

## Brief On Expanding Psychologists' Scope of Practice to Include Prescriptive Authority

- What is a Prescribing Psychologist (RxP): a fully independent, licensed psychologist who has also received specific training and been licensed to prescribe psychotropic medication. A prescribing psychologist is eligible to obtain a DEA registration number.
- In practice, a prescribing psychologist has a formulary consisting of psychotropic medications and communicates with the patient's primary health care practitioner who oversees the patient's general medical care.

### Current State of RxP in the US:

- ✓ **Five states have passed RxP Legislation**  
New Mexico 2002, Louisiana 2004, Illinois 2014, Iowa 2016, Idaho 2017
- ✓ **Federal Agencies Permitting RxP: Department of Defense (DOD)** (Army, Navy, Air Force), **Indian Health Service (IHS)** and **Public Health Service Corps (PHS)**

### Washington State: Unmet Behavior Health Needs

#### *Lack of Access to Psychiatric Prescribers*

Washington State scored 45<sup>th</sup> when compared to other States on an overall measure of mental illness prevalence and access to care (Mental Health America, 2020)

Washington Behavioral Health Workforce, chartered by the Governor and Legislature, report that “**the demand for behavioral healthcare is outstripping the availability of service**” (2016)

“...the **psychiatrist workforce will continue to contract** through 2024...it is unclear whether the shortage will completely resolve by 2050” Satiani et al., (2018).

The vast **majority of psychotropic medications are not prescribed by a practitioner (e.g., psychiatrist) with specialized training** in behavioral health services. (Mark et al., 2009)

Ten of the 13 mental health regions in **Washington State** were more than **10% below the state ratio** of psychiatrist FTEs per 100,000 in a 2005 survey (Baldwin et al., 2005)

- **Number of Psychiatrists in Washington: 570**  
(US Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018)
- **Number of Psychologists in Washington: 3110**  
(WA State Examining Board of Psychologists)

## Is RxP Safe?

### *Over 25 years of Safe Prescribing:*

- ❖ Since the inception of prescribing psychology in 1991 in the Department of Defense there have been no reported instances of inappropriate or harmful prescribing by RxPs.
- ❖ 47 Medical providers who have worked with a prescribing psychologist **overwhelmingly rated RxPs as safe, effective and well-trained.** (Shearer et al., 2012)
- ❖ 22 Medical providers who have worked with prescribing psychologists **overwhelmingly rated RxPs as safe, knowledgeable about psychotropic medication,** and would refer patients to them for psychotropic medication management. (Linda and McGrath, 2017).
- ❖ In addition, the **APA has published practice guidelines** regarding psychologists' involvement in pharmacological issues. The practice guidelines recommend general principles for optimal professional practice.

## Are there training programs and competency assessment measures?

### *Training Programs:*

- National training standards were developed by the American Psychological Association.
- The American Psychological Association has established a process for designating postdoctoral education and training programs in psychopharmacology  
<http://www.apa.org/education/grad/psychopharmacology.aspx>
- The postdoctoral clinical psychopharmacology training program standards allow for distance learning as it pertains to the didactic component
  - **Current Designated RxP Training Programs:**
    - Alliant International University, California, Masters Program
    - New Mexico State University, Masters Program
    - Fairleigh Dickinson University, New Jersey, Masters Program
- **National Exam: Psychopharmacology Exam for Psychologists (PEP)**  
The American Psychological Association (APA) has developed a national competency examination for prescriptive authority.  
  
A detailed breakdown of the content areas for the PEP is located at the following website:  
<http://www.apapracticecentral.org/ce/courses/pep-info.aspx>
- **Supervised Practice**  
All states licensing or certifying psychologists to prescribe have regulations directing supervised practice before permitting independent prescribing.