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MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR CANADIAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Role of School Psychologists

A Position Paper of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA)

Approved by the CPA Board of Directors – June 2022

Prepared by:

Anne-Marie Côté, M.A.

Merril Dean, M.Ed., R. Psych.

Laurie Ford, Ph.D.

Tasmia Hai, Ph.D.

Maria Kokai, Ph.D., C.Psych., Chair

Debra Lean, Ph.D., C.Psych.

Angela R. MacPhee, M.Sc., R.Psych.

Juanita Mureika, M.A., L.Psych.

Janine Newton Montgomery, PhD, C.Psych Cand.

Dorna Rahimi, Ph.D. Student

Shayla Richards, M.A., R.Psych.

Steven Shaw, Ph.D.

Kerry Spice, M.Ed., R.Psych.

Richelle Wagner, Ph.D. Student

Paige Walker, PhD. Student

Stephanie Wilson, M.A., C.Psych.Assoc.

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ABOUT THE CPA

The Canadian Psychological Association is the national voice for the science, practice and education of psychology in the service of the health and welfare of Canadians. The CPA is Canada's largest association for psychology and represents psychologists in public and private practice, university educators and researchers, as well as students. Psychologists are the country's largest group of regulated and specialized mental health providers, making our profession a key resource for the mental health treatment Canadians need.

VISION

A society where understanding of diverse human needs, behaviours and aspirations drive legislation, policies and programs for individuals, organizations and communities.

MISSIONS

Advancing research, knowledge and the application of psychology in the service of society through advocacy, support and collaboration.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mental health and wellbeing which include the range of social, emotional, intellectual and behavioural functions upon which we all rely day to day, are critical to the success of people and the places in which they live, work, learn, and play. This is especially true for children, for whom mental health services and supports bring the biggest return on investment. School psychologists play an essential role in the mental and cognitive health and wellbeing of students in school and non-school settings, particularly, as we continue to live with the impacts of far-reaching societal events, like the COVID-19 global pandemic.

This report has three objectives:

1. to better understand the developmental and mental health needs of children and youth and the role of school psychologists in helping to meet those needs
2. to identify the challenges schools and psychologists face in meeting the developmental and mental health needs and in supporting the wellbeing of students
3. to outline recommendations to four stakeholder groups who can address these challenges and bring about needed change to how we meet the mental health needs of students and schools.

OBJECTIVE ONE:

Mental health needs of children and youth and the role of school psychologists

The report answers the following questions:

1. Why do children and youth need mental health support?
2. Is student mental health a school issue? Why are mental health services central to schools?
3. What about teacher mental health?
4. Who are school psychologists?
5. What do school psychologists do?
6. Why are psychological services central to schools?

The report shares the following points:

1. Mentally healthy children thrive in school and life. Conversely, poor mental health has a clear and negative impact on school engagement and academic achievement. Canadian estimates indicate that mental disorders began in childhood for about 70% of adults with identified mental illness. 10-20% of children and youth worldwide will be diagnosed with mental disorders during their school years, disorders which frequently persist into adulthood. Despite the high and increasing rate of mental health problems, only about 20% of children and youth requiring mental health support receive it. If untreated, mental disorders may have severe consequences, such as hospitalization and suicide.

Children and youth thrive when their unique developmental needs are appropriately met. However, learning and academic progress can become seriously hindered when teaching approaches are not adapted to the cognitive, intellectual, linguistic and social functioning of students, often leading to further emotional and behavioural challenges and problems. Psychologists have an important role in helping educators and parents understand students' developmental needs and how to accommodate them.

2. School-based mental health services have an important role in schools because:
 - a. students spend a lot of time in school
 - i. services are accessed there more easily and equitably
 - ii. problems can be detected early, and early intervention is very important to successful psychological outcomes
 - b. many families cannot afford psychological services outside of school because these services are typically not covered by Medicare
 - c. many remote and rural communities do not have local health service providers.
3. School psychologists' support to teachers and other school professionals, can make a significant difference in teacher engagement, empowerment, well-being, and job satisfaction; all of which have positive

impacts in the classroom and on students and families.

4. School psychologists are highly educated mental health professionals, trained at the graduate level and registered by provincial/territorial regulatory bodies of psychology. They have extensive training in mental health, child development and learning (assessment and diagnosis, prevention/intervention, suicide risk evaluation, crisis intervention), education (consultation, systems change), research (program evaluation, data analysis), and in ethics and law. This training means they are well equipped to address the range of behavioural, cognitive, social, and emotional issues and disorders students face.
5. School psychologists are positioned to provide whole school, classroom, and individual mental health assessments and supports, as well as system-level initiatives to build staff capacity and support mental health and well-being. Working with other mental health and education professionals, psychologists can assist in health and wellness promotion, in maximizing school success, in early identification of cognitive, psychological, and social problems, and in helping to treat and mitigate the impact of problems that arise.

OBJECTIVE TWO:

Systemic challenges in meeting the mental health needs of children and youth in schools

The challenges are:

1. There is limited understanding of what psychologists uniquely bring to the school environment and how they can help address the developmental, learning and mental health needs of students. School psychologists have heavy workloads and are directed to spend time on some activities (e.g., assessment) to the exclusion of many other activities that are critical for student and school success (e.g., prevention and early intervention to prevent problems downstream, collaborative consultation to support teachers and other school professionals).
2. To effectively deliver promotion, prevention, and intervention services, schools need a psychologist to student ratio of 1:500 to 1:1,000. Psychologist to student ratios in Canada fall well under the above benchmark. For example, in 2017-18 the average ratio in Ontario was 1:3448. Shortages are particularly acute in rural, remote, and northern regions and in urban areas with high populations of children and/or youth at risk. The shortage of school psychologists means that students and families don't get services because wait lists are long, and psychologists have no time to deliver the full scope of services students and schools need.
3. There are serious recruitment and retention problems for psychologists in Canada's schools. This is because of conditions of work (e.g., high workloads, limited ability to practice to scope or deliver the range of services students and schools need) but also because schools do not sufficiently participate in the training of psychologists. Participating in training not only augments resource but is itself a good staff recruitment strategy – psychology interns/residents often stay to work where they have trained.

OBJECTIVE THREE:

Recommendations for stakeholders to address these challenges and bring about needed change to how we meet the mental health needs of students and schools

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are directed to four groups of stakeholders.

1. **Policymakers within school boards, school districts, and ministries of education.** These recommendations are intended to increase access, and equity of access, to psychological services for students and teachers by addressing key shortages in the number of psychologist positions and the number of psychologists willing to fill them.
2. **Graduate training programs in school psychology.** These recommendations are intended increase the numbers of school psychologists and the inclusiveness of the profession.
3. **School Psychologists.** These recommendations are intended to encourage school psychologists to expand their understanding of the diverse communities from which students come and to support school psychologists in raising the mental health literacy of the schools and families with whom they work.
4. **National, provincial, and territorial professional organizations of psychology.** These recommendations call for the knowledge mobilization, continuing professional development and advocacy activities the profession can undertake in support of school psychology.

School boards/school districts and ministries of education have a responsibility to effectively respond to the mental health needs of students and schools. They can do so by:

1. Prioritizing and sustaining funding for school psychology services.
2. Staffing schools with a ratio of one psychologist for every 500 to 1,000 students to ensure that the mental and cognitive health and wellbeing needs of students, staff and the school community can be met.
3. Improving recruitment and retention of school psychologists by ensuring:
 - a. Manageable caseloads so that psychologists can accomplish the range of consultative, preventative and intervention services needed by students, staff, and the school environment.
 - b. Support psychologists in practicing to their full and needed scope; doing so leads to better school outcomes and aids recruitment and retention.
 - c. Opportunities for professional development; and
 - d. Professional and administrative supervision and mentorship.
4. Supporting schools in the training of school psychologists to ensure a pipeline of those who can meet the breadth and depth of student need across communities, geographic locations, linguistic groups, and cultures.

Graduate Training Programs in School Psychology must address the chronic shortages of school psychologists. They can address shortages in the following ways:

1. Improve recruitment to the specialty by:
 - a. Introducing school psychology to more undergraduate students; and
 - b. Developing new doctoral programs in different regions across Canada.
2. Increase the number and capacity of:
 - a. Doctoral training programs, especially in areas of the country most affected by the shortages, which can produce practitioners but also researchers and educators in school psychology.
3. Make re-specialization and professional training more accessible by:
 - a. Offering flexible options for those who might want to return to doctoral study;
 - b. Recruiting professionals from related specialties of (e.g., school counselling, clinical psychology) who might want to practice school psychology.
4. Reach out to students and graduates of Educational Programs across Canada to raise awareness that school psychology can be a career shift worth considering by those trained as educators.
5. Focus student recruitment efforts on those from a range of minoritized backgrounds.
6. Ensure school psychology training programs are kept fully staffed to maintain capacity.
7. Increase the number of CPA accredited training and residency programs in school psychology.
8. Promote the development of practicum and residency training in schools by raising awareness among school boards and ministries of education about the need and value of this training.
9. Support school boards/schools by making it easier and more attractive to provide practicum and residency placements for students in pre-service training in school psychology.
10. Establish collaborative school board-university partnerships to create a pipeline of qualified school psychologists to meet the high needs of rural school boards, First Nations, and culturally/linguistically diverse communities.
11. Prepare school psychology students to understand, respect and work with children, youth and families from diverse groups and communities.

Psychologists have a responsibility to increase their capacity to meet the mental health needs of a diverse student body and increase awareness of school psychologists' roles in mental health care among stakeholders. They can do so in the following ways:

1. Contributions of school psychologists should include speaking and presenting to the media, families and the public so that the mental health needs of children and youth, and the role of school psychologists in meeting those needs, is better understood.
2. When providing psychological services to children in schools, psychologists need to learn, understand and respect the cultural, and historical contexts of the diverse communities children come from.

National, Provincial and Territorial Professional Organizations in Psychology have a responsibility to increase awareness of school psychology's role in mental health care and advocate for equitable access and funding.

1. When promoting access to mental health care for Canada's communities, professional associations make access to psychological care within schools an advocacy priority.
2. Increase awareness among policymakers, school systems/staff, parents, students, and the general public of the role of school psychologists in supporting the mental health needs of students and schools.
3. Provide continuing professional development opportunities for school psychologists to learn, understand and respect the cultural and historical contexts of the diverse communities children come from.
4. Support school psychologists and the programs that train them by:
 - a. Improving recruitment to the specialty area
 - b. Recruiting students from a range of minoritized backgrounds and
 - c. Increasing the mental health literacy among school boards and ministries of education and, in particular, increasing awareness and understanding of the needs for, and impacts of, providing psychological services in schools.

MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR CANADIAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

I. MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH AND THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS¹

1. Why do children and youth need mental health support?

Mental health and wellbeing depend on the full range of social, emotional, behavioural and intellectual functions we use daily. About 70% of mental health issues experienced by adults begin before the age of 18ⁱ. Ten to twenty percent of children and youth worldwide will be diagnosed with mental disorders during their school yearsⁱⁱ and their disorders frequently persist into adulthoodⁱⁱⁱ. Many more will experience emotional distress or be at risk for mental illness^{iv}.

If untreated, mental disorders may have severe consequences. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth between 15 to 34 years of age in Canada^v. There was a 61% increase in emergency department visits and a 60% increase in hospitalizations for mental disorders among youth from 2008–2009 and 2018–2019^{vi}.

Despite the high rate of mental health problems, only about 20% of children and youth who need mental health support actually receive it^{vii}. As pointed out by the Royal Society of Canada^{viii}, a 2020 UNICEF report showed that Canada's children and youth ranked poorly, near the bottom of high-income countries (31st out of 38) on measures of well-being, and similarly on teen suicide rates (35th out of 38 countries).

Children and youth thrive when their unique developmental needs are appropriately met. However, learning and academic progress can become seriously hindered when teaching approaches are not adapted to the cognitive, intellectual, linguistic and social functioning of students. Without a good match between a student's learning needs and how information is taught, frustration, emotional and behavioural challenges ensue which further compromise learning success. Support in helping to understand students' developmental profile and addressing their needs (e.g., through special education services) can put them on the right trajectory for academic success and good mental health. (Principals in Ontario reported that about 17% of elementary and 27% of secondary school students received special education support in 2019^x.) Psychologists have an important role in helping educators and parents understand these developmental needs and necessary interventions.

1 In this document, "psychologist" is used throughout. We recognize that in some Canadian jurisdictions, school psychology personnel may include unregulated service providers who may work under the supervision of psychologists (e.g. psychometrist), as well as other regulated providers such as psychological associates.

2. Is student mental health a school issue? Why are mental health services central to schools?

Several factors can affect a student's readiness for learning. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) highlights the importance of good mental health for academic success. Mentally healthy children thrive in school and life^x whereas poor mental health has a negative impact on school engagement and academic achievement^{xi}. Additionally, since neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g., Learning Disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorders, etc.) are risk factors for mental health problems, the early identification and diagnosis of these disorders is critical to good outcomes^{xii}. If their learning and mental health needs are unmet, students are at a higher risk for academic and behavior problems, drop out, and delinquency^{xiii}. The COVID-19 pandemic has become another factor negatively impacting the psychosocial wellbeing of children and youth.

Children spend a large amount of their time in schools and schools often become a community hub. They are ideal settings for children, youth, and their families to receive mental health services, inclusive of mental health promotion, prevention, and intervention^{xiv}. In addition, because psychological services delivered outside of publicly funded institutions are not covered by Medicare, many families simply cannot afford psychological services unless they are provided in hospitals or schools. In some communities, like those in remote and rural locations, there are few health practitioners, making access difficult even for those families who could afford to pay out of pocket for them. The lack of early and accessible identification of neurodevelopmental or mental disorders can compound the psychosocial difficulties students experience. Imagine a student with an undiagnosed and unassisted learning disorder – poor academic performance, negative judgements from peers, fears and anxiety about school performance, and poor self-esteem can ensue. Early identification and treatment not only help a student manage their disorder but can prevent other problems that result from a lack of treatment.

Because children spend so much time in them, schools are an ideal venue to teach and develop the social, emotional, and behavioral skills upon which success in life and work depend^{xv}. Social and emotional education, along with pedagogy, transform “schools into places that foster academic excellence, collaboration and communication, creativity and innovation, empathy and respect, civic engagement, and other skills and dispositions needed for success in the 21st Century”^{xvi}. A cost-benefit analysis of social and emotional interventions suggests that in the long term, there is an average return of \$11 in for every \$1 invested^{xvii}. International research shows that school-based psychosocial interventions have significant, positive effects on adjustment^{xviii}, and that delivering evidence-based mental health programs at school has positive impacts on student learning, achievement, attendance, and behavior^{xix}.

There is growing consensus across health providers and educators that outcomes for children are enhanced when education and mental health services are integrated within schools^{xx}. School success, and future life success, depends on educational and mental health factors in equal measure.

3. What about teacher mental health?

While teachers are trained to educate as well as foster basic socialization skills, many report that they are not adequately prepared to support increasing mental health demands among students and that they experience high levels of stress themselves^{xxi}. Teachers dealing with the diverse learning and behavioral needs in their classrooms, in the context of strapped resources and working environments made more challenging as the result of the pandemic, can face compassion fatigue^{xxii}, burnout and physical and mental illness.

A survey by the Canadian Teachers' Federation in October 2020^{xxiii} indicated that “70% of teachers were concerned about their mental health and/or well-being, and 30% of teachers were “barely coping”. In another study in the US, about 25% of teachers said that they were likely to leave their jobs by the end of the 2020–2021 school year (versus 15% before the pandemic); and a higher percentage of teachers “reported frequent job-related stress and symptoms of depression than the general adult population”^{xxiv}.

The mental health of teachers and students is interrelated. Supporting teachers' well-being, by reducing their job-related stress, is critical to student and school success and is an important aspect of school psychologists' work.

4. Who are school psychologists?

School psychologists are highly educated mental health professionals, trained at the graduate level, and registered by provincial/territorial regulatory bodies of psychology. School psychologists receive training and complete supervised practice in the areas of mental health, child development and learning (assessment and diagnosis of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural functioning, psychological counselling, prevention/intervention, suicide risk evaluation, crisis intervention), education (consultation, systems change), research (program evaluation, data analysis), and in ethics and law, as well as in multicultural interventions. Many school psychologists have specialty areas of expertise such as autism and other developmental disorders, changing school climate, social justice, and anti-racism to name only a few. The practice of psychology is evidence-based. Its methods of assessment and intervention are shaped by research and implemented to address the educational, behavioral, intellectual, and emotional challenges students face.

5. What do school psychologists do?

School psychologists adhere to a tiered model of service delivery^{xxv}:

- primary or universal mental health promotion and prevention services to all students
- secondary or targeted and swift intervention for emerging student and school problems, and
- tertiary intervention, including comprehensive assessments, diagnosis, and intervention for more serious problems, implemented in collaboration with mental health professionals in the community.

While mental health promotion, prevention and intervention is a long-term priority, the pandemic-related impacts on teaching, learning, and mental health make school psychology services an even more essential resource during the pandemic and for post-pandemic recovery. The recently published policy briefing by the Royal Society of Canada “highlights that there are notable threats to children’s well-being, educational success, and healthy development” because of the pandemic^{xxvi}.

In the event of an emergency or a crisis, school psychologists, together with other school professionals, respond to the unique needs of the school community^{xxvii}. Students with suicidal thoughts or self-harming behaviors are seen by the school psychologist as urgent priorities and their care, planned in collaboration with local community mental health teams and hospitals, allows for effective continuity of care^{xxviii}.

By consulting to, and working in partnership with educators, school psychologists make a significant difference in teacher engagement, empowerment, well-being, and job satisfaction^{xxxix}. They work with teachers to solve difficult classroom problems, consult with administrators to adjust classroom supports, provide professional development to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills, and provide individualized information to improve learning, behavioral, and mental health outcomes for students.

As members of school-based teams, school psychologists provide consultative support to administrators and other school and non-school professionals. For example, they have a critical role in planning class and school-wide mental health promotion and preventative interventions for children and youth^{xxx}.

School psychologists provide consultative support to decision-makers regarding systems or district level initiatives, both in the academic and mental health domains^{xxxii}. Systems wide changes in policy and programming help to reach and support significantly more students, more effectively, and achieve benefits well beyond those strictly based on individual student focused services.

Student populations in Canada are increasingly diverse. Students have a range of identities, cultures, and economic circumstances, and many are from marginalized and racialized communities who often do not have equity of access to important health determinants. School psychologists are trained social justice advocates who advise on culturally responsive education that uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance profiles of students to make learning more appropriate and relevant^{xxxiii}. School psychologists' use of evidence and strengths-based approaches helps minimize stigmatization.

6. Why are psychological services central to schools?

School psychology is a specialty area of psychological practice that supports children and youth in their academic, social, behavioural and emotional development, usually right in their natural environment - at school. Psychologists' knowledge and skills applied in schools, through direct interventions and indirect, consultative services^{xxxiiii}, allow for prevention and early intervention in the areas of learning, behaviour and mental health. Our goal is to intervene early before problems develop or before emotional and cognitive problems lead to school failure. School psychologists can have a profound and positive impact on the lives of children and youth on a large scale and on a long-term basis, supporting development and school success for children across age groups and across a range of problem areas.

Many children with mental health needs are unserved or underserved because of social barriers like transportation, finances, and stigma^{xxxiv}. Many of these barriers are overcome when services aimed at preventing, identifying, and treating mental health problems are addressed in schools^{xxxv}. In some areas of the country, schools are the only access point for mental health services for children and their families; in others, children begin the pathway to care through mental health services delivered at their school^{xxxvi}.

Because mental health care delivered in communities is often problem specific (e.g., anxiety clinics, eating disorder clinics), schools are in a better position to respond to the wide range of problems impacting children and youth^{xxxvii}. For example, the Ontario Child Health Study^{xxxviii} found that over the last 30 years, there has been a three-fold increase in the number of youth and caregivers identifying a need for professional mental health help. However, only 22-34% of children and youth with mental health disorders had contact with a mental health provider in their community, compared to 40-50% of children and youth who had contact with a mental health professional at school^{xxxix}.

While most school psychologists are employees of schools and systems of education, and as mentioned, schools are as natural a home for psychologists as they are for teachers, school psychologists also work in other settings (e.g., early childhood education, health, private practice)^{xi}.

II. SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES IN MEETING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN SCHOOLS

The mental health needs of children and youth in schools, as well as how to effectively respond to these needs at the levels of the student, classroom, and school, are well understood by research. However, there are systemic challenges to implementing psychological services in Canadian schools. These challenges are detailed below.

Limited understanding of what psychologists uniquely bring to the school environment. Policymakers and administrators often do not have a complete understanding of the roles and contributions of school psychologists which in turn impacts how many are hired and what they are commissioned to do. School psychologists have heavy workloads and are typically asked to focus almost exclusively on assessment. While assessment is a critical function in the early identification of cognitive and emotional problems, the exclusive focus on this activity means there is little opportunity and time for psychologists to provide other needed services such as (1) preventative and early intervention services which are critical to offset more serious problems downstream; (2) supporting educators and families; and (3) consulting with teachers and other professionals, particularly at times of crisis impacting students and schools (e.g., pandemic).

While some mental health programming and support can be delivered by teachers and counsellors (if their current workload allows it), for reasons of training and expertise, psychological services cannot be. Improperly administered or interpreted psychological testing can have serious consequences for students. These have been detailed in a letter to the government of New Brunswick in response to their decision to permit teachers to administer tests of cognitive functioning, tests that teachers are not trained to administer or interpret^{xii}.

Assessment and diagnosis of developmental, learning, and mental health problems and disorders, intervention to address such disorders, as well as programme development and evaluation cannot be reliably accomplished without psychologists as part of the educational team. The unmet learning and mental health needs of children and youth lead to further and longer lasting impairment, affecting not just school success but life success.

Shortage of school psychologists. In all parts of the country, there are too few psychologist positions within schools, and too few qualified school psychologists. There is no jurisdiction in which the recommended ratio of one school psychologist for every 500 to 1,000 students is achieved in Canada. In 2017/18, existing positions in Ontario schools showed an average ratio of 1:3448, and 7% of the existing school psychology positions were vacant^{xiii}.

The shortage is particularly acute in rural and remote, and northern regions, and areas with high populations of children and/or youth who are at risk (i.e., inner cities). Many rural and remote, and northern communities have difficulty attracting and retaining school psychologists, partially due to the high demand in urban centers, the shortages of trained clinicians, and positions that do not support psychologists practicing to their full and

needed scope. The shortage of school psychologists negatively impacts equity of access for students and their families. It also results, in large, often unmanageable caseloads and long waitlists for service, in some cases several years.

Inadequate funding for school psychology positions. Despite the evidence pointing to the effectiveness of school-based mental health services and supports, “education” is often seen as separate from “health” and “community mental health” when it comes to funding, meaning that there are often no mental health envelopes within educational budgets, or the funding is inadequate or inconsistent.

Limited school board funding for mental health, coupled with provincial and territorial government policy decisions, have often resulted in cuts and rollbacks of psychology staffing and services. This leaves service gaps or other staff taking on mental health roles for which they have no time and often no training. As a result, students’ mental health needs are not adequately met and staff experience stress and burnout from being asked to do more with less.

The shortage of psychologists in schools is also related to the conditions of work. Challenges to recruiting and retaining psychologists include

- Compensation for school psychologists is often not competitive with other areas of practice
- Heavy workloads and roles which do not permit psychologists to practice to their full scope.

Insufficient educational program capacity to train school psychologists. Currently, there is an insufficient number of school psychologists being trained in Canada. This is because there are too few accredited doctoral and residency programs in school psychology and/or there are too few students accepted into each graduate class, due in part to limited faculty and resources in university school psychology training programs. There is also a shortage of practicing school psychologists who are able/willing to accept psychology students and/or residents for placement due to their own large caseloads and difficult working conditions in schools.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES AND BRING ABOUT NEEDED CHANGE TO HOW WE MEET THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS.

The following recommendations are directed to four groups of stakeholders.

1. **Policymakers within school boards, school districts, and ministries of education.** These recommendations are intended to increase access, and equity of access to psychological services for students and teachers by addressing key shortages in the number of psychologist positions and the number of psychologists willing to fill them.
2. **Graduate training programs in school psychology.** These recommendations are intended to increase the numbers of school psychologists and the inclusiveness of the profession.

3. **School Psychologists.** These recommendations are intended to encourage school psychologists to expand their understanding of the diverse communities from which students come and to support school psychologists in raising the mental health literacy of the schools and families with whom they work.
4. **National, provincial, and territorial professional organizations of psychology.** These recommendations call for the knowledge mobilization, continuing professional development and advocacy activities the profession can undertake in support of school psychology.

School boards/school districts and ministries of education have a responsibility to effectively respond to the mental health needs of students and schools. They can do so by:

1. Prioritizing and sustaining funding for school psychology services.
2. Staffing schools with a ratio of one psychologist for every 500 to 1,000 students to ensure that the mental and cognitive health and wellbeing needs of students, staff and the school community can be met.
3. Improving recruitment and retention of school psychologists by ensuring:
 - a. Manageable caseloads so that psychologists can accomplish the range of consultative, preventative and intervention services needed by students, staff, and the school environment.
 - b. Support psychologists in practicing to their full and needed scope; doing so leads to better school outcomes and aids recruitment and retention.
 - c. Opportunities for professional development; and
 - d. Professional and administrative supervision and mentorship.
4. Supporting schools in the training of school psychologists to ensure a pipeline of those who can meet the breadth and depth of student need across communities, geographic locations, linguistic groups, and cultures. Participating in training not only augments resource but is itself a good staff recruitment strategy – psychology interns/residents often stay to work where they have trained.

Graduate Training Programs in School Psychology must address the chronic shortages of school psychologists. They can address shortages in the following ways:

1. Improve recruitment to the specialty by:
 - a. Introducing school psychology to more undergraduate students; and
 - b. Developing new doctoral programs in different regions across Canada.
2. Increase the number and capacity of:
 - a. Doctoral training programs, especially in areas of the country most affected by the shortages, which can produce practitioners but also researchers and educators in school psychology.
3. Make re-specialization and professional training more accessible by:
 - a. Offering flexible options for those who might want to return to doctoral study;
 - b. Recruiting professionals from related specialties of (e.g., school counselling, clinical psychology) who might want to practice school psychology.

4. Reach out to students and graduates of Educational Programs across Canada to raise awareness that school psychology can be a career shift worth considering by those trained as educators.
5. Focus student recruitment efforts on those from a range of minoritized backgrounds.
6. Ensure school psychology training programs are kept fully staffed to maintain capacity.
7. Increase the number of CPA accredited training and residency programs in school psychology.
8. Promote the development of practicum and residency training in schools by raising awareness among school boards and ministries of education about the need and value of this training.
9. Support school boards/schools by making it easier and more attractive to provide practicum and residency placements for students in pre-service training in school psychology.
10. Establish collaborative school board-university partnerships to create a pipeline of qualified school psychologists to meet the high needs of rural school boards, First Nations, and culturally/linguistically diverse communities.
11. Prepare school psychology students to understand, respect and work with children, youth and families from diverse groups and communities.

Psychologists have a responsibility to increase their capacity to meet the mental health needs of a diverse student body and increase awareness of school psychologists' roles in mental health care among stakeholders. They can do so in the following ways:

1. Contributions of school psychologists should include speaking and presenting to the media, families and the public so that the mental health needs of children and youth, and the role of school psychologists in meeting those needs, is better understood.
2. When providing psychological services to children in schools, psychologists need to learn, understand and respect the cultural, and historical contexts of the diverse communities children come from.

National, Provincial and Territorial Professional Organizations in Psychology have a responsibility to increase awareness of school psychology's role in mental health care and advocate for equitable access and funding.

1. When promoting access to mental health care for Canada's communities, professional associations make access to psychological care within schools an advocacy priority.
2. Increase awareness among policymakers, school systems/staff, parents, students, and the general public of the role of school psychologists in supporting the mental health needs of students and schools.
3. Provide continuing professional development opportunities for school psychologists to learn, understand and respect the cultural and historical contexts of the diverse communities children come from.
4. Support school psychologists and the programs that train them by:
 - a. Improving recruitment to the specialty area
 - i. Recruiting students from a range of minoritized backgrounds and

- ii. Increasing the mental health literacy among school boards and ministries of education and, in particular, increasing awareness and understanding of the needs for, and impacts of, providing psychological services in schools.

ENDNOTES

- i <https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/what-we-do/children-and-youth/>
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