states in the Northeast. It is my role as NASP Delegate to continue to foster a partnership between our university faculty and our state association for supervision of School Psychology graduate students. I also believe that making our state association accessible and desirable to School Psychology students is a priority. We need our graduate students to be involved in the state association to develop future leaders for the RISPA Board. We also need recent graduates to stay in Rhode Island and fill open positions. Our city schools are using their school-based mental health grants to make the salary more competitive, to offer memberships to NASP, and to pay for NASP accredited professional development to recruit School Psychologists. It is my role as NASP delegate to create awareness of federal school-based mental health grants that are available to our schools and could have a substantial impact on recruiting for open positions and retaining our local graduates.