

WELCOME EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGISTS

Following a meeting with psychologists employed by the **Ministry of Education** in the Wellington region, education psychologists voted to begin joining APEX and appointed interim delegates to represent them.

Psychologists from across the country working for the Ministry are now joining up, wanting our advocacy with their employer and a unified voice for the profession.

APEX is ensuring their rights are respected – professional association fees are not being reimbursed as per their contract and many interns are not being paid anything, let alone the steps in their salary scale.

The joining up of education psychologists marks an exciting time for the division as we grow into being *the* union for psychologists.

SUPERVISION **New wording in the MECA**

We have received some enquiries from members about changes to clause 15.0 Professional Supervision in the new APEX MECA. We take the opportunity to signal the new wording in the MECA – this clause now contractually requires the DHB to explicitly recognize and address the issue of dual relationships, and support supervision external to teams/services in such cases.

It was a point of robust discussion during the MECA bargaining - the employers' team, which included national level psychology leader representation, accepted our argument that dual relationships, the blurring of supervisory relationships, and the overlap of line management and supervision

are a concern. Dual relationships limit the efficacy of supervision as well as safety for the supervisee.

We can confirm the broad function of the changes is to:

- Ensure that all psychologists retain professional autonomy around choice of supervisor with guidance from Professional Advisor/Leader as need be;
- Employers are obligated to ensure that psychologists are not adversely affected by dual relationships within teams; and
- Supervision external to immediate teams is supported in such situations.

BRIEFLY

Are you on the right salary step?

APEX delegates and the office have had a rise in enquiries from members not on the right pay step. Check your copy of the MECA and ensure you are on the right step. If you have joined since 3 October, you are entitled to be backdated any pay rise to the date you joined APEX.

Severance

Six days before a mediation date Canterbury DHB informed us they would pay severance to a psychologist whose research job was disestablished. Redundancy is a misfortune, not a privilege. However where an alternative role is offered that is not substantially similar to the original role, the employer is obliged to make a severance payment, if their offer of redeployment is not accepted.

Divisional officers – nominations open

Nominations are now open until 5pm on 10 December for the positions of divisional secretary and divisional president. As per the APEX rules nominations must be in writing, signed by the proposer and seconder (both of whom must be financial members), accompanied by the candidate's signed consent to nomination. Scanned copies of the nomination documents should be emailed to psychologist@apex.org.nz. A ballot on nominations, if necessary, will be held after 10 December.

Canterbury CAF Committee

At the beginning of December, a joint stopwork of mental health workers in Canterbury Child Adolescent and Family service elected a committee of six to represent concerns over waiting lists, clinically unsafe treatment, inadequate interview rooms and poor management to the DHB. APEX psychologists' delegate on the committee is Cherie Benns. The committee is supported by APEX, NZNO and NUPE.



Services in trouble

Over the last month we have had to send letters to raise concerns about two services in crisis because of unsafe staffing – Hutt DHB children and adolescents mental health, and Fielding's community mental health service. Both letters raised concerns about patient safety and the associated stress on staff and were sent to the Chief Executives and Chief Medical Officers of the DHBs concerned. The response of Midcentral DHB to our concerns about Fielding's service was positive - crisis work was reallocated within the mental health division.

Supervision Audit

On 6 December we will be sending out another audit around supervision issues. It is important to ensure our colleagues have appropriate supervision and we encourage all to participate in this audit.

Delegates video-conference

On 23 November, 9 delegates from the division held a video-conference to discuss the path forward for the division. Matters discussed included health and safety; workload; professional issues; and MECA and pay.

CONTACT APEX
PSYCHOLOGIST@APEX.ORG.NZ
09 526 0280 | APEX.ORG.NZ

UNPAID OVERTIME

187 PSYCHOLOGISTS TOOK PART IN THE OVERTIME AUDIT AND THERE WERE RESPONSES FROM EVERY DHB COVERED BY THE MECA. 37% OF RESPONDENTS WORK IN CHILD AND ADOLESCENT SERVICES, 32% IN OUTPATIENT OR COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND 20% IN PHYSICAL HEALTH.

48%
WORK UNPAID OVERTIME MOST WEEKS

1 IN 4
WORK MORE THAN 3 HOURS UNPAID OVERTIME PER WEEK

64%
WORK UNPAID OVERTIME BECAUSE OF UNDERSTAFFING

87%
WRITE UP PATIENT NOTES DURING UNPAID OVERTIME

How often are people working unpaid overtime?

48% - usually worked overtime most weeks
26.5% - sometimes worked overtime every few weeks
9.7% - sometimes worked overtime every few months
15% - said they did no unpaid overtime

How much overtime?

52.4% - work between 1 and 3 hours of unpaid overtime per week on average
22.6% - work between 3 and 5 hours of unpaid overtime per week on average
4.8% - work between 5 and 7 hours of unpaid overtime per week on average
1% - work more than 10 hours unpaid overtime per week on average

How do people spend their overtime?

87.4% - writing up patient notes
61.6% - filling out paper work
55.6% - catching up on work emails
41.7% developing resources for their service
26% - doing employment-related education/training
21.85% - seeing patients
17.88% - booking appointments

Psychologists feel the need to do unpaid overtime because:

64.38% - service is understaffed
43.15% - waiting lists are too long
18.5% - poor managements and disorganisation within my service
13% - not enough office space such as computers or interviewing rooms

"FEELING COMFORTABLE WITH DISCOMFIT"

Peter Robertson is our delegate at Capital & Coast DHB and works in a forensic unit in Porirua.



Why did you decide to become a psychologist?

It was very random actually, I had come back from overseas, and was looking to have a career change and my brother and sister-in-law were psychologists and had a lot of psychologist friends. I said I was looking to do something different and the head of the clinical programme at Canterbury University suggested I do that. I asked, "Won't it take too long?" He said, "No", which was not true! So I just went for it and I've been a psychologist now for 14 years.

How do you find working in a forensic unit?

I really like working with the client group, working in an institution comes with organisational and staffing issues – but I would cautiously say I love it! All the work we do with our clients is valuable – especially advocating for the clients and the group work – we have a DBT group. One of the major challenges is the public's limited understanding of our client group and why what has happened, has happened. We are less affected by fiscal pressures than the rest of mental health because of the nature of our client group.

What works well in your unit?

I can only speak personally but I think people work well when people communicate well, and are direct with all members of the team and with management. To do that, you have to have good relationships with people as a bottom line, so you can say what you want and be direct. You don't always get what you want, but at least you get to say it. That coupled with a bit of acceptance of some things that don't go very well and won't happen easily – is what works well.

How do you think professional differences with psychiatrists can be navigated well?

What psychologists do well is feeling comfortable with discomfit. Saying what we think and not being afraid to say it. Getting your point across with some acceptance that you are not always going to be agreed with and psychiatrists may have the last say. But at least ethically, we have said what we think.

What do you think constitutes appropriate supervision?

At least fortnightly, and weekly in the early stages with a supervisor that is a good fit to your needs, career development stage, and other things that might be important to the supervisee, personality, culture and gender.

How do you find being a delegate?

The good thing about psychologists is that they are good at doing stuff for themselves. Some issues like pressure to take leave, which has come up again this year, are things we have to think about how we respond to. But most of the time psychologists are able to resolve issues themselves and don't need to go to that extra level by bringing it to their delegate. That said I do worry that members may not feel that we are accessible enough as delegates and would love to be contacted any time about anything.

What do you enjoy doing when not at work?

When not at work I like to absorb myself in reading good biographies and novels, and books about Buddhist psychology, art and architecture, watching box sets and hanging out with my partner and cat doing very little.