

Statement on Paid School Psychology Internships

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Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs (CDSPP)
Division 16 of the American Psychological Association (APA)
National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Graduate Education Committee
Trainers of School Psychologists (TSP)

The Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs (CDSPP), Division 16 of the American Psychological Association (APA), National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Graduate Education Committee, and Trainers of School Psychologists (TSP) support the need for all specialist and doctoral level school psychology students to receive a stipend for their internship that is fair in relation to the time and services provided, and the setting and geographic location of the internship. The compensation and benefits, along with assurance of adequate supervision by qualified personnel and other support for interns should be included in a written internship agreement.

NASP (NASP, 2020), the American Psychological Association (APA, 2015), and CDSPP (CDSPP, 2017) standards or guidelines for graduate preparation all call for students to complete a supervised internship on a full-time basis for one year or part-time basis within two years. The minimum number of expected internship hours leaves little, if any time for interns to perform additional work to support themselves, particularly those with families and other responsibilities. In some cases this can pose an insurmountable barrier that prevents students from completing school psychology training. Additionally, many graduate students in the United States incur substantial debt over the course of their studies (Delisle, 2014), which can contribute to significant physical, mental, and long-term financial health problems for students (Wilcox et al., 2019). Thus, it is critical that school psychology interns receive a stipend to both compensate them for services provided to field sites and keep them from falling further into debt.

Paid internships are a valuable recruiting device at a time when shortages in the field make recruitment *critical*. Recruiting graduate students of color is particularly important to diversifying the profession and meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse P-12 student population. Such graduate students are more likely to have incurred student loan debt prior to the internship (Espinosa et al., 2019) and can ill-afford to incur additional debt while completing an unpaid internship.

Recent data suggest that just over 75% of specialist level and almost 90% of doctoral level school psychology students who completed internships in the United States in 2019-2020 received stipends (Prus, 2021). Thus, most field sites recognize the need to pay a stipend to school psychology interns and have the financial ability to do so. However, there are substantial regional and state differences among programs in the likelihood that students will receive internship compensation (Prus et al., 2014; Prus, 2021). For example, based on entries in the NASP program database only about 28% of specialist interns attending school psychology programs in New England states were paid in 2019-2020 (Prus, 2021). This leaves much room for improvement.

Paid internships would be consistent with the requirements of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC, 2020) and APA (APA, 2015). Such financial support can help enhance student recruitment, increase the range of internship opportunities for those who otherwise could not participate in unpaid internships, and ease the overall burden of school psychology student debt. Thus, CDSPP, Division 16 of APA, the NASP Graduate

Education Committee, and TSP support paid internships for all specialist and doctoral school psychology students and encourage school psychology faculty and program directors to work with states and field sites to attain 100% paid internships.

References

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