

**National Association of School Psychologists**  
**SPAW Virtual Hill Day State Resource Guide Addendum**

**SPAW Virtual Hill Day**

***November 14, 2018***

Dear State Leader,

To help advance our shared advocacy goals related to school psychologists' roles, school safety, and school mental health, we are adding a Virtual Hill Day during School Psychology Awareness Week. And we need your help!

The increased attention during SPAW makes it a great time to motivate your members to get involved in advocacy that doesn't require an actual trip to the "Hill".

NASP's Virtual Hill Day focused on federal advocacy will be **Wednesday November 14, 2018**. We'd love for state association leaders to plan a Virtual Hill Day for your state on the same day targeting your state legislators.

A Virtual Hill Day in your state presents an opportunity for you to have proactive conversations with key members of your state legislature before many states enter their legislative sessions in the spring of next year.

***Not sure where to start?*** We've tried to make it easy! The next page of this addendum contains the 10 necessary steps to plan your Virtual Hill Day, and the useful resources that NASP offers to assist you. And, we've made these resources adaptable for you to use at any point throughout the year - not just during SPAW.

**Enclosed in this packet are the following resources:**

- 10 steps for a Successful SPAW Virtual Hill Day
- NASP Key Advocacy Messages
- Virtual Hill Day Outreach Through Newspapers
- Sample press release
- Sample social media posts
- Sample letter to congressional delegation
- Sample letter to state legislators

Thank you for your time and looking forward to a successful Virtual Hill Day!

-NASP

## **10 Steps for a Successful SPAW Virtual Hill Day**

### **November 14, 2018**

#### **1. Determine your purpose.**

Why are you hosting a Virtual Hill Day? To inform legislators on school psychology and the policy issues we face in the profession? To advocate for or against specific policy proposals? What do you want legislators to take away from your communications with them? Work with your team to determine what you want lawmakers and their staff to take away the day after your Virtual Hill Day.

#### **2. Develop key points for your messaging.**

Based on your previously identified purpose of the Virtual Hill Day, consider the primary issues facing your school/district/state that you want your elected officials to know about and act upon. As you prepare your message and talking points, focus on how you will convey *three key ideas*:

- a. What is the **problem**?
- b. What **action(s)** can address the problem?
- c. What are the **benefits** of these actions and the **research** that supports them?

Be sure to consult NASP's [key advocacy messages](#) for help!

#### **3. Gather information.**

To make it as easy as possible for your members to contact legislators, make a document or excel spreadsheet ([like this one here](#)) with the member's name, district number, email address, twitter handle, and office phone number listed in the columns. Share this list with your members, and even consider making the list public in the event non-members want to participate.

In addition, you may opt to use NASP's engagement software. Once you have created your key message, you can send the message to Caden Fabbi at [cfabbi@naspweb.org](mailto:cfabbi@naspweb.org). Then, NASP will create a special code for your state to send out to your members that will take them to a webpage where the email template that you created will be pre-loaded. Participants will simply type their home address in to the software and contact information for their representatives will load. Additionally, NASP will be able to track the total amount of contacts that were made through the software and will share that data with you.

#### **4. Identify key legislators.**

Some states have hundreds of members in their state legislature. Take some time to identify members that are especially important to contact and highlight them in your spreadsheet or to your members. This could include the chair and members of the education committees in both chambers and the members of the leadership in each party. Participants should always contact their personal legislators and identify themselves as their constituent. Legislators pay special attention to the concerns of the people they represent. As you research key members, be sure to note any relevant

biographical information that may help with your messaging. For example, it might be helpful to know if a legislator was a former school official, teacher, and/or school board member.

**5. Draft template emails/letters and social media posts.**

Use your previously identified key messaging points to develop email templates and social media posts for your members to use. Consider crafting and designating a hashtag to use on Twitter. Also, be sure to schedule out your Association's social media posts ahead of time. Be sure to tag your local representatives and use your [state's political hashtag](#) whenever possible to highlight the importance of the message to local legislators. You can consult NASP's sample email/letter templates [here](#) and social media posts [here](#).

**6. Contact stakeholders.**

Media and stakeholder outreach could take your Virtual Hill Day to the next level in terms of reach. Be sure to [send a press release](#) to your contact at your local newspaper (media guidelines can be found [here](#)). Additionally, the President of your Association, a member of your board or another motivated school psychologist can write an op-ed for publishing ([here](#) are some examples of successful op-eds). Finally, [send a letter to your congressional delegation](#) on behalf of your state association to establish a relationship going into the next legislative session and to highlight issues school psychologists are focused on.

**7. Send the resources to your advocates.**

When you initially communicate this event to your membership, outline the value of direct constituent communications in influencing the policymaking process. Advocates need to understand *why* their direct participation is critical to policy success! This helps drive their motivation and participation.

Once you have your resources drafted and finalized, share them with your membership!

**8. Be available.**

On the day of your event, send out a message reminder in the morning with all of the resources that you consolidated and let your members know that your team is available for any assistance and to answer questions. Be sure to be tracking messages on social media and share/retweet any posts from your members and supporters to your Association's accounts.

**9. Evaluate.**

Once your Virtual Hill Day has ended, offer an opportunity for participants to provide feedback on the event. How many total contacts did you make with offices? What were facilitators and/or barriers to their engagement? How can you help make improvements in the future?

10. **Turn it up.**

*Ready to turn your Association's advocacy efforts up a notch?* Consider unlocking your advocacy potential further with an in-person **and** Virtual Hill Day! A toolkit for organizing an in-person Hill Day is coming soon.

## School Psychology Awareness Week - Key Advocacy Messages

The most important part of *unlocking your potential* to advocate is to create an effective message that will resonate with legislators and their staff. NASP recommends tailoring the messages in the three broad categories below to the needs of the students in your state.

### 1. Create School Environments That are Safe, Supportive and Conducive to Learning.

Students who do not feel safe and supported at school, both physically and psychologically, cannot learn to their fullest potential. Supportive school environments employ effective discipline strategies that help to: (1) reduce school violence, (2) prevent bullying and harassment, and (3) improve school climate. We can enable teachers' ability to teach and students' ability to learn when we ensure that all students: (a) come to school feeling safe, welcomed, and respected; (b) have a trusting relationship with at least one adult in the school; (c) understand clear academic and behavioral expectations; and (d) see their role as positive members of the school community.

#### *The Problem*

- Witnessing or experiencing school violence diminishes student engagement and leads to increased risk of truancy (unexcused absences) and school avoidance.
- Exclusionary discipline practices (ex. out-of-school suspensions) do not improve school safety and are often administered unfairly, and at disproportionate rates for certain populations, which fuels bad outcomes for students in the classroom and throughout life. Data shows that:
  - Black students are more than 3x as likely to be suspended than white students
  - Students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be suspended than their nondisabled peers
  - Racial minority students with disabilities are more likely to be suspended than white students with disabilities
- Involvement in bullying creates barriers to learning and is associated with increased risk of substance abuse, mental health problems, and decreased academic performance. Research indicates:
  - Approximately 1 in 4 students experiences bullying during the school year.
  - 74.1% of LGBT students were verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation; 55.2% because of their gender expression.
  - Students with disabilities are 2-3x more likely to be bullied than their non-disabled peers.
- Increased gun access and gun possession are associated with heightened violence, thereby suggesting that increasing the presence of guns in schools is likely to have harmful effects on students.

#### *Actions to Address the Problem*

- Support legislation, policy, and funding streams that promote sustainable crisis prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery

- Reject proposals that seek to allow anyone other than a commissioned School Resource Officer to be armed on a school campus
- Support efforts to promote positive and effective discipline strategies that seek to address and correct inappropriate behaviors (e.g., PBIS, restorative practices)
- Support legislation that increases access to school-based mental health supports, implements an integrated multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) model, integrates school safety and crisis preparedness efforts in schools, balances physical safety with psychological safety.

## **2. Improve Access to Comprehensive School Mental Health Services and School Employed-Employed Mental Health Professionals**

Comprehensive and coordinated learning and mental health services directly contribute to more positive student outcomes and increased academic achievement. School psychologists and other school-employed mental health professionals have unique training that allows them to deliver these services within the context of learning, and in support of the mission of schools. These professionals can provide critical early identification and intervention services to help students build the skills they need to meet the academic and social demands of school and life.

### *The Problem*

- 1 in 5 children and youth will experience a mental health disorder.
- Approximately 80% of students who need mental health care do not receive it. Of those who do, the majority access care in schools. Students are more likely to ask for help if services are available at school.
- Personnel shortages of school-employed mental health professionals result in critically unmet needs for students across the country, especially in rural and low-income areas.
- Children living in low income households are at greater risk for Adverse Childhood Experience, which are associated with increased risk of mental health problems and decreased academic achievement.

### *Actions to Address the Problem*

- Support legislation that makes a long-term and sustained commitment to align staffing ratios with recommendations generated from national professional organizations to allow for the delivery of a full range of mental health services.
  - The recommended ratio of students to school counselor is 250:1;
  - The recommended ratio for school psychologists is 500-700:1
  - The recommended ratio for school social workers is 250:1.
- Support policies that promote effective collaboration between school-employed and community mental health professionals.
- Establish school community mental health partnerships that supplement, not replace, existing school based services and foster collaboration between school and community mental health professionals.

## **3. Ensure All Students Have Access to a High Quality, Well-Rounded, Rigorous Curricula**

All students should have access to a well-rounded education provided by qualified and effective teachers and educators. A comprehensive 21<sup>st</sup> century education includes social–emotional competency, self-control, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills, the ability to access and evaluate the validity of information, and the ability to thrive in an increasingly competitive global economy. A commitment to high expectations should extend throughout comprehensive curricula that include math, reading, the sciences and social sciences, foreign languages, fine arts, physical and mental health, and work readiness skills. Schools should also make a sustained commitment to teach and hold students accountable for critical life skills such as social–emotional competency, self-control, problem solving, and conflict resolution skills.

### *The Problem*

- Teachers' expectations for student success significantly impacts student's actual academic achievement. Research indicates that low income, black, and Hispanic students are more likely to be held to lower expectations than their white peers.
- Racial minority youth and English Language Learners are more likely to be taught by an inexperienced or unlicensed teacher.
- Access to a well-rounded and rigorous coursework is not a reality for many of our nation's schools and students. Data shows that:
  - Black and Latino students have less access to high level math and science courses
  - English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and students of color are more likely to be retained or held back

### *Actions to Address the Problem*

- Promote school funding policies that promote equitable access to resources for *all* students, regardless of where they live.
- Require policies that hold schools accountable for ensuring *all* students are expected to achieve high standards within a rigorous curriculum that includes social-emotional competencies and other critical life skills
- Ensure that teacher preparation, training, and professional development programs prepare teachers to work with diverse student populations.
- Promote efforts that foster increased family engagement and collaboration.

## Virtual Hill Day Outreach Through Newspapers

Outreach through newspapers can be a very effective means of increasing the visibility of your Virtual Hill Day. We suggest you consider sending a press release or submitting an Op-Ed. Each has a different purpose and format, which are outlined below, along with some general guidelines and specific tips for each. Please note that writing an Op-Ed requires planning ahead to ensure your piece runs prior to or on the day of your Virtual Hill Day.

### General Guidelines

**Think local.** Start with your local papers. Major papers are inundated with submissions of all kinds and are very difficult to break into.

**Be relevant, clear, concise, and accurate.** When writing for print, make sure your topic is relevant to the community. Try to tie in a local angle to help the audience connect personally with the story. Avoid meandering sentences and using acronyms. This will help you keep the audience's attention. ALWAYS make sure to check (and double check!) your facts and sources of information.

**Understand your audience's perspective.** Even when trying to convey the most simple information, you will be much more effective when you consider why people would care, what is in it for them, what role they may play in the problem/solution, and how the solution or information you are presenting meets their needs.

**Identify the preferred method of submission.** E-mail has become the primary means of submitting written work to media outlets. Most outlets will *not* accept e-mail attachments, however, so be sure to paste your draft into the body of the e-mail.

**Submit the piece to the right person.** Press releases generally go to the news or metro editor or desk. Letters to the Editor and Op-Eds would go to the editorial/opinion page editor. This information may be available on the website; if not, simply call the main number for the newspaper and ask for the person who handles the topic or type of piece you are submitting.

### Sending a Press Release

Press releases are factual, informational announcements about events, awards, programs, studies, accomplishments, etc. They generally come from an organization, as opposed to an individual; convey who, what, where, when, and why; and are distributed to multiple media outlets at the same time. An effective press release can easily be turned into a short article. Be sure to:

- Identify the preferred contact person's name at the media outlet(s).
- Keep the release brief and information factual and to the point, typically 1–2 pages.
- Include a release date, name and contact information, and headline at the top.
- Include details or examples from your district to illustrate a point.
- Avoid jargon. Use short sentences and paragraphs.
- Use either –30– or ### at the bottom of the last page to indicate the end of your press release. If your release is longer than one page, center –More– at the bottom of all but the last page.

## Writing and Submitting an Op-Ed

An Op-Ed is an opinion piece published in a newspaper but written by someone who is not on that newspaper's editorial staff. Op-Eds are not responses to an article that has appeared in the paper, although they should at least address current newsworthy issues.

Op-Eds are typically 500–800 words long, and unlike a “useful tips” column or article, express your opinion on an issue. Newspapers publish Op-Eds by people “whose opinion matters” on the topic being addressed. This does not mean that you need to be an elected official, chairman of the board, or award winner; however, who you are and what you do generally determines whether or not the newspaper believes readers will have a reason to care about what you say. Coauthoring an Op-Ed with another person (e.g., a school psychologist in another district, a school social worker, or even a parent) sometimes can lend additional credibility to the piece.

**Writing your Op-Ed.** Op-Ed writing is unique in that you need to blend personal writing style and voice with professional expertise and factual information. Op-Eds are not academic articles, tracts, open-ended letters to an elected official or policy maker, or “how-to” fact sheets. They are a cogent essay characterized by brevity, clarity, voice, relevance, and timeliness, and they are intended to sway the readers’ opinions on an issue or topic. When writing an Op-Ed, be sure to:

- Identify the newspaper that you want to publish your Op-Ed. Have more than one paper in mind so that if your first choice does not run the piece, you can submit it the next paper in line.
- Confirm that the paper(s) accept Op-Eds and their submission guidelines. Call the paper or check on the website. **Follow these writing and submission guidelines!**
- Read Op-Eds in the paper to get a sense of length, style, format, messages, and types of authors.
- Identify two or three key messages or points you want to make. We have a handy Virtual Hill Day sheet you can use to identify a few key points.
- Include anecdotes to personalize your point.
- Relate your messages to the local community.
- Include a concluding paragraph that refocuses on the benefits to children and schools associated with your opinion (e.g., “*Effective prevention efforts mobilize a school’s most vital resource—the students—to be a school’s most powerful force in fostering a caring culture in which all students can grow and learn. It is a wise investment.*”).
- Follow the writing tips provided above. **Avoid jargon and passive writing.**
- Do not include citations, but be able to provide the paper with references if you are using information from such materials in the Op-Ed. You can say, “*According to the Surgeon General’s report on children’s mental health...*”

NASP has drafted a sample Op-Ed to help guide you in your writing process. You can view it [here](#).

**Submitting your Op-Ed.** Op-Eds can only be submitted to one paper at a time. If the paper runs your Op-Ed, it becomes their property and you may not submit it elsewhere. However, if they don’t run it, you can and should “shop” the article to another paper. The goal is to get the piece published, not just get it published in the largest paper. When submitting the Op-Ed, be sure to:

- Follow the submission guidelines.

- Paste your article into the body of your e-mail.
- Include your name, title, and home and work phone numbers, as well as a few sentences about yourself and your credentials on the topic.
- Most papers will send an auto-reply to let you know they received the submission and how long it is likely to take for them to make a decision (generally within a week).
- If your piece is extremely time sensitive, include this in your e-mail.
- Follow up within 24 hours to confirm that they received the piece. However, calling repeatedly is not appropriate and may annoy the editor(s).
- Let the editor know that you are submitting this exclusively to them but would like to submit elsewhere if they are not going to use it.
- If the paper runs the piece, send a thank you e-mail to the editor.
- Find out if you need permission from the paper to reprint or copy it for wide distribution.

## **Additional Things to Consider**

- Get together with your colleagues to brainstorm article or Op-Ed ideas. Develop some key messages and bullet points on those topics in advance. Obvious topics include: school safety, crisis response, mental health, home–school–community collaboration, creating positive school climates, or the need for more educational resources. Use NASP’s Virtual Hill Day talking points to help guide you.
- Have a digital B/W and color photo of yourself available to send electronically, as some papers run photos with their Op-Eds.
- Send copies of your published articles and Op-Eds to key stakeholders, including colleagues, elected officials, your administrators, community service providers, etc. Include a cover note that says something along the lines of, “Thought you might be interested in this piece. I appreciate working with you to improve outcomes for our children and youth.”

*For further information on communications or media outreach, visit [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org) or contact Kathy Cowan, NASP Director Communications at [kcowan@naspweb.org](mailto:kcowan@naspweb.org). © 2018, National Association of School Psychologists, 4340 East West Highway, Suite 402, Bethesda, MD 20814, 301-657-0270.*

Further Information Contact:

DATE

YourName, YourPhone, YourEmail

**\*YOUR ASSOCIATION NAME\* to Host Virtual Hill Day on November 14, 2018 During School Psychology Awareness Week**

*School psychologists from across the state to advocate for commonsense school safety measures, improved access to school-employed mental health services for students, and more rigorous curricula.*

YourStateCapital, YourState— In coordination with the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), \*YOUR ASSOCIATION\* is hosting a virtual hill day on November 14, 2018. School psychologists across the state will be writing to their state legislators as part of National School Psychology Awareness Week (SPAW), which is November 12–16, 2018.

In light of recent tragedies, school psychologists in \*Your state\* and across the country believe it is important that state legislators address three issues affecting students' ability to learn in an environment that is safe, supportive, and conducive to learning.

*Commonsense School Safety*

When students do not feel safe and supported at school, both physically and psychologically, they cannot learn to their fullest potential. This means supporting policies that promote sustainable crisis prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery while rejecting proposals that seek to allow anyone other than a commissioned school resource officer to be armed on a school campus.

*Access to School-Employed Mental Health Services*

One in five children and youth experience a mental health disorder, and about 80% who need mental health care do not receive it. With suggested staffing ratios for school-employed mental health professional (250:1 for school social workers, 250:1 for school counselors, and 500–700:1 for school psychologists) not being met by most school districts, state leaders need to make a sustained commitment to achieve these key staffing ratios to ensure students are receiving the support they need.

*High Quality, Well-Rounded, Rigorous Curricula*

Comprehensive 21st century education includes social–emotional competency, self-control, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills, the ability to access and evaluate the validity of information, and the ability to thrive in an increasingly competitive global economy. This means supporting school funding policies that promote equitable access to resources for all students and ensuring that teacher preparation, training, and professional development programs prepare teachers to work with diverse student populations.

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**About your organization**

About NASP: The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) represents 25,000 school psychologists throughout the United States and abroad. NASP empowers school psychologists to promote the learning, behavior, and mental health of all children and youth.

For further information contact [LOCAL CONTACT] or NASP Director of Communications Kathy Cowan at 301-347-1665 or [kcowan@naspweb.org](mailto:kcowan@naspweb.org), or visit [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org).

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## **SPAW Virtual Hill Day - Sample Social Media Posts**

Feel free to use these social media posts during Virtual Hill Day, or adapt them for your state association's Virtual Hill Day! For any posts on Twitter and Instagram, you should try to use #UnlockPotential, #NASPADvocates, and [your state's political hashtag](#).

### **TWITTER:**

Today is SPAW Virtual Hill Day! Join me in advocating for safer school environments, increased access to school-employed mental health professionals, and well-rounded curricula for students here and across the country. <http://bit.ly/NASPAAC> #UnlockPotential #NASPADvocates

Join me & school psychologists across the country today in telling Congress to support evidence-based school safety, including increasing access to school-employed mental health professionals to students across the country. <http://bit.ly/NASPAAC> #UnlockPotential #NASPADvocates

Join @nasponline's Virtual Hill Day and tell Congress to support evidence-based school safety, including increasing access to school-employed mental health professionals to students across the country. <http://bit.ly/NASPAAC> #UnlockPotential #NASPADvocates

### **FACEBOOK:**

Today is National Association of School Psychologists's Virtual Hill Day! School psychologists across the country will be contact their members of Congress to advocate for issues important to students across the country. Join me in advocating for safer school environments, increased access to school-employed mental health professionals, and well-rounded curricula for students. <http://bit.ly/NASPAAC>

Join me & school psychologists across the country today in telling Congress to support evidence-based school safety, including increasing access to school-employed mental health professionals to students across the country. <http://bit.ly/NASPAAC> #UnlockPotential #NASPADvocates

Join National Association of School Psychologists's Virtual Hill Day and tell Congress to support evidence-based school safety, including increasing access to school-employed mental health professionals to students across the country. <http://bit.ly/NASPAAC> #UnlockPotential #NASPADvocates

### **INSTAGRAM:**

Today is SPAW Virtual Hill Day! Join me in advocating for safer school environments, increased access to school-employed mental health professionals, and well-rounded curricula for students

here and across the country. Use the link in my bio to write to your members of Congress today!

[\[PUT BIT.LY/NASPAAC AS YOUR URL IN YOUR PROFILE.\]](#)

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#SchoolPsychologist #SchoolPsychologist #Psychology #NASPAAdvocates #UnlockPotential

Join me & school psychologists across the country today in telling Congress to support evidence-based school safety, including increasing access to school-employed mental health professionals to students across the country. Use the link in my bio to write to your members of Congress today! [\[PUT BIT.LY/NASPAAC AS YOUR URL IN YOUR PROFILE.\]](#)

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#SchoolPsychologist #SchoolPsychologist #Psychology #NASPAAdvocates #UnlockPotential

Sample Letter to State Legislators  
[INSERT STATE ASSOCIATION LOGO IF APPLICABLE]

Month Day, 2018

The Honorable \*FIRST and LAST NAME\*  
Street Address  
City, State Zip Code

Dear Senator/Representative \*LAST NAME\*,

My name is \*YOUR NAME\*, and I am writing to you in my capacity as a constituent[WHEN APPLICABLE] and as \*YOUR TITLE\* at \*YOUR STATE ASSOCIATION\*, an association that represents school psychologists across \*YOURSTATE\*. I wanted to bring to your attention a few issues that are critical to the well-being of students across our state. To reach their full potential, students require a school environment that is safe, supportive, and conducive to learning. Achieving this requires legislative support in three areas: creating safe and supportive learning environments, increasing access to school-employed mental health professionals, and ensuring comprehensive and rigorous school curricula.

### **Creating Safe and Supportive Learning Environments**

Students who do not feel safe and supported do not learn to their fullest potential. Statistically, schools are among the safest places for children, and incidents of school violence are rare and on the decline. However, we acknowledge that in light of recent events of school violence, children and their families worry about keeping their children safe at school. Efforts to create a safe and supportive school environment require a balance of physical and psychological safety. This means *supporting* policies that promote a positive school climate; effective discipline policies and practices; a continuum of comprehensive school mental and behavioral health supports; and sustainable crisis prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery, while *rejecting* proposals that seek to overly harden our schools or allow anyone other than a commissioned school resource officer to be armed on a school campus.

For more information on how you can support schools in creating safer environment for students, you can reference *A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools*, released by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) in collaboration with organizations that represent school administrators, school mental health professionals, and school resource officers. The Framework outlines evidence-based policies and practices for improving school safety and increasing access to mental health supports for children and youth. You can find the framework at [www.nasponline.org/fsss](http://www.nasponline.org/fsss).

### **Increasing Access to School-Employed Mental Health Professionals**

One in five children and youth in our country experience a mental health disorder, and about 80% of those who need mental health support do not receive it. The vast majority of children who do receive services access them in the school setting. To ensure that students are receiving the support they need to stay in school and be active learners, there needs to be a

sustained commitment to reaching key staffing ratios of school-employed mental health professionals (e.g., school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers) in every school district. For school psychologists that ratio is 1 for every 500–700 students. Data indicates the current national ratio is approximately 1:1,382, which is half the recommended ratio. **[INSERT ANY STATE SPECIFIC DATA RELATED TO THE SHORTAGES, IF AVAILABLE]**

But remedying this requires more than hiring school-employed psychologists; it requires addressing the shortages within the profession. From a lack of qualified faculty and programs across the country to retention and burnout issues, the profession will continue to fail to meet the demands of schools and students going forward until changes are made.

For more information on shortages in school psychology, I encourage you to visit NASP's *Shortages in School Psychology Resource Guide*, which can be found at [www.nasponline.org/shortages](http://www.nasponline.org/shortages).

### **Ensuring High-Quality, Well-Rounded, Rigorous Curricula**

In addition to ensuring that kids feel safe and are receiving proper mental health support in the school setting, it is important that *all* students are held to high standards across a high-quality, well-rounded, rigorous curriculum that allows them to thrive in an increasingly global economy. This means supporting legislation that ensures funding that promotes equitable access to resources for all students and ensuring that teacher preparation, training, and professional development programs prepare teachers to work with diverse student populations. This also requires support for comprehensive education programs that teach students social–emotional competency, self-control, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills, and the ability to access and evaluate the validity of information.

For more information, I suggest you read NASP's *Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach: Guiding Principles for Effective Schools and Successful Students*, which can be found at [www.nasponline.org/rtl](http://www.nasponline.org/rtl).

On behalf of **\*\*YOUR STATE ASSOCIATION\*\***, we look forward to having the opportunity to work with you in the coming legislative session on these issues. If you have any questions, or would like to further discuss any issues related to school safety and school psychology, you can reach me at **XXX-XXX-XXXX**.

Sincerely,

**YOUR NAME**

**YOUR TOWN, YOUR STATE**

**\*YOUR TITLE\***

**\*YOUR STATE ASSOCIATION\***

**About the \*Your Association\***

**Insert about here**

Sample Letter to State Legislators  
[INSERT STATE ASSOCIATION LOGO IF APPLICABLE]

[Month Day, 2018]

[\*TITLE OF STATE LEGISLATOR \* \*FIRST and LAST NAME\*]

[Street Address]

[City, State Zip Code]

Dear \* TITLE of STATE LEGISLATOR\* \*THEIR LAST NAME\* (e.g. Dear Senator Carson),

My name is[ \*YOUR NAME\* ]. I am your constituent, a school psychologist, and a member of [\*YOUR STATE ASSOCIATION\*], an association that represents school psychologists across [\*YOURSTATE\*]. I wanted to bring to your attention a few issues that are critical to the well-being of students across our state. To reach their full potential, students require a school environment that is safe, supportive, and conducive to learning. Achieving this requires legislative support in three areas: creating safe and supportive learning environments, increasing access to school-employed mental health professionals, and ensuring comprehensive and rigorous school curricula.

### **Creating Safe and Supportive Learning Environments**

Students who do not feel safe and supported do not learn to their fullest potential. Statistically, schools are among the safest places for children, and incidents of school violence are rare and on the decline. However, we acknowledge that in light of recent events of school violence, children and their families worry about keeping their children safe at school. Efforts to create a safe and supportive school environment require a balance of physical and psychological safety. This means *supporting* policies that promote a positive school climate; effective discipline policies and practices; a continuum of comprehensive school mental and behavioral health supports; and sustainable crisis prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery, while *rejecting* proposals that seek to overly harden our schools or allow anyone other than a commissioned school resource officer to be armed on a school campus.

[INSERT ANY INFORMATION ABOUT CURRENT STATE LEVEL POLICIES OR PRACTICES RELATED TO SCHOOL SAFETY THAT YOU WANT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO]

For more information on how you can support schools in creating safer environments for students, you can reference *A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools*, released by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) in collaboration with organizations that represent school administrators, school mental health professionals, and school resource officers. The Framework outlines evidence-based policies and practices for improving school safety and increasing access to mental health supports for children and youth. You can find the framework at [www.nasponline.org/fsss](http://www.nasponline.org/fsss).

### **Increasing Access to School-Employed Mental Health Professionals**

One in five children and youth in our country experience a mental health disorder, and about 80% of those who need mental health support do not receive it. The vast majority of children who do receive services access them in the school setting. To ensure that students are receiving the support they need to stay in school and be active learners, there needs to be a sustained commitment to reaching key staffing ratios of school employed mental health professionals (e.g., school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers) in every school district. For school psychologists that ratio is 1 for every 500–700 students. Data indicate the current national ratio is approximately 1:1,382, which is half the recommended

ratio. [INSERT ANY STATE SPECIFIC DATA RELATED TO THE SHORTAGES, IF AVAILABLE]

But remedying this requires more than hiring school-employed psychologists: It requires addressing the shortages within the profession. From a lack of qualified faculty and programs across the country to retention and burnout issues, the profession will continue to fail to meet the demands of schools and students going forward until changes are made.

For more information on shortages in school psychology, I encourage you to visit NASP's *Shortages in School Psychology Resource Guide*, which can be found at [www.nasponline.org/shortages](http://www.nasponline.org/shortages).

### **Ensuring High-Quality, Well-Rounded, Rigorous Curricula**

In addition to ensuring that kids feel safe and are receiving proper mental health support in the school setting, it is important that *all* students are held to high standards across a high-quality, well-rounded, rigorous curriculum that allow them to thrive in an increasingly global economy. This means supporting legislation that ensures funding that promotes equitable access to resources for all students and ensuring that teacher preparation, training, and professional development programs prepare teachers to work with diverse student populations. This also requires support for comprehensive education programs that teach students social-emotional competency, self-control, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills, and the ability to access and evaluate the validity of information.

For more information, I suggest you read NASP's *Ready to Learn, Empowered to Teach: Guiding Principles for Effective Schools and Successful Students*, which can be found at [www.nasponline.org/rtl](http://www.nasponline.org/rtl).

Thank you for all the work that you do on behalf of our district and for taking the time to read my letter. If you have any questions, or would like to further discuss any issues related to school psychology you can reach me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or [insert PERSONAL e-mail address, do not use your work address].

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME  
YOUR TOWN, YOUR STATE

**About \*Your Association\***

Insert about here