

An Update from the OPA President

Dear colleagues:

I would like to address three specific points in this brief column, volunteerism, membership, and OPA by-laws revision.

The first many of us have family and friends residing in the areas affected by Hurricane Harvey. I am sure that all have seen the news and video of the flooding and the suffering of those that have lost family, homes, and possessions of a lifetime. I would like therefore to suggest you consider becoming a member of the American Psychological Association's Disaster Response Network (DRN). The DRN works with the American Red Cross in providing psychologists to respond to disasters across the United States. At the present time, the DRN has approximately 2,500 psychologists nationwide serving as volunteers and more psychologists are needed in the Southcentral and Southwestern United States. To obtain additional information contact the APA DRN office at pracpr@apa.org.

Secondly, I would like to call your attention to the fact that we are a small professional organization. With the membership of just slightly over 170 members and with over 500 licensed psychologists in the state of Oklahoma it should be obvious that OPA is not as influential as it could be. With only approximately 20% of the active psychologists in Oklahoma lifting the weight and carrying the ball to advance psychology among the citizens of Oklahoma, as well as, protecting the practice of psychology through our ongoing legislative efforts we just are not as influential as we need to be to fully accomplish our stated mission.

OPA Mission

“. . . to advance psychology as a science and profession and as a means of promoting human welfare by the encouragement of psychology in all its branches in the broadest manner; by lobbying Oklahoma legislators and members of regulatory agencies to protect and advance the interests of psychologists; by the promotion of research in psychology and improvements of research methods and conditions; by the improvement of the qualifications and usefulness of psychologists through high standards of professional ethics, conduct, education, and achievement; by the increase and diffusion of psychological knowledge through meetings,

professional contacts, reports, papers, discussion, and findings to the promotions of the public welfare.”

It is painfully obvious that we would be much more effective in being able to fulfill the OPA mission if we were a larger more dynamic organization. We require many more active, not just active by dues paying but by active participation and involvement in the association's activities. Over the past 18 months, the membership committee has taken great steps in trying to contact those that are not members of OPA as well as those that have recently failed to renew their membership in OPA. However, membership is not just the function of the membership committee alone; membership is the responsibility of each member of the association. Therefore, I challenge each one of you to reach out to a non-member psychologist during the next 2 months before our annual meeting and invite them to join OPA. We need to reach each qualifying non-member psychologist and invite him or her to be part of the effort to educate the citizens of Oklahoma to the value of our profession, as well as, the ongoing OPA efforts to defend our professional license; aid in the efforts increase access to care and; insure reasonable rates of reimbursement for services provided. Just imagine if we could reverse these numbers and have 80% of the licensed psychologists in Oklahoma as OPA members. The association could accomplish more programs in public education, as well as, increasing our ability to impress on the minds of the Oklahoma legislature the value of our services, and the need to insure they are available to the citizens of the State. Let me paraphrase former APA President Pat DeLeon, those that are not members of the association are parasites. Although that may sound brutal it isn't, non-members are benefiting from your membership in OPA as they benefit directly from the legislative efforts of OPA in the protection of their licenses, and scope of practice not to mention in the protection of reimbursements rates from state agencies and indirectly from insurance companies. So please make an effort to obtain a new member to OPA, as you are not only helping the Association but yourself as well. Without a strong and vibrant OPA, the profession in Oklahoma would surely quickly disappear.

Let us not forget that not only are we a science but a health profession. A review of the APA model doctoral program and the Examination in the Professional Practice of Psychology shows that at least 60 percent of our education and training is directly medically related. This can be seen with over lapping requirements in the biological basis of behavior, the ability to differentiate physical and mental disorders, an understanding of the impact of medications can have on cognitive functioning, and ability to appropriately diagnose and treat not only psychological problems such as depression and anxiety but the psychological aspects of physical illnesses such as cancer, diabetes, obesity, etc. In fact, the overlap of psychology and medicine is so great that there has been at least one program that combined the Ph.D. in psychology with an MD.

The third point I wish to raise is that hopefully in the next few days you will be seeing the efforts of the OPA Board to revise the OPA By-laws. This effort has been no small task by your Board of Directors. For nearly a year, the board has met and discussed changes that were

needed to make the operation of your Association simpler and more responsive to membership. We have streamlined the organizational structure and clarified the election and if needed the process for filling board vacancies. When these by-laws are available, please review them and be prepared to vote on their adoption at the annual meeting.

Finally, next year will be one of the most aggressive we have had legislatively in many years you will learn more at the annual meeting in November so make your plans to attend today if you haven't already done so.

Thank You,

Gil Sanders, EdD

OPA, President