

Building Bridges

Opportunities for Learning, Networking, and Leadership

COMMITTEE ON EARLY CAREER PSYCHOLOGISTS

Career
Building

Leadership

Networking

Professional
Identity

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Career Building: Getting Started

Challenges and opportunities . . .

Early career psychologists (ECPs) confront many new responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities.

As an early career psychologist, you may

- grapple with difficult decisions and how to balance career, family, and financial priorities
- feel isolated in new work settings
- struggle to establish an identity
- find the first few years in a new professional role to be uncertain as you pursue dreams, overcome obstacles, and make professional choices

For all these reasons, early career psychologists need to build bridges that create opportunities to engage, learn, network, and become leaders within the discipline of psychology.

CECP and APA Can Help

The American Psychological Association (APA) established the Committee on Early Career Psychologists (CECP) to serve as a bridge to new opportunities.

The CECP

- represents the unique interests and concerns of psychologists in the first 7 years of their careers
- consists of six members representing different constituencies within psychology: science; education; public interest; practice; divisions; and state, provincial, and territorial psychological associations
- advocates and develops resources for early career psychologists—for example, APA recently implemented a graduated fee structure to better accommodate financial limitations faced by early career psychologists
- supports the needs of early career psychologists within and outside of APA

See the CECP Web site (www.apa.org/earlycareer/) for information on resources, careers, activities, Listservs, and other useful topics.

As the world's largest and oldest organization of psychologists, APA provides a powerful and unified voice to support the discipline of psychology.

APA

- promotes the interests of the broad range of psychologists through advocacy at the state and national levels
- provides training and practice guidelines to advance and protect the profession
- comments on landmark legal cases to shape and define psychology
- provides information to the public and the media about psychological science, education, and practice
- offers continuing education opportunities—online, at convention, through sponsors and independent study—that enable psychologists to stay abreast of developments in the discipline
- accomplishes all of this within a framework of respect for diversity and individual differences

Whether it's in Congress, state legislatures, federal agencies, or major educational and social institutions, APA is there to inform, participate, and monitor the issues that matter to you most.

Building Bridges Through Networking

Networking will lead you to individuals and groups who share your interests and can advise or assist you in advancing your career and your potential leadership role within psychology.

There are many benefits of networking:

Mentoring

- Networking brings you into contact with other psychologists who may serve as mentors and offer feedback and advice based on their professional experience.
- Mentoring is relevant to all psychologists—
 - from scientists learning how to pursue a directed line of research;
 - to educators first negotiating job salary and duties;
 - to practitioners seeking to establish their first practice or expand into a new area of practice;
 - to individuals seeking guidance from psychologists of similar age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.

Networking enables you to obtain objective feedback about your work experiences, brainstorm solutions to challenges, and identify opportunities for professional advancement.

Jobs and careers

- Networking helps you learn of employment opportunities earlier and develop allies in different institutions, practices, and settings.

Professional development

- Networking provides you with opportunities to advance your skills and collaborate with colleagues on research, practice, and advocacy endeavors.

Support

- Networking provides support to help you navigate the early stages of your career.

Diversity

- Networking brings you into contact with other psychologists who are similar to you in age, race, cultural background, gender, disability status, or sexual orientation. Members of these groups may have faced personal or professional challenges, and talking with them may prove helpful.

A strong, active professional network is an essential foundation for a thriving, engaging, and successful career . . .

Building Bridges Through Leadership

There are many ways to become actively engaged in the activities and leadership opportunities of APA, and members who are active in governance tend to be active in multiple ways. However, it can be challenging for early career psychologists to decide where and how to begin working on one of the many boards and committees of APA or within the 54 divisions and 60 state, provincial, and territorial psychological associations (SPTPAs).

Here are some tips on how to begin:

Getting Connected: The Basics

Professional associations have a hierarchical governance structure run by an executive committee (EC) that oversees finances, advocacy, and a number of boards and committees reporting to the EC on specific training, research, practice, or public interest issues.

- Most APA boards and committees are elected by the Council of Representatives; divisions and SPTPAs tend to have more appointed and volunteer positions or positions that are voted on by the membership.

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- Associations frequently issue a “Call for Nominations” to serve on special task forces or work groups.
- Members typically advance by building relationships and credibility through service in a number of governance positions.

Getting Connected: Where to Begin?

Look for opportunities to build on your strengths and expertise, serve the profession or a specific constituency, and focus on issues of importance to you. Remember that as an early career psychologist, you have a very important and valuable perspective to provide in all governance activities. Once involved, you will develop a more informed understanding of how associations work and the type of governance activities that are rewarding to you. To begin,

- **Go online** to read detailed information about the structure and activities of the association (www.apa.org/about/structure.html):
 - Most associations have a “Governance” or “Boards and Committees” link on the home Web page.
 - APA provides an online list of SPTPAs and divisions (by topic) to help you identify those working in areas of interest to you.
 - APA division and SPTPA Web sites offer superb opportunities for networking.
 - Minutes from business meetings and special reports are often online.

Networking leads to solutions . . .

- **Contact the chair of a committee of interest to you.** Share your appreciation for their work and your willingness to serve.
- **Sign up for Listservs.** APA hosts over 1,000 Listservs, as do SPTPAs, for psychologists located near you (<http://listserve.apa.org/archives/index.html>). Listservs can be focused on a specific topic (e.g., clinical neuropsychology) or general activity (e.g., advocacy).
- **Attend convention programs and social hours** to meet other professionals with similar interests. APA and most states host annual conventions. Divisions provide most of the programming for the APA convention and offer:
 - *Social hours and award ceremonies*—Occasions for more personal interactions with members.
 - *Suite programming*—Smaller, more informal discussion seminars.

Getting Connected: The Process

Active participation in the association is the best way to get connected and discover other ways to become involved:

- **Serve on a committee.** Most associations have one or more committees focused on the following issues: education, practice, science, public interest, newsletter, convention, membership, diversity, awards, nominations/elections, advocacy, continuing education, ethics, and fundraising/philanthropy. There are also many small sections or work groups that are more task or topic specific.

Networking leads to opportunities . . .

- **Seek out like-minded individuals.** Many associations also have a diversity or an early career committee that sends a voting representative to the executive committee. Serving in such positions is a rewarding way to provide valuable input to the association.
- **Become a coordinator or join a grassroots network.** Some associations appoint a person to manage a network of local volunteers. Examples of APA volunteer networks include:
 - *Business of Practice Network:* Network of state associations and practice divisions that oversee the Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award program and other initiatives to advance psychology within the behavioral health marketplace.
 - *Disaster Response Network:* National network of volunteer psychologists with training in disaster response who offer assistance to relief workers, victims, and victims' families after man-made or natural disasters.
 - *Public Education Campaign:* Grassroots network that provides tools and marketing strategies to increase the visibility of psychologists and communicate the value of psychology to the public.
- **Join advocacy networks.** Join a grassroots network compatible with your interests (e.g., the APA Practice Network, the Federal Education Advocacy Coordinators Grassroots Network, and the Public Policy Advocacy Network). Many states and divisions also coordinate advocacy networks focused on specific issues (e.g., Medicaid, serious and persistent mental illness, criminal justice, etc).

Networking leads to enrichment of professional skills . . .

- **Write about early career issues.** Build visibility through writing about early career issues in articles for newsletters and journals or in letters to the editors of the *Monitor on Psychology* and other publications. You can also volunteer to review manuscripts for many division journals and SPTPA newsletters.
- **Participate in the convention:**
 - Submit proposals for poster presentations.
 - Serve on programming committees.
 - Take part in the CECP-sponsored programs on issues relevant to ECPs (e.g., financial planning, balancing career and family, etc.).
 - If you make a presentation, collect contact information from attendees and send them additional information that may be of interest.
- **Don't quit, and always follow through when opportunity knocks.** Timing is key, and although some opportunities might not work out, persistence pays off, particularly if you use these tips to build relationships over time.

*. . . building bridges advances your
career and the discipline of psychology.*

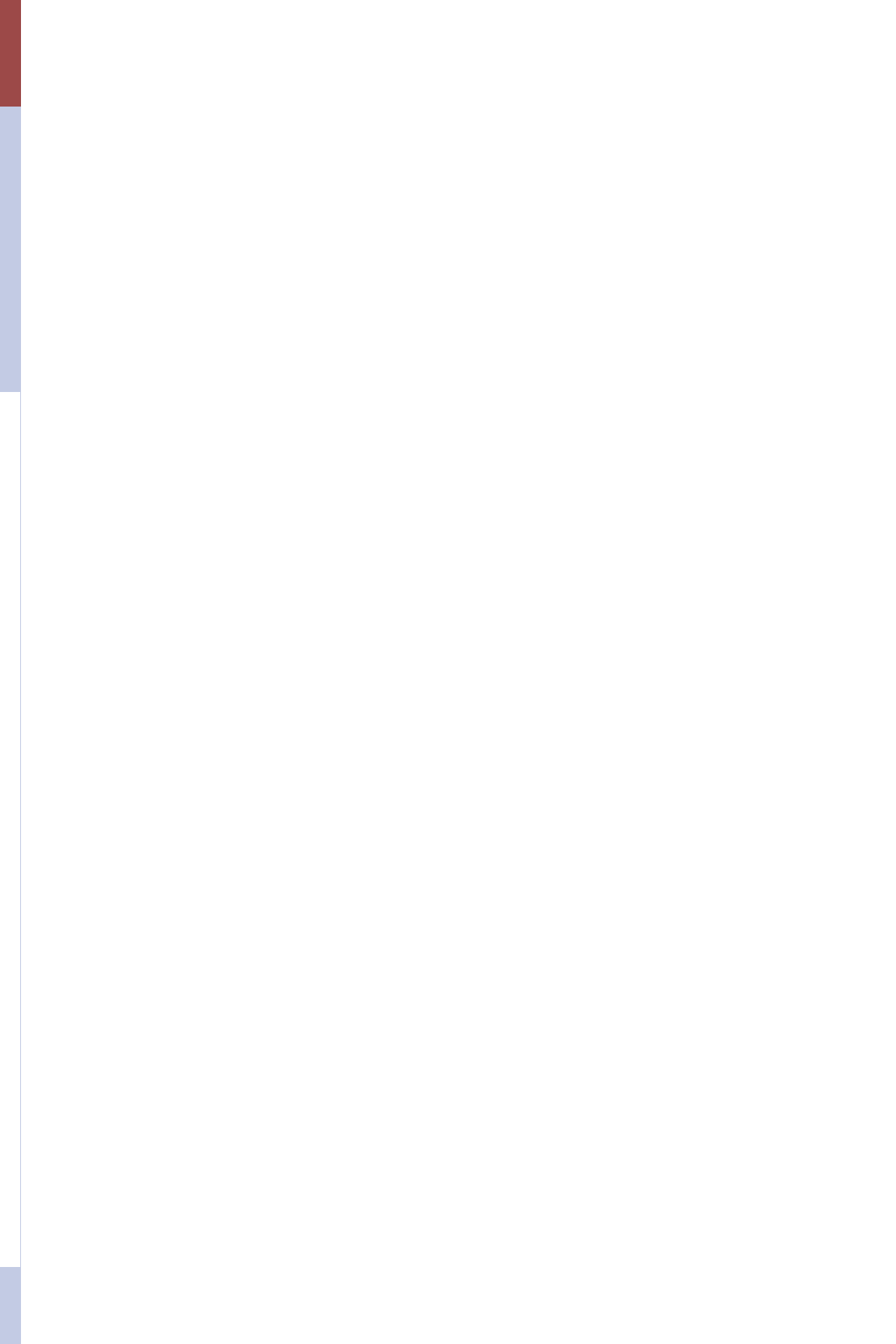
*CECP created this brochure to help YOU
become more involved and influential in
APA's governance and policy activities. As an
active governance member of APA, you will
help shape the future of our discipline and
advance APA's work in the areas of science,
practice, education, and public interest. And
in doing so, you will be able to network and
advance your career through opportunities
you'd never anticipated.*

For More Information

**Visit the Early Career Psychologists
Web site at**

www.apa.org/earlycareer/

**or contact the American
Psychological Association at**
membership@apa.org





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