



Michigan Psychological Association

The Michigan Psychological Association membership represents the interests of psychologists and the mental health needs of the public by maintaining the highest standards of psychology through the promotion of professional excellence, leadership, scholarship, advocacy, and training.

The APA Summit on the Future of Education and Practice
Implications for the Master's Issue in Michigan
Joy Wolfe Ensor, PhD and Jeff Toepler, MA
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For the last two years, MPA's Master's Committee has worked tirelessly to move the Master's issue forward in Michigan. Thanks to these efforts, in July 2021 the MPA Board passed the following motions:

- MPA, consistent with APA position statements, recognizes the value that Michigan LLPs offer Michiganders as part of a high quality and culturally competent mental health/substance use workforce.
- MPA recognizes that the current licensing law creates inequities between LLPs and other Master's-trained clinicians in a manner that (a) is not competency-based, (b) restrains commerce and (c) limits Michiganders' access to mental health/substance use treatment.
- MPA supports independent practice for LLPs in the area of psychotherapy upon completion of 4000 hours of supervised post-Master's clinical experience.
- MPA supports nomenclature for LLP practitioners that includes the term "psychology."
- MPA will support legislation that includes the items approved above.

In subsequent meetings, the Board addressed scope (particularly around levels of psychological assessment and interpretation) and title for Master's degree psychology practitioners' independent practice – two sticking points that have vexed our psychology communities for decades.

As the issue was being discussed within MPA, the effort to embrace a definition of psychology as a multi-tiered profession was gaining momentum at APA as well.

First, APA developed accreditation standards for Master's degree programs in health service psychology. Following a period of review and public comment (to which MPA contributed), APA approved these standards in February 2021.

Second, on January 28-30 of this year, APA convened an Assembly on the Value and Distinctiveness of the Doctoral Degree in Psychology, a gathering of thought leaders representing a diversity of communities. MPA members Joy Wolfe Ensor, PhD and Katelyn Coddair, MA, LLP, were among the invitees.

Most recently, on October 21-23, APA convened another gathering of some 150 psychology professionals for a Summit on the Future of Education and Practice. The Summit's ultimate goal is to align education and practice around a shared vision and roadmap for the future of health service psychology. The invitees were assigned to five intersecting pillars: Workforce Development, Independent Practice, Educational Competencies, Technology, and Licensure/Regulations.

Joy Wolfe Ensor and Katelyn Coddair joined the Independent Practice pillar. Jeff Toepler, MA, chair of MPA's Master's Committee, joined the Licensing/Regulations pillar, which is tasked with defining the scope and title of Master's-degree psychology practitioners. The Scope and Title group will continue working on this issue over the next year.

APA will incorporate the recommendations from all the work groups into a new model licensing law that can be adapted for state legislatures across the country – including, we hope, Michigan.

In his introductory remarks, APA's Chief of Professional Practice (and former MPA President) Jared Skillings emphasized that justice, equity, diversity and inclusion are foundational to our profession's efforts to reduce health care disparities. These efforts include growing a more diverse psychology workforce.

BIPOC and other minoritized populations are under-represented among doctoral level psychologists, in part because the time and money involved in attaining the doctorate make the terminal Master's the degree of choice for many. As such, supporting Master's-degree psychology professionals is an important part of diversifying the psychology workforce and addressing the treatment needs of our communities.

APA's vision and MPA's align around a number of key elements that pertain to the future of psychology practice in our state:

- There are distinctions in education and training between the Master's and Doctoral degrees; some "top-of-license" competencies (such as those eligible for the ABPP diplomate) are in the province of doctoral trained psychologists. We are well advised to clarify where our tiers of practice overlap and where they are distinct.
- Professional development is not static; rather, new credentials and competencies are career-long achievements and do not stop with the attainment of the terminal degree. Equity calls on us to consider alternate pathways for aligning scope of practice with demonstrated credentials and competencies.

- APA's leadership in accreditation and model licensure laws will help reduce disparities and inequities in credentialing practices within and across states.

MPA is committed to being an inclusive association that supports psychology graduate students, professionals and licensees at all levels of training. It is thanks to the Master's Committee's engagement in MPA leadership that we now have a seat at this important national table. We are excited and hopeful that the upcoming year will see accelerated progress toward our longstanding goal of equity and inclusion in the psychology workforce. This includes promulgating a new licensing law that will establish scopes of independent practice in our multi-tiered profession, and that will level the playing field between Michigan LLPs and other Master's degree mental health providers in our state.

Watch this space.

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