

PRACTITIONER REPORT

The Problem of Licensure Mobility

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Psychologists seeking to obtain a license in another state, whether for purpose of relocation, for a multi-state practice, or for engaging in tele-health, might find themselves facing a real nightmare. The Board of Psychology in the new state might ask the psychologist to jump over many hurdles, such as producing notarized supervision forms, when some of the supervisors have retired or passed on. As former APA President Pat DeLeon (2000) has observed, “few psychologists realize how difficult it is to get relicensed in a new state.”

The problem arises because each state determines the qualifications for professional licensure. By 1977, all states had enacted a psychology licensure law, however with a great deal of variation in the requirements. The APA Practice Directorate, using the APA Model Licensure law, has attempted to reduce some of this variation in order to promote mobility. However, many variations remain.

Other professions have addressed this problem. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing has endorsed a model based on the driver’s license, in which mechanisms exist for mutual recognition and reciprocity. Licensure is recognized across state lines, with the nurse subject to the laws and rules of the new state. So too, the pharmacists facilitate mobility through uniform licensure requirements and a clearinghouse program which transfers the pharmacists license to the new state, verifying background information and screening for disciplinary actions.

APA has been attempting to address this problem. The APA Council of Representatives at the February 2001 meeting gave formal approval to an ongoing strategic plan developed by the Committee for the Advancement of Professional Practice (CAPP) for helping to provide a climate within which existing mechanisms for professional mobility can continue to develop.

CAPP, at Council's request, had been implementing a strategic plan to provide a supportive environment for giving visibility to the existing mechanisms for professional mobility available through the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology (National Register), the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB), and the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP). CAPP conducted programs at the annual State Leadership Conference, disseminated invited articles to state and provisional psychological association newsletters, and took other strategic actions. In February, Council approved the continuation of this plan, and as a result, additional articles on the status of the various mobility mechanisms have been, and will continue to be published, as appropriate, in APA and Practice Directorate publications (e.g., Smith, 2001, Sullivan, 2000-01), additional conference programs will be arranged, and meetings among parties of interest will be facilitated. In addition, the author and Jay Benedict, Associate Editors of the journal, Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, are preparing a special section on this issue..

Background

The information in this section of the column has been drawn from various APA governance documents. In February 2000 Council suspended its rules and approved a new business item, titled "Reciprocity of Licensure Among States", introduced by Dr's. Carol Goodheart, Ron Levant, and 20 other Council Representatives. This item affirmed that the attainment of reciprocity of licensure and other mechanisms for professional mobility are

urgently needed. It directed CAPP, as the lead group, and BPA to work in collaboration with ASPPB to develop a plan to achieve this goal.

In March, 2000, CAPP and the Practice Directorate made time available before the start of the State Leadership Conference for representatives of state psychology licensing boards and state psychological associations to meet to discuss mobility, in a forum coordinated by ASPPB. This was the second consecutive year for this particular forum.

At its meeting later in March, 2000, CAPP discussed the Council item and decided to convene a conference call among representatives of CAPP, BPA, and ASPPB to determine what would be most helpful in promoting mobility. This call took place in June, 2000. It highlighted several relevant issues, including the type of support that APA could provide, the potential implications of technology changes and tele-health for licensure, and the recognition that other organizations have also developed initiatives to facilitate licensure for psychologists moving to different states. Of considerable importance, the participants on the call noted that there are two different mechanisms for promoting professional mobility: **Reciprocity**, which refers to agreements between jurisdictions in which states are willing to recognize each other's licensees based on comparable requirements for licensure, and **Endorsement**, which is a vehicle to recognize individuals as having met a high standard qualification, such as the Certificate of Professional Qualification (CPQ) developed by ASPPB which is accepted by jurisdictions as meeting most of the qualifications for licensure. In the past 10 years only 10 states have entered into reciprocity agreements. This makes endorsement the more promising mechanism for promoting mobility since more than two dozen states are in various stages of recognizing the more recently developed CPQ.

In July, 2000, CAPP continued discussion of this issue with representatives of ASPPB and the National Register. CAPP noted that decisions about licensure reciprocity and mobility are not the province of APA but rather of state and provincial psychology boards. CAPP also noted that BPA has a work group examining tele-health issues, and that these issues are clearly relevant to any consideration of reciprocity and mobility. CAPP felt that it could take two additional actions supportive of reciprocity and mobility at the present time: 1) provide a climate and create an environment in which existing mechanisms for mobility can flourish, by informing members about the various mechanisms for mobility offered by ASPPB, the National Register, and the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP); 2) inform Council of the distinctions between reciprocity and endorsement, and the status of the latter as being the mobility mechanism more widely accepted by states and provinces.

As part of providing a climate to support existing mechanisms for mobility, CAPP offered to compile and disseminate to state and provincial psychological associations (SPPAs) invited articles written by ABPP, ASPPB, and the National Register about the various mechanisms and initiatives each has developed to promote licensure reciprocity and mobility. Each of the organizations was contacted and agreed to prepare a brief article suitable for publication in SPPA newsletters. These 3 articles were circulated in September, 2000, and have been reprinted in various SPPA newsletters.

In October, 2000, CAPP reviewed the progress made in publicizing the various mechanisms for promoting mobility and the increasing acceptance which these mechanisms are receiving, and decided that a continuation of the current strategy would be recommended to the Board and Council. In December, 2000, the Board of Directors approved the strategic plan prepared by CAPP.

Mechanisms to Mobility: Implications for Practitioners

At this point in time it seems clear that the need for mobility for psychologists will continue to increase. However, since we really don't know how events will unfold in the future, all of the vehicles for increasing psychologists' mobility should be supported. We need all of our "oars in the water," so to speak. Readers are encouraged to contact the sponsoring organizations to learn more about each of the mobility mechanisms: the National Register, the ASPPB , and ABPP.

As always, I welcome your thoughts on this column. You can most easily contact me via email: Rlevant@aol.com.

References

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Biographical Sketch

Ronald F. Levant, Ed.D., A.B.P.P., is a candidate for APA President. He is in his second term as Recording Secretary of the American Psychological Association. He was the Chair of the APA Committee for the Advancement of Professional Practice (CAPP) from 1993-95 , a member of the Board of Directors of Division 29 (1991-94), a member at large of the APA Board of Directors (1995-97), and APA Recording Secretary (1998-2000). He is Dean, Center for Psychological Studies, Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, FL.