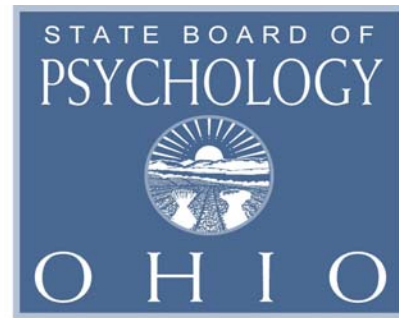


Testimony on the FY12-13 Biennial Operating Budget
Senate Finance Committee
Senator Chris Widener, Chair

Ronald R. Ross, Ph.D., CPM
Executive Director
State Board of Psychology
May 4, 2011



Chairman Widener, Vice Chair Jones, Ranking Member Skindell, and Members of the Committee:

I am Dr. Ronald Ross, Executive Director of the State Board of Psychology, a self-supporting non-GRF-funded regulatory board. I am here today to request the executive biennial recommendation of \$525,394 for FY2012 and \$535,406 for FY2013. At the outset, please know that I will not be seeking additional funding, largely due to the fact that our payroll estimates have been revised downward, and there should be sufficient funding in the executive recommendation to pay for our biennial audit and to implement online biennial license registration during FY13, our two new budget requests.

The State Board of Psychology's Role in Ohio

The Psychology Board is comprised of six psychologists and three consumer advocates, and its day-to-day responsibilities are managed by a staff of five full time employees. Among the Board's primary responsibilities are: ensuring that license applicants meet requirements for licensure; conducting examinations; initial licensing and biennial license renewal, which includes biennial verification of continuing education compliance; registration, monitoring, and termination of supervised practice arrangements; monitoring for illegal practice; investigating complaints; conducting hearings; applying disciplinary actions in response to misconduct, mostly via negotiated consent agreements; and, rule and policy making.

The Board receives approximately 200 license applications and issues approximately 150 new licenses annually. Each year, the Board receives approximately 60-100 formal written complaints alleging misconduct. Complaints relative to the practice of psychology are typically highly complicated and involve the application of highly specific professional standards of care and ethical principles governing psychologists. We are grateful that this budget recommendation will continue to allow the employment of two investigators. We have tried to meet our mission responsibly with one investigator, over a period of nearly one year, and due to an untenable workload, the investigatory process became too slow for everyone involved, including complainants and our licensees.

The Psychology Board's 3,600 licensees are at the forefront of the healthcare system in Ohio, being found in private practices, public and private hospitals, medical schools, mental health clinics, Veteran's Affairs medical centers, university and college counseling centers, schools, industries, courts, and prisons. The deeply human interactions that take place in a psychologist's practice typically reflect a complicated combination of hope and despair. The Psychology Board has the responsibility for regulating behavior that typically occurs when patients are highly vulnerable in terms of their emotional condition, self-concept, and relationships. Ohio's consumers of psychological services expect from their psychologist compassion, competence, trust, confidentiality, and a clearly defined role. The Psychology Board exists to ensure that Ohioans get these things.

Operational Overview

- We have over the past 15 months been operating with 5 staff members, although we have a vacancy in an administrative assistant position. We have decided not to fill that position or request funds to do so, which will save approximately \$110,000 over the biennium. We have maintained our productivity and efficiency with a staff of five, as opposed to when operating with a staff of six.
- Along with approximately 30 other boards and commissions, the Psychology Board receives shared administrative, fiscal, and HR support services from the Central Services Agency (CSA), a division of DAS, in the Riffe Center. We receive shared IT services from the Office of Information Technology.
- The Board's Web site fosters numerous efficiencies, by providing the public, applicants, and licensees access to information and materials, including: license applications and instructions; laws and rules; license verification; practice alerts; and disciplinary actions. By scanning and hyper-linking the primary disciplinary document underlying each of the Board's disciplinary action files, the public can click on public records for reading and printing, instead of calling or emailing our office for records. Similarly, we have scanned every full public enforcement record, and now can email or mail a disk containing the record, in lieu of photocopying and mailing files that can approach 1000-2000 pieces of paper.
- We have identified other efficiencies and cost-savings, including: limiting scheduled board meetings to three annually (historically the board meet at least quarterly); limiting meetings to one day, with 10:30AM start times, so members can travel to Columbus in the morning, avoid hotel charges, and return home on the same day; and, we recently amended our

policy on the life of our personal computers, now replacing them on an as-needed basis (generally a 6-year cycle).

- We do business from a customer service model. Those emailing or calling the Board almost always need something that we have, so we answer our phones in person and we are immediately responsive to licensees and the public. When you call the Psychology Board office, you get a personable staff member who knows the laws and rules, and will take time to address questions or find somebody in the office who can.
- Overall, the executive recommendation would provide the Board with sufficient resources to: meet projected payroll and associated fringe costs; meet the projected costs of doing business, including rent, CSA payroll, fiscal, and HR charges; telecommunications connections, printing, postage, and limited travel; and, meet the costs associated with enforcement of our laws and rules through administrative hearings when responsible disciplinary actions cannot be negotiated.

Challenges and Setting Priorities

The Board is always mindful of its responsibilities to address the violations of patient rights while balancing due process, accountability, and public protection. As a priority, we must proceed to administrative hearings when evidence reflects violations or threats to the health and safety of Ohioans and when a responsible consent agreement cannot be negotiated. Please note that the Board did not have to conduct any hearings over the past biennium, due in part to good fortune and in part to our success in negotiating consent agreements that are responsive to the violations and protective of the public. In the absence of an inordinate number of disciplinary hearings, the executive recommendation will meet the needs of the Psychology Board and the public.

Please know of my gratitude to Jessica Levy at the OBM, Michele Perch at LSC, and to the Kasich Administration for this responsible and reasonable recommendation that will allow the State Board of Psychology to continue its work as the only entity with authority to regulate the practice of psychology in Ohio, and to this Committee for your consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your consideration. I would be pleased answer any questions.