ERICA PERKINS
State Delegate Candidate: Rhode Island
Statement 2

The NASP Leadership Assembly has adopted three strategic goals that guide the association’s work. In your state, what are some gains being made in school psychology practice related to these goals, and what are some pressing challenges?

Rhode Island School Psychologists Association has offered two Social Justice workshops over the past school year to all interested school psychologists, titled, “The Invisible Wounds of Racial Trauma”. The events were free to RISPA members and offered at an affordable rate for non-members. The first workshop focused on Contextualizing and Understanding, and the second workshop focused on Engaging and Healing. These workshops were also offered as Professional Development for the Providence Public Schools Mental and Behavioral Health Team. More recently, the workshops were featured at the NASP Annual Convention in 2022. A couple of our state leaders also participated in Multi-Cultural Organizational Development training via RLM sessions in 2022. As an organization, we are in the needs assessment and consciousness raising phases. We remain challenged by a very small core group of leaders in our state association.

Workforce shortages are being remedied through School-Based Mental Health grants available to LEAs in Rhode Island to hire more school psychologists and to make salaries more competitive. There are also mini-grants available to non-profits for professional development and professional membership activities and registration. Collaboration with the university liaison for our state’s only School Psychology graduate program is a priority for RISPA. RISPA also seeks to include School Psychology graduate students in RISPA events, Board leadership, and NASP sponsored activities. We hope that with better funding, a collaborative relationship with our school psychology graduate program, and collaborative relationships with other professional organizations in the state to pool resources that we will retain more graduates in our state to enter the professional workforce. We continue to lose early career practitioners to our neighboring New England states who can offer more competitive salaries. We also have fewer graduate students training in our state because we only have one school psychology graduate program at present.

The Practice Model has been promoted and emphasized with all eligible school psychologists through our virtual coffee and conversation and virtual community and connection sessions over the past few school years. There is still a varying continuum of psychological services that local school psychologists are practicing across the state with some practitioners providing more comprehensive and integrative services that others. Implementing all domains of practice continues to be difficult for some practitioners due to workforce shortages, high student to provider ratios, and workloads.