

Maryland School Psychologists' Association

FACT SHEET

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS AND THE “MODEL LICENSURE ACT”

School psychologists are employed in all 24 Maryland school systems to provide important psychological consultation, assessment, and intervention services to at-risk students and students with disabilities. Credentialing of school psychologists is the domain of the Maryland State Department of Education. Maryland has adopted the specialist-level training standards of the National Association of School Psychologists as the entry level for the profession. The specific certificate issued by MSDE is entitled “School Psychologist.” The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) spells out graduate degree, coursework, and experience requirements that ensure a high level of training and supervised experience for all Maryland school psychologists.

Certified school psychologists are exempt from the licensing requirements of Title 18 of the Maryland Health Occupations Act when they are performing the duties of their school employment. Certified school psychologists are not entitled to practice independently without a license. Conversely, in Maryland licensed psychologists are not able to be employed by public school systems as school psychologists without also holding the COMAR School Psychologist certificate. This ensures that school psychologists have the specific training and supervised experience necessary for them to provide their highly specialized services. For 2008-2009 the 24 school systems in Maryland employ approximately 760 school psychologists.*

Maryland’s Health Occupations Act regarding licensure of psychologists is derived in large part from the “Model Act for State Licensure” of the American Psychological Association (APA). For over 30 years this document has contained a “school psychologist exemption” such as currently exists in Maryland. However, the APA is currently considering removing the exemption for school psychologists who do not hold a doctoral degree that meets their standards; it may formally adopt this position later this year. If the APA publishes a new Model Licensure Act that removes this exemption, then as a next step the APA would encourage states, including Maryland, to follow their lead and eliminate the school psychologist exemption from state law. This would essentially mean that only licensed psychologists, or a small number of doctoral trained school psychologists, could provide psychological services to Maryland students, and prevent most well trained and fully qualified school psychologists from doing so. **Elimination of the exemption would seriously curtail the ability of Maryland school systems to provide critically important and legally mandated psychological services to the students of this State.**

Currently the APA is accepting public comments on the MLA. Through June 5, 2009, interested persons can go to http://forms.apa.org/practice/modelactlicensure/dsp_form.cfm to provide comments.

If the APA does indeed adopt a Model Licensure Act that removes the school psychologist exemption, the Maryland School Psychologists’ Association would strongly oppose any moves to modify or remove the current licensure exemption from Maryland Law. MSPA is working with local school systems, MSDE, MSTA, and other professional associations to ensure that no such legislation is ever adopted here. However, we will need to be vigilant and to work closely with our colleagues and with our friends in the General Assembly, to preserve the ability of school psychologists to provide essential psychological services to Maryland school children.