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## Guidelines for School Psychology Graduate Programs in the Provision of Continuing Professional Development

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## Guidelines for School Psychology Graduate Programs in the Provision of Continuing Professional Development

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*“The school psychology [graduate preparation] program provides for, collaborates in, or contributes to relevant continuing professional development opportunities for practicing school psychologists.” (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010, p. 10).*

### BACKGROUND

Continuing professional development (CPD) is an ethical responsibility that benefits children, families, and schools. However, there are other good reasons why a school psychologist must remain current regarding developments in research, training, and professional practice:

- To maintain certification or licensure from one’s state department of education for practice in the schools.
- To maintain certification as a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP; See Nationally Certified School Psychologist Renewal Guidelines: NASP Continuing Professional Development Program, [www.nasponline.org/certification](http://www.nasponline.org/certification)).
- To maintain licensure as a school psychologist to practice in the private sector, as required by state licensing boards.
- To maintain a credential in a specific skill area, as recognized by a professional association, such as in applied behavior analysis or play therapy.

School psychology training programs vary widely in how they provide CPD. For example, many work collaboratively with their state professional association, local school districts, or state department of education. Formats for training vary from courses and workshops to self-study and professional learning communities.

The purpose of this technical assistance brief (TAB) is to present guidelines that might be useful to school psychology programs in providing CPD. It is beyond the scope of this TAB to attempt to provide comprehensive guidelines as to the specific content of CPD. Each locality has its own needs, but some broad content areas are apparent. For example, the application of the prevention-focused public health service model to public education has been characterized by many as a paradigmatic shift in the role of the

school psychologist, and it requires strong skills in data analysis and systemic consultation. Simultaneously, ongoing concerns with the impact of unmet student mental health needs on achievement and safety underline the need for strong skills in consultation, counseling, and crisis intervention. The need for school psychology training programs to provide a broad spectrum of training experiences targeting both prevention and intervention is apparent (Unruh & McKellar, 2013, p. 96). This TAB focuses on how CPD might best be provided, irrespective of its content.

## **GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

The American Psychological Association’s Council of Representatives (2013) recently approved 11 principles of quality CPD (and continuing education) that are helpful in guiding school psychology programs.

Guided by these principles, CPD should:

- Be evidence-based, supported by research as to both its content and method of delivery.
- Be designed to enhance and improve not only participants’ professional practice but also service to the public, contributions to the profession, and the development of interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration.
- Reflect current research on diversity, be committed to a multiculturally competent approach, respect issues of diversity, and address the needs of underrepresented populations.
- Include evaluation of the learning experience and assessment of its outcomes.
- Build on graduate training, while including training in specific areas, ranging from introductory to advanced levels based on the needs of the participants.
- Incorporate quality formal continuing education as a central component.
- Utilize presenters with established expertise in the targeted content and/or skill area and who incorporate input from participants as to the value and usefulness of the training provided.
- Incorporate multiple teaching methods to enhance learning and the translation of learning into practice.
- Be accessible to all participants, including those with disabilities.
- Include a focus on the active engagement of the learner.
- Make a clear connection between learned content and its application within the learner’s professional context.

Several of the guidelines above reflect a shift over the past several decades in how CPD is best conceptualized and provided—a shift from a traditional, didactic approach focusing on dissemination of content knowledge to a more holistic and self-directed learning approach that emphasizes professional learning and application of skills (Webster-Wright, 2009). The latter approach is best situated within a professional learning community that supports learning, as opposed to a more student-centered college course or didactic workshop.

Drawing from the principles above and supporting research, the following guidelines are offered to graduate programs in school psychology in providing CPD:

- Actively support (throughout their course of training) graduate students’ participation in local, state, and national school psychology professional associations. More specifically, actively promote students’

participation and presentation (e.g., posters, workshops) in the professional development events that these associations sponsor. Such pregraduation involvement is likely to facilitate their continued postgraduation involvement and leadership within these organizations and their professional development functions, as well as reinforce a strong self-directed approach to lifelong learning.

- Survey school psychologists (and related professionals) in the region to identify specific topics of need and interest. Electronic survey methods such as Survey Monkey and Qualtrics can facilitate such needs assessments.
- Actively partner with schools, school districts, state departments of education, and local, state, and national professional associations in the creation of relevant and engaging professional learning experiences. Also consider alumni associations and additional associations outside of school psychology, such as those representing general or special education groups, clinical psychologists, school counselors, educational leaders, and others.
- Become a NASP-approved, APA-approved, and/or State Board-approved provider of continuing education. (Note that NASP-approved school psychology programs are automatically granted NASP-approved provider status for purpose of CPD.)
- Provide highly interactive, context-intensive, needs-responsive CPD opportunities that emphasize application of content and skills learned to professional practice.
- Target not only school psychologists in CPD opportunities but also professionals with shared interests and needs.
- Sponsor more effective networking among school psychology graduate programs, school districts, and school psychology professional organizations. Such enhanced communication ensures that the needs of the districts, the professional concerns of the associations, and the content of graduate training are aligned and remain sensitive to changes in professional practice parameters. For example, at Nova Southeastern University, we initiated the Tri-county School Psychology Consortium, which focused on coordinating programs and field training among three local school districts, three graduate programs in school psychology, and three local professional organizations.
- Seek supportive funding, such as grants, for CPD from state and federal agencies. Innovative and promising intervention initiatives (e.g., motivational interviewing training as a school-based intervention for at-risk students) are often grant-supported. This applies not only to training grants but also to many research grants that attempt to demonstrate program effectiveness.
- Provide university graduate courses of varying duration (e.g., from one credit to multiple credits leading to a certificate) that are based on specific identified needs of the targeted participants.
- Advertise CPD opportunities. In addition to traditional announcements via flyers, newsletters, and Listserv, consider coordinating with the marketing department of your university.
- Offer CPD at times, locations, and formats that are most convenient to participants. Many practicing school psychologists are finding it more and more difficult to secure professional leave to attend events during the workday. Therefore, exploration of nontraditional delivery methods for professional learning experiences—such as webinars, online training modules, and evening or weekend scheduling formats—is recommended.

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## APPENDIX

### NASP NCSP Renewal Requirements Pertaining to CPD

A hallmark of the NCSP system has always been its promotion of high-quality CPD. For many years, school psychologists who hold the NCSP have been required to engage in activities designed to maintain, expand, and extend their professional training and skills. To further encourage high-quality CPD, the National School Psychology Certification Board has instituted two recent CPD content standards, as described below.

#### 1. NASP- or APA-Approved Provider Requirement

The NASP-Approved Provider System was created to assist school psychologists in obtaining quality professional development. NASP-approved providers must demonstrate that their offerings align with NASP practice guidelines, are provided by qualified professionals, and are intended to enhance professional competencies, skills, or knowledge.

NCSPs must obtain 10 of the 75 CPDs required for renewal from NASP- or APA-approved providers during each 3-year renewal period.

Requiring that a portion of CPD credits come from approved providers assists NCSPs in obtaining appropriate instructional level, content, documentation, and administrative practices for CPD activities. It is generally regarded that requiring high-quality, relevant continuing education is one of the hallmarks of a profession. Physicians, lawyers, accountants, licensed counselors, speech pathologists, and others are required to obtain all or part of their continuing education from approved providers. Continuing education by approved providers assists professionals in accessing recognized, high-quality activities that enhance their professional growth and meet accepted standards.

NASP's annual convention and summer conferences offer valuable opportunities to earn approved provider CPD credits. In addition, one can use NASP's [Online Learning Center](#).

A list of NASP-approved providers, including a number of state associations, is available at <http://www.nasponline.org/profdevel/approvedprovider/apdirectory.aspx>. NASP also accepts credits from providers approved by the [American Psychological Association](#) (APA; <http://www.apa.org/>).

#### 2. Ethical Practice and Legal Regulation of School Psychology CPD Requirement

NCSPs must also accrue 3 hours of CPD regarding ethical practice and/or the legal regulation of school psychology. Legal regulation of school psychology refers to IDEA, NCLB, Section 504, and similar issues. This requirement may be met with any appropriate CPD activity category.

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To help meet this requirement, hours of convenient and affordable NASP- and APA-approved CPD in ethical practice and legal regulation are available through the Online Learning Center at <https://nasp.inreachce.com>. In addition, the book *Professional Ethics for School Psychologists: A Problem-Solving Model Casebook*, and the chapters on ethics in the latest edition of *Best Practices in School Psychology* can be used for self-study.

Questions? Contact the NASP Certification department at [cert@naspweb.org](mailto:cert@naspweb.org).

*Developed by the Technical Assistance Group of the NASP Graduate Education Workgroup*

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