

January 28, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Covid-19 Vaccine Priority for School Psychologists

Governor Newsom:

California's Safe Schools for All Plan "provides support and accountability to establish a clear path to minimize in-school transmissions and enable, first, a phased return to in-person instruction, and then ongoing safe in-person instruction" (<https://schools.covid19.ca.gov>).

The California Association of School Psychologists, on behalf of the 6,500+ school psychologists serving our students, respectfully requests the California Department of Public Health to clearly and immediately state and communicate to all County Public Health Departments that School Psychologists are front-line mental health providers and educators, and as such are included in Group 1B Tier One.

There has been an inconsistent message at vaccination sites regarding the approval of school psychologists receiving the vaccination. Because these professionals are critical to the success of our students, and many of the services they provide must be done in-person, it is of the utmost importance that they are included in Tier 1B.

As defined in the updated vaccination plan for California, those working in education and childcare are included in 1B Tier One:

California's vaccination plan

1B Tier One:

- Individuals 65 and older
- Those at risk of exposure at work in the following sectors:
 - **Education and childcare**
 - Emergency services
 - Food and agriculture

<https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/>

School psychologists are currently providing direct services to students from **birth through age 21 to varying degrees across the state**. The services provided by school psychologists are critical to the mental health and learning ability of our students, which have been severely, detrimentally impacted by the pandemic. Some of the critical services school psychologists provide include:

- **In-person** and virtual psychoeducational assessment for students. These assessments must legally be conducted by school psychologists and determine whether a student has a condition, such as a learning disability, which necessitates special education and/or other

accommodations. These assessments are scientifically developed and rigorously normed; to maintain their integrity and reliability the vast majority can only be utilized in-person.

- **In-person** and virtual crisis and mental health diagnosis and counseling for students
- **In person** and virtual support for parents of students with mental health needs
- **In-person** consultation and support to teachers, administrators, and school staffs
- Evidence-based social-emotional and behavioral supports for students experiencing stress due to COVID-19 school closures
- Assistance to district and school staffs to develop school re-entry guidelines
- Support for student engagement and well-being in a virtual learning environment

The California Association of School Psychologists, the American Psychological Association, and the National Association of School Psychologists are “working with states to advocate that psychologists who provide in-person services remain among the high-priority health care providers to receive the COVID-19 vaccine during its initial release.” (<https://www.apaservices.org/practice/clinic/covid-19-vaccine-access>).

Please issue immediate guidance to ensure School Psychologists are among the group 1B Tier One and are eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination. This will allow more direct in-person support to our state’s most vulnerable students, help them do their best in a uniquely challenging learning environment, and help address the most pressing mental health issues they are now facing.

We respectfully request that School Psychology practicum students and interns be included with School Psychologists, as these students also provide direct services under the supervision of School Psychologists.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this important matter. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us at (916)444-1595 or melaneec@casponline.org.

Respectfully,



Dr. Jeannine Topalian, Psy.D.
President



Melanee Cottrill
Executive Director

Cc: Dr. Naomi Bardach, State Lead, Safe Schools for All Team
Dr. Erica Pan, Acting State Public Health Officer, California Department of Public Health
Ben Chida, Chief Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, State Board President, State Board of Education
Brooks Allen, Executive Director, State Board of Education