



# Alaska Psychological Association

Advancing psychology as a science, a profession, and a means of promoting health and welfare

February 24, 2016

Senator Pete Kelly, Co-Chair  
Senator Anna MacKinnon, Co-Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
Alaska State Capitol Building  
Juneau, AK 99801-1120

## **RE: Proposed Medicaid Reform Legislation**

Dear Senate Finance Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

The Alaska Psychological Association would like to propose a change in the Medicaid Regulations which would include Doctoral Psychological Interns as mental health professionals providing billable services. Doctoral Psychology Interns are a portion of highly trained individuals who could be providing quality mental health services to Medicaid populations.

Psychology training differs from that of Masters level professionals. Doctoral students in psychology must successfully complete a full-time, one-year, supervised doctoral internship to meet graduation requirements for their Ph.D. or Psy.D. The internship is parallel to the residency for physicians; however, physicians receive their M.D. or D.O. degree immediately prior to the start residency year. Before the start of internship, Doctoral Psychological Interns have completed all required coursework for the doctoral degree which involves 4-5 years of full time class work and research activity, as well as several years of supervised clinical practicum (typically a minimum of 1000 direct service hours). They have also completed a Master's Degree (or equivalent) and many have proposed their doctoral dissertations. The internship represents the capstone clinical training requirement for the doctorate.

State licensing requirements and the American Psychological Association (APA) mandate that Doctoral Psychological Interns must receive weekly clinical supervision equivalent to a minimum of two hours of individual and two hours of group. Their supervisors must be licensed in Alaska and maintain responsibility for the client caseloads, as well as be physically present on the premises where the internship occurs. Doctoral Psychological Interns continue to be affiliated with their host university doctoral programs, and thus are also supervised and monitored by the university program's Director of Clinical Training.

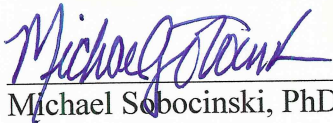
Given the current review of Medicaid expansion, increasing the availability of well-qualified mental health providers could not be timelier. We have approximately 225 licensed psychologists in the state of Alaska and around 8-10 Doctoral Psychology Interns. Currently, potential training sites and supervising psychologists are reluctant to take on the financial responsibility of an intern, as interns cannot be reimbursed for their services through Medicaid.

*Doctoral Psychology Interns already bill for Medicaid services in numerous states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Utah, Oregon, and Wyoming. As an*

example, you can access the Senate Bill 832 passed in Oregon  
<https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2015R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/SB832>.

In conclusion, Doctoral Psychology Interns are subject to strict supervision and training requirements and typically have more formal education and training than Master's level interns. Thus, Doctoral Psychology Interns, with appropriate supervision, should be able to bill under the psychotherapy and psychological testing codes. This will allow for more training sites and opportunities in Alaska that will attract and retain more interns, thus providing more qualified providers to serve our growing communities. These interns are then likely to remain in our state and become resident Licensed Psychologists.

Our association hopes that you strongly consider this win-win situation for all and stands ready to assist you in your efforts. Please consider us as a resource.



Michael Sobocinski, PhD  
President, Alaska Psychological Association

cc: Members of Senate Finance Committee  
Valerie Davidson, Commissioner, DHSS  
Randall Burns, Division of Behavior Health, DHSS