



March 23, 2020

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Director, OPCA and Associate Executive Director, Education

Dear Dr. Wall,

We hope that you are doing well in the face of unprecedented challenges facing our country and the world.

The Society for Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Psychology: Division 39 of APA has been contacted by several student members who have voiced concern about training expectations for Interns and the unique challenges they are facing. Though there was a joint statement made On March 20 by The Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC), the American Psychological Association (APA), the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) and the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB) concerning COVID-19, we would like to encourage training councils, healthcare facilities, and graduate programs to consider the limitations Interns face in safely communicating their concerns to site administrators, recommending the maximum amount of flexibility in work assignment as possible, and ensuring maximum safety protocols.

Though many internship sites have adapted to unprecedented times by moving patient care to telepsychology and, in some cases, telesupervision, there are still Interns in urban areas who are concerned about exposure when traveling to a work site (e.g., using public transportation) and about the possibility of infecting patients without knowing they are carriers, as well as risks to their own health and safety if an institution were not following CDC guidelines. In such cases, Interns may have to incur additional expenses out of pocket to take measures to maximize their safety and to protect other students, patients and staff. Though the issues involved in making decisions on whether an Intern is “essential” or whether services provided to clients outweighs personal risk is a highly complicated one, reminding everyone involved in these decisions that Interns and trainees are in a vulnerable position and may not have sufficient professional experience to implicitly understand and process the complexity of these decisions. Moreover, they face unique power differential based on the fact that their degree attainment is affected by their participation in internship. They have worked toward their degrees for 5+ years. It is extremely vital that individuals with decision making power bring a

compassionate and kind approach to how they make decisions and how they communicate and implement them for trainees.

With this in mind, we would like to offer some on-going and future recommendations to Internship sites, hospital administrators, graduate programs, and Interns:

- Encourage Interns to visit HR to accurately and fully understand the health benefits available to them at their site. Many institutions are modifying HR policies to accommodate the unique situation we are facing. HR may also be able to offer options and discuss the recourse an Intern may have when discussing employee safety and accommodations with supervisors or administrators.
- Advocate for sites to consider special funds to increase Internship stipends to help with unanticipated costs of living expenses associated with current circumstances; many Interns work full-time but receive significantly less compensation to mitigate the added costs.
- Suggest that supervisors initiate discussions with Interns explaining their value at a site and for patient care in this critical time, welcoming space for an Intern's concern and providing understanding when an Intern voices a perspective different than the supervisor's. Although there are legitimate reasons why an Intern may not be able to provide psychological services from home, in some cases this may be permissible and appropriate. In each case, it would be helpful to explain the reason or rationale for these decisions to the Intern.

Thank you for the work and support you have been providing to trainees and the communications you have been providing to current Interns. We ask that more direct communication and guidance also be provided to the sites themselves. Even providing what sites are doing to problem solve or how sites are making reasonable exceptions to traditional protocols may help all sites gain a greater sense of best practices. Lastly, we would like to advocate for greater dialogue around ways to improve the financial situation for Interns.

Respectfully,

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