

North Carolina School Psychology Association 2019 Legislative Agenda

Thank you for your support of HB 933 – Reciprocity for School Psychologist Licensure! This led to the NC State Board of Education approving a new state licensure recognition for Nationally Certified School Psychologists (NCSPs) in November 2018, thereby eliminating the competitive disadvantage NC had compared to the other 33 states that recognize the NCSP credential.

Here is why NC School Psychologists need your help again:

The Problems:

- In 2018, 13 school systems and most of the 173 charter schools in NC had no full-time School Psychologist on staff. That is over 150,000 children who are unserved by a School Psychologist. With each child unserved and underserved, the risks rise for suicide, student violence, school dropouts, etc.
- NC ranks 50th in children who received needed mental health treatment. [Commonwealth Fund Scorecard on State Health System Performance, 2018](#)
- 9.3% of NC high school students attempted suicide in 2015 (an 86% increase from 2011). [NC Child Health Report Card, 2018](#)
- Currently, the ratio of School Psychologists to NC students is 1:2,100 (the nationally recommended ratio is 1:500-700).
 - There are only 744 School Psychologists who provide services for 1.6 million NC students.
 - In short, for every 1 NC School Psychologist, we need at least 2 more to meet NC students' needs.
 - In the 2017-18 school year, NC had at least 75 vacancies, more adversely impacting rural students and communities.

NC School Psychologists and our students need your help:

Increase Access to School-Based Mental Health Services.

- Increase the number of School-Based Mental Health professionals, including School Psychologists, to address students' social-emotional and mental health needs. Research establishes that mental and behavioral wellness is directly linked to overall positive student achievement, high school graduation, prevention of risky behaviors, disciplinary incidents and substance abuse.
- When School Psychologists and school support personnel are providing comprehensive services to children, there is a clear picture of the whole child and more personalized learning. We see them in schools and know their lives, families, and friends. School Psychology is not a field that should be outsourced unless the State wishes to compromise quality of care and student outcomes.
- Improve student access to comprehensive mental health services within the school buildings. Statistically, if a needy child receives mental health services, it will be inside his/her school or not at all; therefore, it is the school itself, and the full-time school personnel therein, who best deliver these services in order to maximize outcomes and the return on investment.
- Educators want and need more School Psychologists. Families and communities agree.

Increase Pay and Positions for NC School Psychologists.

- School psychologists are certified with advanced degrees as a NC licensing requirement. NC will remain unable to fill the current school psychologist vacancies without significantly increasing salaries. Neighboring states offer higher salaries which detracts top candidates from NC.
- Significantly increasing pay will incentivize out-of-state School Psychologists to move to NC schools; this must happen in order to make progress toward the 1:500-700 nationally-recommended ratio.

Who Are We and How Do We Serve NC Students? School Psychologists...

- Provide trauma-informed care and support to students experiencing adverse childhood experiences, such as abuse, opioid addiction, natural disaster recovery, homelessness, foster care, life-threatening illness, neighborhood violence, poverty, and more.
- Recognize, wherever possible, student safety risks such as self-injury, suicide, and threats to others. Intervene, conduct risk and threat assessments, and/or connect students to the appropriate level of school and community supports: providing critical continuity of care within the current realities of staffing shortages.
- Provide students the right academic and social-emotional interventions, at the right time.
- Support schools' and families' understanding of their students with disabilities.
- Consult with schools, students and their families to decrease suspensions for increased educational success.
- Help educators, other school mental health professionals, and administrators with students' behavioral and social-emotional health so that the classroom environment is one where all students can learn and be safe.
- Are the psychologists who know the most about education and the educators who know the most about psychology.