

The Model Act and Arizona by Claudia Weiss, NCSP

Background

You may already be aware of the proposed changes to the American Psychological Association's Model Act for State Licensure of Psychologists from the last Intervention, from AASP e-mail alerts, or from information provided by NASP.

In a nutshell, the Model Act is APA's recommended language for states to draft legislation and regulations for licensing psychologists. Most states, Arizona included, currently have in their psychologist licensing standards an exemption for school psychologists employed by school districts and certified by the State Department of Education. This is consistent with the last APA Model Act from 1987, indicating Arizona has followed APA's lead in the past.

The proposed Model Act recommends restricting the use of the term "psychologist" to those who have a doctoral degree **and** are licensed. The proposed changes also recommend that **psychological practice** be limited to those who hold doctoral degrees **and** are licensed. (This means the Model Act is not so benign as to result in a simple name change: it affects practice.) If our state licensing board adapted those changes, we could lose our ability to **practice** school psychology in any setting.

What about Arizona?

Arizona's Statutes for Licensure – which includes the exemption for school psychologists employed by school districts and credentialed through the Arizona Department of Education – was revised in January of 2008. ADE's standards are consistent with the NASP Standards for Credentialing, requiring a minimum of 60 hours of graduate training in school psychology and a 1200 clock-hour internship. The Department of Education certification language also states, "A school psychology certificate is required for personnel whose primary responsibility is the role of a school psychologist." As is the case nationwide, the majority of Arizona's school psychologists hold a specialist-level degree and are not licensed.

What could happen in Arizona?

If the proposed Model Act goes through, the Arizona Board of Psychologist Examiners could choose to remove or not remove the exemption for school psychologists employed in school settings and certified by ADE. If the exemption were to be removed, there would be conflicts between the Arizona Department of Education certification of school psychologists and the Statutes for Licensure. Because school psychologists are not eligible for private practice in Arizona anyway, the effects would be felt solely by the ADE and by school districts everywhere that are already experiencing shortages of school psychologists. The bureaucratic maelstrom that could result from the inconsistency

between governing bodies would detract time, energy, and attention away from Arizona's children and families.

Any good news?

The good news is that school psychologists in Arizona are well-respected and valued. Although we often operate behind the scenes in our school districts, those who have worked with us understand our unique blend of training in both education and psychology.

What do we do now?

AASP had created a Task Force to monitor and address possible changes resulting from the proposed Model Act. We are in the process of developing information sessions across the state to educate members about how everyone can do their part to help. In the meantime, if you would like an AASP Task Force member to present at your district's school psychologists' meeting or to other stakeholders in your district, please contact Kathleen Rahn (kprahn@cox.net) or me (cwnaz@yahoo.com). If you want to help serve on the task force, please let us know as soon as possible.