
Fall 2025

NVCP Newsletter



Northern Virginia Clinical Psychologists

<https://vapsych.org/nvcp-home>

From the NVCP President

Mike Schaub, PhD - NVCP President

As we move into a new season, I'm grateful for the energy and dedication that makes the NVCP community so special. Each of us shares a commitment to strengthening our profession and supporting one another in the meaningful work we do every day. This year, we are building on that foundation with an initiative that invites each of our chairs to explore new and innovative ideas for advancing NVCP's mission through programming, advocacy, and education.

Our mission is focused on the following goals:

- Providing continuing education and training opportunities for members
- Connecting with other psychologists through social events and discussion groups
- Advocating for state and federal policies related to our field
- Educating the public about mental health and wellness
- Addressing social inequalities affecting marginalized populations
- Supporting the development of early career professionals

Each part of this mission offers rich opportunities for creativity and collaboration. Our Continuing Education Co-Chairs are developing programs that not only meet our licensing requirements, but also inspire us to grow as clinicians. We are looking at ways to incorporate innovative topics and diverse presenters who can bridge science and practice, enrich our understanding, and expand the reach of our professional learning.

Our Diversity Chair continues NVCP's efforts to emphasize that clinical excellence cannot be separated from cultural awareness and inclusion. This work will focus on exploring initiatives that bring attention to the needs of marginalized populations and ensure our association reflects the diverse voices of our community.

Our Legislative Advocacy Chair plays an essential role in advancing mental health care policy at both the state and national levels. This year, we are encouraging ways to make advocacy more accessible, whether through legislative updates, brief advocacy trainings in conjunction with VACP, or opportunities for members to connect directly with policymakers on issues that impact our work and our clients.

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President's Message continued

Connection and belonging across our career milestones are also central to NVCP's identity. Our Membership & Social Activities Chair will continue to develop creative opportunities to bring us together, both professionally and personally. From informal gatherings to larger social events, these are the opportunities that strengthen our sense of community and remind us that we are not alone in our work.

Our Communications Chair is reimagining how we share information and celebrate accomplishments. Through our website and social media platforms, we are exploring fresh ways to highlight the meaningful work happening across our organization and to invite broader participation from members at every career stage.

Finally, our Newsletter Chair is building on the great work of years past to expand how the newsletter connects and informs our community. This publication will continue to showcase the many voices within NVCP, share updates from our chairs, highlight member accomplishments, and offer thoughtful reflections on professional and clinical topics.

What excites me most about this initiative is how it invites us all to think expansively about what NVCP can be and how we can best serve one another and our broader community. I encourage every member to get involved, share ideas, and join in this creative process.

Together, we can make this a year of innovation, connection, and growth for ourselves, for our colleagues, and for the people and communities we serve.

Warmly,

Mike Schaub, Ph.D.

Membership Moments

Carla Messenger Shuman, PhD - NVCP Membership and Social Chair

Greetings everyone,

It has been a busy season for the membership of NVCP. On August 9, Anna Lucca and I hosted a coffee get-together for NVCP members at Godfrey's coffee shop in Falls Church. Ten members, including three new members, joined us for coffee, networking, and great conversation. We hope to continue having these coffee hours in different locations across Northern Virginia to allow for deeper and meaningful connections amongst our members across the region. They have been a great way to meet fellow psychologists practicing in close proximity, especially for those of us in solo private practice with fewer moments in the day with embedded connections to colleagues.

On September 21, thirty NVCP members, including 5 members of the board, spent time connecting at Paradise Springs Winery in Clifton, VA. This annual event is always filled with wonderful connections in a beautiful setting. If you have not yet been able to join for this event, we hope you will consider doing so next September – it was so nice hearing conversations ranging from family life to clinical psychology and really captures the beauty of our profession and importance of connection amongst clinicians.

Questions and suggestions for membership initiatives and social events?

Email Carla at: nvcpmembership@gmail.com

Diversity Highlights

Scott Krysztofiak, PsyD - Diversity Chair

This fall season, I wanted to highlight a series of heritage months that have taken place and will continue to take place throughout November. Please check out these links from NAMI to learn more about mental health issues impacting specific groups of individuals. Having deeper and more nuanced understanding of these intersectional mental health concerns deepens our work as clinical psychologists and the services we can provide to the Northern Virginia community.

September 15th through October 15th, Hispanic Heritage Month
[NAMI - Hispanic/Latinx](#)

October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month
[NAMI - People with Disabilities](#)

November, Native American Heritage Month
[NAMI - Indigenous](#)

To all readers: Your perspectives on working with specific client needs are invited and welcomed for inclusion in future newsletter issues! If you are interested in sharing your recommendations for addressing diversity, please contact Scott Krysztofiak, Diversity Chair, at: nvcpdiversity@gmail.com. We would love to highlight your work, communities, traditions, and voices.

VACP Fall 2025 Conference Recap

The Power of Diverse Perspectives

Carole Sebenick, PhD

On October 10, a surprisingly easy drive south on I-95 afforded me a rare opportunity to gather with a diverse crowd of fellow psychologists from across the Commonwealth for learning on a wide array of topics. The VACP Fall Conference, held in the historic Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, featured ten hours of continuing education and a VACP business meeting over a day and a half. My attendance was limited to the 7-session agenda on Friday; despite a couple decades of VACP membership, I had rarely attended the conference due to full schedules of clients on Fridays and Saturdays. I hadn't realized how much I was missing!

The conference courses represented the strong link between science and practice in clinical psychology. Sessions focused on psychotherapeutic and assessment strategies as well as cutting-edge neuropsychological science, trauma- and justice-informed theoretical models, and recent government and commercial-sector actions that impact our profession. NVCP members Brian Razzino, PhD, and Scott Krysztofiak, PsyD, were among the presenters, and several Northern Virginia colleagues were in attendance. Learning about the dedicated work of clinical psychologists throughout Virginia truly was affirming. For those who could not attend, I offer a brief summary of Friday's jam-packed trainings:

The day started with Brian Razzino, PhD, sharing his work on a super-hero themed model he uses to help teens reframe social-emotional problems in a way that can move them from impaired, shame-based internalization to empowered problem solving and mindful emotional regulation. The applications to work with adults and to psychoeducation outside the therapy room became readily apparent to me. Then, Midlothian-based clinicians and researchers Jeremy Walden, PsyD, and Enoch Bullock, MEd, provided an overview of the complexities of assessment and treatment of PTSD and TBI among marginalized populations for whom intergenerational and individual trauma shape neuropsychological functioning and symptom presentation.

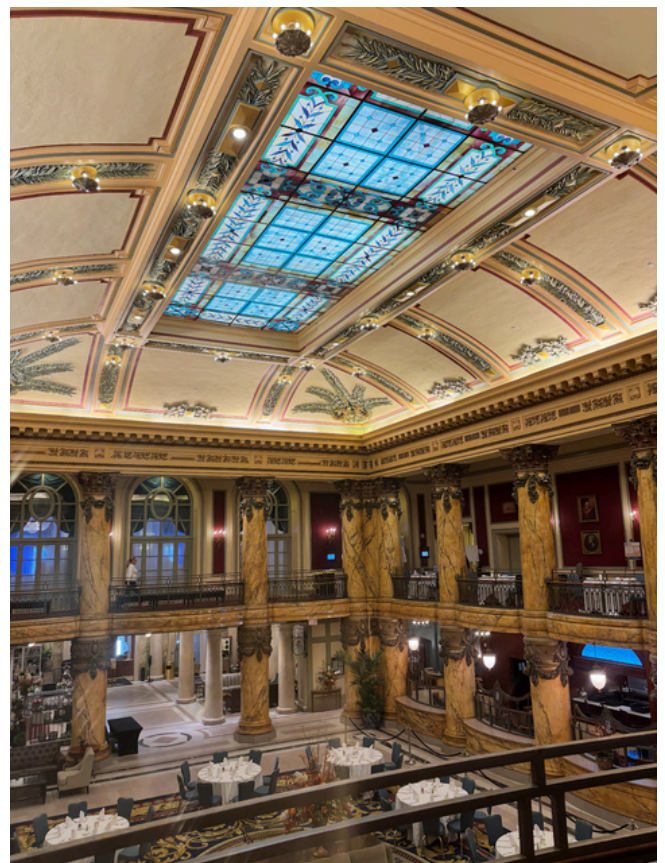
VACP Conference Recap Continued

Following the VACP business lunch that reminded me of the expansive work done behind the scenes to keep our profession engaged and effective, a session on “Staying Grounded in a Shifting World” launched the afternoon. Presented by a panel of experts from Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Williamsburg, and Alexandria (Jennifer Flaherty, PhD; Hannah Jones, PsyD; Scott Krysztofiak, PsyD; and Stacie Otey-Scott, PsyD), this session raised awareness of justice-oriented strategies for building resilience in the face of the socio-political stress that affects our clients and ourselves; they highlighted the power of understanding and applying tenets of theories like Liberation Theory, Hope Theory, Collective Resilience-Building, and Hayes’ and Carter’s models of intersectional identity and ecological levels of diagnosis in our work. And, they imparted take-away advice that has stuck with me: “Be an up stander, not a bystander,” conceptualize as “not broken, just blocked,” and use “hope as a radical counterforce” against oppression and psychological suffering.

The fourth session, led by the Virginia Beach mother-daughter team of Kimberley Coddington, PhD, and Charissa Coddington, JD, reminded participants of the importance of understanding the legislative process (and consulting legal experts) as we wade through changes that have shaped our work over the past two decades; they prompted our consideration of ethical principles that call us to advocacy; and they provided resources for staying on top of legislative affairs.

The final session of the day focused on practical strategies and case examples of neurodiversity-affirming approaches to assessment. This session by Maryland-based psychologist, Eleonora Sadikova, PhD, suggested behaviors and testing conditions that improve the effectiveness of assessment processes and outcomes, diagnosis, and intervention recommendations. For me, an educator and psychotherapist, the relevance of her wisdom to my work in other areas of clinical psychology was immediately apparent and useful.

In a beautiful location, imparting important learning, and for an amazingly affordable registration fee, the VACP Fall Conference was worth any amount of driving on I-95...and we NoVa folks know what a testament that is!



Legislative Updates

Anna M. Lucca, PhD - NVCP Legislative Affairs Chair

Update on Prescriptive Authority for Clinical Psychologists.

Earlier this year, VACP-sponsored RxP legislation directed the Virginia Boards of Psychology and Medicine "to jointly convene a work group with stakeholders to study the education, training, and qualifications of clinical psychologists licensed in the Commonwealth and assess under what conditions it may be appropriate for clinical psychologists to be granted prescriptive authority."

This RxP working group met several times over the past few months, and VACP is expecting a formal summary and recommendation report to be issued in November. Feedback from participants has indicated significant push back from psychiatry and other medical professional groups on key aspects of training and scope of practice. As such, our bill sponsor, Sen. Barbara Favola, is planning to introduce a bill to extend the study of RxP for another year which would give VACP additional time to strengthen lobbying efforts.

In addition, VACP will continue to work on building grassroots support for RxP in Virginia. These efforts include providing training and support to members of the Key Psychological Network (KPN), recruiting more psychologists to the KPN, and developing targeted advocacy campaigns. Please contact me if you are interested in learning more about legislative advocacy and how to become involved in KPN. If you are a constituent of any of the following legislators, your participation would be especially welcomed: Sen. Stella Pekarsky (District 36), Del. Kathy Tran (District 18), Del. Charliene Herring (District 4), Del. Irene Shin (District 8), Del. Rozia Henson (District 19), Del. JJ Singh (District 26), Del. Geary Higgins (District 30), Del. Bobby Orrock (District 66), Del. Phillip Scott (District 63).

Protecting patients from inappropriate use of AI: VACP is working with representatives from Northern Virginia (Del. Kathy Tran and Sen. Favola) to take the lead in introducing simultaneous bills in the Virginia House and Senate to protect the provider-patient relationship from inappropriate use of artificial intelligence technologies. Del. Tran and Sen. Favola's bills will be modeled after Illinois [Bill 1806](#), which was passed earlier this year. This legislation provides that therapy services must be conducted by licensed practitioners who may use AI in an adjunctive capacity, while stipulating that AI cannot be used to make independent therapeutic decisions, directly interact with clients in any form of therapeutic communication, or generate therapeutic recommendations or treatment plans without the review and approval by a licensed professional.

If you have questions about legislative affairs within NVCP and VACP, please reach out directly to Anna Lucca: annamlucca@gmail.com

Upcoming NVCP CEU

VACP is offering a 1.5 hour CE training on Friday, November 14th at 12:00pm.

This virtual APA training, led by Alix Ginsberg, Deputy Chief of State Advocacy, and Deborah Baker, Head of the Office of Professional Legal and Regulatory Affairs, will be free to VACP members and provide information about RxP, Legislative Advocacy 101 skills, as well as an overview of the Virginia legislative landscape post-election. This training is a great opportunity for those considering more active engagement in the intersections of our clinical work with legislation in our home state of Virginia.

Click the image on the right to register for the training. We hope to see you there!



Feature Article

Trends in Therapy and Assessment for Autism as Informed by The Neurodiversity Movement and Diagnostic Changes

Hannah Poole, PsyD

The past several decades have been marked by an increase in both the number of individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) citing in 2025 that one in 31 adults is diagnosed with autism, and the coinciding rise of the neurodiversity movement. The neurodiversity movement advocates for the acceptance and inclusion of individuals who identify as neurodivergent and encourages the celebration of the unique thinking styles and their contributions to their communities rather than relying on deficit models that were prominent in the past. Central to this movement were the perspectives and voices from within the neurodiverse populations themselves, many of whom advocated for diagnosis-first language, collaboration with researchers (e.g., “no research about me without me”), and pushed back against practices and interventions that encouraged “masking” neurodivergent traits.

In response, the field of psychology, which has a checkered past regarding its treatment of those seen as different, was challenged to adopt neuroaffirming practices. These practices seek to destigmatize those differences that may be *different* but not problematic for neurodivergent individuals. For example, while the treatment goal for an autistic child several decades ago may have included reducing stimming behaviors such as pacing and and flapping, these repetitive behaviors are now understood as unarmful and regulating for autistic individuals. Nowadays, a neuroaffirming therapist would likely acknowledge these behaviors as self-regulating and support the child and family in identifying additional interventions to support self-regulation (e.g., occupational therapy, a sensory diet, physical activity such as gymnastics or martial arts). Furthermore, neuroaffirming psychologists ask the question, “How much of this is actually problematic vs. how much of this is only a problem due to the way that our society is structured?” They then seek to both adjust the therapeutic environment to support the client, but also advocate for additional shifts in the client’s broader social context (e.g., school, the family system, and the community at large).

This shift toward neuroaffirming practices has not only been adopted by interventionists but has also changed the way in which autism testing is conducted and how the diagnosis itself is understood and given. With the publication of the DSM-5 came a new conceptualization of ASD itself. Rather than retaining multiple diagnoses (e.g., Asperger’s Disorder, Autistic Disorder) under Pervasive Developmental Disorder, all of these diagnoses were consolidated into one diagnosis of “Autism Spectrum Disorder.” Therefore, Autism became understood as a broad and diversely presenting set of differences in the areas of social communication/interaction, interests, and behaviors. Further, this publication marked the advent of “levels of support” associated with a diagnosis of ASD, with Level 1 indicating someone “requires support,” Level 2 indicating they “require substantial support,” and Level 3 indicating they “require very substantial support.” Although seemingly subtle, this addition shifted the focus away from the *severity* of the clinical picture to the support a person needs to be successful in day-to-day life. This re-classification pushed assessors to hone in on the various presentations associated with ASD and also gave them the flexibility to assign levels of support needs that are not permanent across time. Today, individuals conducting autism testing likely underscore to families that the assigned level is not an amount or severity of autism someone has, but rather how much support they require *in the present moment* across settings to attain conventional success. These levels may and often do change as children naturally develop and attain new skills.

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Also, the way that autism testing is conducted across environments has shifted as practices have become increasingly neuroaffirming. This relates to both the adaptations providers make to the testing environment, but also the methods by which diagnoses are made. Adaptations to the testing environment may include things like adjusting noise and volume level, dimming lights, providing sensory breaks, and increasing structure and predictability, all of which can also be applied to spaces of intervention. Further, as diagnoses are being made at younger ages (largely thanks to data collected from research with siblings of children with ASD), the number of individuals with autism diagnoses increases, and insurance coverage and waitlist become more prohibitive, many psychologists are pushing for diagnoses of less ambiguous cases of ASD to be made outside of the clinic. Some psychologists have therefore advocated for and even created programs to train pediatricians to screen for signs of autism and conduct developmental interviews to support diagnosis in the primary care space.

Despite these positive shifts towards neuroaffirming intervention and assessment alongside accurate and timely diagnosis across settings, there are still many barriers for families with neurodiverse children. As psychologists, it is essential that we continue to learn and understand the needs of neurodiverse individuals and communities. Understanding the complex history and shifts in conceptualization across time, as well as the current sociopolitical context surrounding neurodiversity and trends in treatment and testing is critical to providing the highest quality of care.

For more information about the neurodiversity movement, see <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/identity/the-neurodiversity-movement>.

For additional information about neurodiversity more generally, see <https://childmind.org/article/what-is-neurodiversity/>.

About the Author

Hannah Poole, PsyD, received her doctorate from the PGSP-Stanford PsyD Consortium and completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the Department of Developmental Pediatrics at Children's Hospital Colorado in Denver. Hannah currently works at Expand Psychology in Falls Church and Alexandria, Virginia, providing therapy and assessment services to children with autism and other neurodevelopmental differences.

Interested in Writing A Feature Article?

We are always excited to feature a variety of articles, perspectives, and topics in our newsletter. We encourage NVCP members to reach out with any topics they might like to explore through writing to help familiarize our members with your work, or raise into conversation important topics within the NVCP community, and field at large. Don't have time to write? We are happy to interview you and transcribe the interview to feature your voice in the newsletter too.

Reach out to newsletter editor, Adam Rosen, at nvcnewsletter@gmail.com with questions and column suggestions.

NVCP Communications Reminder

McKenna O'Shea , PsyD - NVCP Communications Chair

There are several ways to connect with NVCP members and access organization information!

On LinkedIn, you can search for Northern Virginia Clinical Psychologists (NVCP) or use [this link](#).
On Facebook, follow us at NVCP (Northern Virginia Clinical Psychologists).

To subscribe to the NVCP listserv, or provide feedback about ways we can best communicate with you all, please send an email to McKenna O'Shea at osheappc@gmail.com.

Continuing Education Corner

Courtney Ferenz, PsyD - CE Co-Chair & Vice President

On October 24, NVCP held a three-hour continuing education event at Wildfire in McLean, VA, titled "Addressing Ethical and Professional Issues in Artificial Intelligence and the Practice of Clinical Psychology." We had about 75 members attend this event, which is approximately double our usual turnout. This engaging presentation examined how artificial intelligence is reshaping clinical practice. Attendees explored the promises and pitfalls of integrating AI into mental health care, including the potential to enhance assessment, diagnosis and treatment, as well as the ethical challenges it poses. We specifically explored the ethical implications around marketing tools designed to increase the visibility of professional practice. The discussion emphasized maintaining clinical judgment, fairness, and ethical integrity as technology continues to evolve within the field.

The featured speaker, Edward A. "Ted" Peck III, PhD, delivered a dynamic and thought provoking presentation that blended technical insight with practical ethical guidance. Dr. Peck offered real world examples and encouraged lively discussion among attendees. Dr. Peck incorporated his personal photographs to demonstrate how AI is used, which added a personal touch. We sincerely appreciate Dr. Peck's engaging presentation on this topic as we continue to navigate this changing landscape.

Stay tuned for our next continuing education event on Psychology and the Aging Brain!



Welcome to New NVCP Members

As is NVCP newsletter tradition, we would like to welcome our newest members who have joined our community since the previous newsletter:

Lillian Mitchell, PsyD, Jason Northrop, PsyD, Lauren Staadeker PsyD,
Latrice Vinson, PhD, Taylor Wilmer, PhD

Know of prospective members or early career clinicians looking to join our community? Please email membership chair, Carla Messenger Schuman, at: nvcpmembership@gmail.com

Member Spotlight: Amber Mason, PhD, NCSP

NVCP is proud to recognize Amber Mason, PhD, for her recent achievements within our community.

Dr. Mason's practice, Aptivate Educational and Psychological Solutions, recently won the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce's 2025 Micro Business of the Year Award. Micro Business nominees must have five or fewer full-time employees and/or earn less than \$1 million in annual revenue. The Best in Business Awards program was held on October 23, 2025 and highlighted the following regarding Dr. Mason's work:

"Aptivate Educational and Psychological Solutions transforms the lives of youth ages 3-22 through integrated academic and psychological services. Founded by Dr. Amber Mason in 2022, Aptivate offers evaluations, therapy, social skills, tutoring, and college counseling, both in Old Town Alexandria and virtually via PSYPACT. Beyond clinical excellence, Aptivate is a community leader, providing full scholarships to social skills camps, subsidized therapy, and ongoing group programs in partnership with Community Lodgings. Dr. Mason mentors emerging psychologists, co-founded a peer consultation group, and advocates for mental health policy, while the team actively supports nonprofits, including the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria, making a lasting impact on families and youth."

To read more, see the following article in Alexandria Living Magazine:
<https://alexandrialivingmagazine.com/business/alexandria-celebrates-best-in-business/>



Dr. Mason was also appointed this October to the Children, Youth, and Families Collaborative Commission of the City of Alexandria (CYFCC). The three main goals of the 2025 CYFCC Children and Youth Master Plan are to (1) support the physical and mental health of children, (2) contribute to the academic success and career readiness of youth, and (3) increase the positive experiences of youth and their families and decrease instances of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Dr. Mason's three-year term on the Commission starts in November 2025.

Congratulations to Dr. Mason on her recent successes and support of the community.

Do you have professional successes you would like to celebrate with the NVCP community in our newsletter? Submit your highlights and announcements via email to Adam Rosen at: nvcpnewsletter@gmail.com

Thank You from the New NVCP Newsletter Editor

Adam Rosen, PsyD - Incoming Newsletter Editor

Dear NVCP community,

I wanted to close this edition with a quick note of gratitude to the board and our membership for your collective support as I have entered this role. Of course, this feeling of warmth was not of particular surprise to me. From my first NVCP potluck event at Ann O'Malley's home, to CE trainings at Maggiano's and fall socials at Paradise Springs, I have always been struck by the professional and personal support offered by our organization and all those who comprise it. It has made engaging in clinical practice in our area all the more rewarding and I'm excited for continued collaborations to come.

My goal is to carry on the incredible work of my predecessor in this role, Carole Sebenick, whom I also owe a great debt of gratitude for her kindness and guidance through this transition. I am open to your thoughts, feedback, and visions for the newsletter and our ongoing efforts to remain connected between in person events. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with your ideas and curiosities for what you may hope to see featured in future issues. My hope is that the newsletter continues to reflect the diverse voices, practices, and stories that make our organization such a lively, enriching, and special place.

I encourage you to reach out to me at anytime at: NVCPnewsletter@gmail.com. I will look forward to hearing from you, working with you, and connecting with you, as always.

With gratitude,

Adam

Interested in Advertising in the Newsletter?

Reminder: Ad space in any issue of the NVCP Newsletter is available to members free of charge.

The NVCP board welcomes our members to take advantage of the opportunity to advertise their work, spotlight their practices, find occupants for empty office space, highlight upcoming trainings, and much more. As a perk of NVCP membership, advertising in our newsletter is free of charge to members.

We also invite non-members and community colleagues to advertise within the newsletter on topics relevant to our membership.

Non-members may purchase single-issue space at the following rates:

\$50 for ¼ page

\$100 for ½ page

\$125 for full page.

Your advertisement content, ideas for articles, and recommendations of resources to share are welcomed. Please contact the editor, Adam Rosen, at NVCPnewsletter@gmail.com.

Look for the next issue in January!

The newsletter is distributed by email to all members in January, April, July, and October. Past issues are available with member sign-in via the [NVCP website](#).