

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Janet Wood](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 10, 2018 5:15:50 PM

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-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]  
Sent: Tuesday, April 10, 2018 5:08 PM  
To: Sunset Advisory Commission  
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Agency: TEXAS STATE BOARD EXAMINERS PSYCHOLOGISTS

First Name: Corinne

Last Name: Zupanick

Title: Clinical Psychologist & family member of mentally ill

Organization you are affiliated with:

Email:

City: Austin

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed:

I am a licensed clinical psychologist. I also have personal experience as a family member of 2 persons with Serious Mental Illness (SMI). In both roles, (personal and professional) I am opposed to a merger of psychologists into a singular mental health umbrella.

To begin with, such an action creates a systemic form of discriminatory bias against mental illness and is in violation of the spirit and intent of the federal Mental Health Parity Act. This Act sought to correct a system wide problem that caused persons with mental illness to receive different, restricted, limited and inferior services, over medical services. By creating a separate umbrella called mental health professionals, Texas serves to limit and stigmatize such services as somehow different from other forms of healthcare. The research is abundantly and clear that psychology serves a central role in the prevention and treatment of such conditions as diabetes, obesity, intellectual disabilities, hypertension, and cancer to name just a few. Such cannot be said for the social services emphasized by other mental health professionals.

To be clear, psychologists are scientist-practitioners which distinguishes us from other mental health practitioners. We primarily provide healthcare services, not social services (although social services may be performed as a secondary adjunct service). We are no more similar to other mental health professions as a medical doctor is to nurses, physical therapists, physician assistants etc. However, if you feel the need to move us, please move us to an umbrella that lets us join other healthcare professionals and peers of similar training and commitment to science and best-practices.

Lastly, as a family member of two persons with serious mental illness I am also opposed to this. I have already seen first hand how the insurance industry treats persons with SMI as though they are the same as a person who needs to learn to parenting skills by only paying for social services, and weak 'treatment' forcing their care into the hands of ill-qualified persons with generalist, masters degree training. To me this is like sending a person with lung cancer to

a nurse practitioner, or physicians assistant.

Nothing against those professions; its just they are not trained to treat such severe and critical types of illnesses like cancer. My family members have not improved in many years b/c their insurance companies send them to a generic "mental health professional" with a master's degree. Instead, like a cancer patient who deserves an oncologist, persons with SMI deserve a psycholgist, Creating an umbrella that lumps all mental health professionals into one group is doing just that. Treating them, and stigmatizing them as though all mental and emotional needs are the same.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

If there is to be any merger, please move ALL healthcare professionals into one umbrella as well, and then place psychologist there. This is more in keeping with the Mental Health Parity Act. If that doesn't seem feasible, then leave things alone. We do not need to create more stigma, more difficulty for people to access mental health services. And we certainly do not want the public to think that all mental health professionals are equal and interchangeable. They are not equivalent any more than an MD is the same as a physicians assistant or a nurse. Moreover, those that require the advanced training and skill of a psychologist should be afforded to opportunity to readily and easily find those services, under a heading psychology, not a generic and stigmatizing term mental health.

Health is health, and all the research points to a dynamic and complex interchange of mental and physical factors in all forms of disease and illness. A separate umbrella ignores this vital component of health, wellness, and recovery.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree