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APRIL 2025

# NVCP Newsletter



*Northern Virginia Clinical Psychologists*

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

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## From the NVCP President

Mike Schaub, PhD - NVCP President

As psychologists, we understand that work is more than just a job—it serves as a source of identity, purpose, and community. In Northern Virginia, changes to the federal workforce have effects that extend far beyond individual employment status. With approximately 2.4 million civilian federal workers nationwide—and nearly 20% concentrated in Virginia, D.C., and Maryland—policy shifts such as terminations, return-to-office mandates, and increasing scrutiny over agency roles and funding have profound psychological consequences for the individuals we serve.

NVCP members are on the front lines, supporting individuals and families as they navigate these challenges. Many of our clients are grappling with job loss, career uncertainty, financial strain, and heightened stress at home. The loss of vocational identity, the challenge of reorganizing child care, and the anxiety of an unpredictable future contribute to significant emotional distress. Economic and employment instability can exacerbate symptoms of anxiety, depression, and burnout. The threat of agency reorganizations erodes a sense of security, while mandated workplace changes disrupt routines and work-life balance. These stressors not only impact individual well-being but also have broader effects on relationships, communities, and workplace culture.

In conversations with friends and colleagues, I hear stories of federal employees who feel devalued and, as a result, are disengaging at work—doing only the bare minimum to get by. When employees feel undervalued, motivation declines, leading to lower morale and productivity across entire teams. Additionally, these workplace changes can be particularly difficult for employees from diverse racial, ethnic, and international backgrounds. The elimination of diversity initiatives can weaken their sense of belonging and inclusion, making it even harder to feel supported at work. Without intentional efforts to foster a sense of community, some employees may feel increasingly isolated and uncertain about their future.

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## President's Message continued

Now more than ever, it is critical for psychologists to take a broad perspective—recognizing both the contextual and psychological factors impacting mental health. In career counseling, I focus on understanding the contextual nuances of my clients' work lives, including their employment history, skills, family responsibilities, and workplace relationships. However, much of my time is spent addressing the psychological impact of their circumstances. I frequently draw upon elements of grief therapy, helping clients process both actual and anticipated loss. Creating a safe space to explore feelings such as sadness, fear, and anger is an essential part of this process. Existential therapy techniques also play a role—helping clients examine the meaning and purpose of their work and recognize their ability to make choices and exercise agency in their careers. The challenges our clients face extend beyond job loss or workplace adjustments; they tap into deeper psychological struggles related to identity, purpose, and loss.

As a professional community, we are providing meaningful support. This includes helping clients process feelings of loss, adjust to changes in vocational identity, develop coping strategies, explore new career options, and build resilience in the face of uncertainty. Simultaneously, we must practice self-awareness and self-care as we absorb the emotional weight of our clients' struggles. Together, we can help our clients navigate this uncertain political landscape while continuing to provide the compassionate care that defines clinical psychology.

Let's keep the conversation going to ensure we meet this moment with knowledge, empathy, and action. How have changes in the federal workforce affected your clients or practice? How are you responding to their needs? I welcome your thoughts—please feel free to email me at [nvcppresident@gmail.com](mailto:nvcppresident@gmail.com). I will anonymize and share responses with the NVCP membership.

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## New NVCP Members

We are very pleased to welcome colleagues who have joined NVCP since January 2025!

### **NEW ACTIVE MEMBERS:**

David Cranford, PhD  
Christopher Lindemann, PhD  
Jessica Peck, PsyD  
Raelyn Loiselle Roberson, PhD  
Brendan Robinson, PhD

### **NEW STUDENT MEMBERS:**

Kaneng Dakwak  
Lindsay Burdette  
Ryan Steadman



Please join us for the NAMI walk on Sunday, May 4th, at 10:00 am. The walk this year will be held at Ben Brenman Park in Alexandria. If you are interested in joining Team NVCP, please register by clicking on the link below. You can also make donations using the same link. Our team's fundraising goal this year is \$1,000.00. We look forward to seeing you out there!

Questions? Please feel free to email Scott Kryzstofiak at [scottyk1517@gmail.com](mailto:scottyk1517@gmail.com).

[Click here for the NVCP Registration and Donation Page!](#)

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# Continuing Education Corner

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

On March 14, Robyn Miller, Ph.D., presented a virtual CE program entitled “Professional Wills and the Practice Executor Role: Clinical, Business, and Emotional Considerations.” This presentation highlighted the importance of having a formal written directive (“professional will”) to protect patients by planning for incapacitation or death. She talked about her personal experiences as a practice executor as well as the findings of her research on legal, ethical, and therapeutic considerations of unanticipated therapist absence/death.

Dr. Miller is a licensed clinical psychologist and the founder of TheraClosure, the first therapist professional executor service. With nearly 25 years of clinical experience, Dr. Miller provides training, supervision, and professional will and practice executor consultation services. She has written on this topic as well.

The presentation was very informative, greatly enhancing attendees’ understanding of an important and often neglected topic.

**Stay tuned for upcoming details on the next CE program to be offered in June!**

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# NVCP Social Events

Carla Messenger Shuman, PhD - NVCP Membership and Social Chair

On Sunday, February 9, 2025, our annual winter potluck and membership drive was held at a member's home in Falls Church. We were very fortunate to have lovely weather this year. Fifty-two members and prospective members gathered to network and connect. I spoke with several new members and a couple of prospective members whom I had not previously met. I am so grateful that our membership continues to grow. The potluck has become a wonderful tradition and a great way to meet colleagues, catch up with old friends, and invite more clinical psychologists to join our group!



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# Diversity Highlights

Scott Krysztofiak, PsyD - Diversity Chair

There is a lot to celebrate in the spring and summer months! Please check out these links to learn more about mental health issues and specific groups of individuals.

April is National Arab American Heritage Month  
[Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian Mental Health](#)

May is Asian/Pacific Heritage Month and Jewish American Heritage Month  
[Asian American and Pacific Islander Mental Health](#)

[Jewish American Mental Health](#)

June is LGBTQ+ Pride Month and Caribbean American Heritage Month  
[LGBTQ+ Mental Health](#)

[A Neglected Challenge of Mental Health: Latin American and Caribbean countries rank among the world's happiest, but mental health remains an undiscussed issue](#)

July is Disability Pride  
[Disabilities and Mental Health](#)

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 [nvcpsdiversity@gmail.com](mailto:nvcpsdiversity@gmail.com).



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## NVCP Attends VACP Conference

Many members of our organization gathered and learned together at the VACP Spring Conference in Williamsburg, April 3-5, 2025.



Save the Date for VACP's 2025 Fall Conference  
October 10-11 | The Jefferson Hotel, Richmond, VA

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# Celebrating Gender Expansiveness in Gender Affirming Therapy

Rachel W. Friendly, PhD

For the past several years, transgender and gender expansive folks in the United States have been the targets of countless acts of political enmity and personal hostility. The months since President Trump's inauguration have added additional layers of fear, confusion, and despair for this community. Therapists can provide a safe place for gender expansive clients to process their reactions, explore their identities, and grow into their authentic selves.

Historically, graduate-level training on working with the gender expansive population has been virtually nonexistent. As a result, regardless of presenting concern, transgender clients are often turned away by well-meaning therapists who cite their professional inexperience as rationale for needing to refer on to other providers. Unfortunately, often there are no better qualified alternatives. One survey of transgender and nonbinary youth in 2024 reported that, for a variety of reasons, 49% of youth who desired mental health treatment last year were unable to access it. This is particularly notable given that, in that same survey, 46% of respondents reported considering suicide within the past year, and 14% reported attempting suicide. (Note that only those who survived these attempts were able to take the survey.)

We know that appropriate, supportive clinical care for gender expansive clients can be literally lifesaving. So, how can we approach this care in the most affirming, most productive manner? Much of our clinical discussion of the gender expansive community focuses on gender dysphoria, the experience of distress that arises from the mismatch between one's sex assigned at birth and one's gender identity. While this is an important part of most transgender clients' lived experience, it is important not to discount the converse experience of gender euphoria, or the joy of feeling alignment between one's body and one's gender identity. Clinicians are in a unique position to help clients learn to celebrate their authentic selves, often before others in clients' lives are even aware of these identities, and sometimes in the face of active rejection from those around them. In a culture that often seems to be telling trans folks they shouldn't exist at all, it is amazing what a difference it can make to have even one person celebrating a client's identity.

The following are some ideas for how clinicians can provide celebratory gender affirming care to the transgender and gender expansive community:

- **Check your website.** Is the language gender inclusive? Are the images hetero- and gender-normative, or do you offer glimpses in which gender expansive clients may see themselves? If you offer couples or relationship services, do you use gendered language (e.g., boyfriend/girlfriend, husband/wife) or gender neutral language (e.g., partner, spouse)?
- **Create a welcoming consultation call experience.** Get comfortable introducing yourself with your name and pronouns and asking for others' pronouns (hint: you can just say, 'What are your pronouns?' or 'What pronouns do you use?'). Practice a positive and affirming tone, even if you are not yet super-confident. Warmth and tone can make a huge difference in how welcomed and celebrated clients feel.

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- **Be thoughtful with your paperwork.** Think about what you need to know and what you are just curious about. For instance, do not ask a client about their name prior to transition--i.e., their "deadname"--if they have legally changed it, unless it is required for insurance billing or other externally-required documentation purposes. Consider using open ended options for questions about sex and gender identity. If you are going to use a forced-choice option, consider using 'another' rather than 'other' as the last choice; trans folks are already 'othered' all the time, and even this small thing can make a huge difference. Consider eliminating intake questions about sexual orientation or make responses to these items voluntary; for clients in the middle of a gender transition, this can be a complicated question.
- **Be mindful about the kind of impression made by your physical space.** Clients notice how we decorate our spaces (including our virtual backgrounds for telehealth work). Are there pride symbols or trans-affirming imagery in your space? Are support staff well educated about how to engage in an affirming manner? Consider a sign for your front desk that states something like, "We respect everyone's gender identity. Please share the name and pronoun (she/he/they) you would like us to use." Are the bathrooms accessible and/or gender neutral?
- **Celebrate and affirm 'in the room.'** Ask about the client's gender journey, who celebrates them, and how they think about gender in their life. Look for opportunities to celebrate small victories and instances of self-knowing, self-compassion, and self-celebration. Orient the client to their own experiences of gender euphoria so that they can practice balancing all the grief and difficult emotions with moments of joy and affirmation. Avoid deadnaming them or being careless with pronouns (both their own and those of others about whom they may speak in session). Avoid over-apologizing when you make a mistake; this can make the client feel like they must make you feel better. Instead, take accountability and then move on. Do not assume gender identity is the only important issue for the client or is the reason behind all other distress. And above all: Believe them when they tell you who they are, even if it changes over time. This change is all part of the transition process and should be celebrated with the client!

As psychologists, we have the rare privilege of supporting, affirming, and empowering our gender expansive clients in a time when they are one of the most persecuted groups in our country. Watching a client come into their own, speak their truth, and own their authentic self is one of the most satisfying, most moving experiences we can have as therapists. Taking a celebratory stance allows us to model the value of positive self-care and a strong sense of self-worth in session so that our transgender and gender expansive clients can carry that into the rest of their lives.

To learn more about the mental health needs of the transgender and gender expansive community, visit [The Trevor Project](#). For a succinct, well written explanation of the differences between sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation, check out [this video](#). To get a better understanding of the legal and political struggles of the trans and gender expansive communities, or to get involved as an advocate or ally, check out [Advocates for Trans Equality \(A4TE\)](#) or [Equality Virginia](#). To add yourself to a database of allied providers, visit [OutCare](#). Finally, you may want to watch the recitation of a moving and heart-opening spoken [word poem by J Mase III](#), a black/trans/queer educator.

### About the Author

*Rachel W. Friendly, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist practicing in California, Massachusetts, Virginia, and Washington, DC. She received her Ph.D. from Clark University and served in both staff psychologist and training director roles at universities across the East and West coasts of the US. Currently, she is building a private practice based in Fairfax, VA, specializing in working with clients who have historically felt silenced (e.g., women, the queer and gender expansive community, and communities of color).*

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## Advertisements

### Collaborative Support Psychological Services PLLC

Dr. Aneta Kern, PhD, PMH-C is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist in Virginia specializing in Perinatal Mental Health and Pediatric Neuropsychology. At this time, her personalized telehealth therapy services primarily support individuals through the emotional and psychological adjustments of pregnancy, the prenatal and postpartum periods, and parenthood. While these are her main areas of focus, Dr. Kern welcomes individuals with a variety of concerns and is committed to providing comprehensive, evidence-based care.

She is in-network with CareFirst and Aetna and is Tricare Certified. Through the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact (PSYPACT), she is authorized to offer telehealth services in all participating states.

Contact: 703-719-4380

Website: [www.supportpsychology.com](http://www.supportpsychology.com)

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## Nurturing Body & Mind: Supporting mothers and women through life's transitions



Are you feeling overwhelmed by the demands of home, work, family and life? Do you struggle with self-acceptance, body image, or the pressure to do it all?

**You don't have to navigate this alone.**

Join us in a safe and empowering space where you can connect with others in similar seasons of life, share your experiences, and find the tools to cultivate balance, confidence, and a healthier relationship with yourself. Group discussions will center around:

- **Work-Life Balance:** Learn strategies to juggle work, family and personal time without burning out.
- **Grounded Living:** Discover ways to reconnect with yourself and create a life that aligns with your values and passions.
- **Body Image:** Break free from societal expectations and embrace the beauty of your unique body.
- **Sustainable Nutrition:** Embrace your intuitive eater to create a peaceful and nourishing relationship with food.



In this group, you'll gain support, insight, and practical tools to help you live more mindfully, feel grounded, and step into your full potential physically, emotionally, and mentally. We'll help you create the balance you've been craving and reclaim your inner resilience.

#### Details

**Who:** Moms & Women in VA, DC, MD & any PSYPACT state

**When:** Biweekly, Wednesdays (9-10:15am EST)

**Where:** Online via Zoom

**Cost:** \$150 intake; \$100/session  
*\*Superbills provided*

***It's time to take care of you!***

**Book a free consultation at <https://tinyurl.com/uvtgroups>**  
Questions? Please email [drvoshanov@urbanvillagetherapy.com](mailto:drvoshanov@urbanvillagetherapy.com)

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NUTRITION

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# Legislative Update

Anna M. Lucca, PhD - NVCP Legislative Affairs Chair

Success!! Senate Bill 752, introduced by Sen. Favola, unanimously passed both chambers of the Virginia legislature and was signed by the Governor. In its final version, this bill “directs the 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.”

Continued advocacy efforts -- both at the individual and VACP level -- are more important than ever. The work group has until November 1, 2025, to report their recommendations back to the Legislature. During this period, VACP is encouraging all members to consider becoming more active as advocates. Currently, we have 18 members of the Key Psychological Network (KPN), which pairs members with their VA senators and delegates to educate and voice support for all issues impacting clinical psychology practice and profession. VACP leadership has set the goal to increase this number to 100 members who are part of the KPN by July 1st. If you are interested or have questions about how to become part of the KPN, please don't hesitate to contact me at [annamlucca@gmail.com](mailto:annamlucca@gmail.com) or you can contact our VACP Legislative Chair, Edward Tiller, at [jetiller145@gmail.com](mailto:jetiller145@gmail.com).

Another way to help is to consider donating to the Virginia Psychological PAC, which is a political action committee registered with the VA Board of Elections and is a separate, segregated fund from your VACP membership dues. Donations enable VACP to expand their lobbying efforts on behalf of prescriptive authority legislation.

You can use this QR code to make a donation to the Virginia Psychological PAC. VACP will match all donations made in the month of May dollar for dollar up to \$50,000!



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## NVCP Social Media

McKenna O'Shea , PsyD - NVCP Communications Chair

*Exciting news!*

NVCP has new ways to connect! A LinkedIn profile and BlueSky account have been created for new ways members can keep up with NVCP updates. Both profiles will also provide regular updates and highlights of new research, advocacy efforts, and other news in psychology. On LinkedIn, you can search for Northern Virginia Clinical Psychologists (NVCP) or use [this link](#).

Our BlueSky account can be followed at [@nvcp.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/nvcp.bsky.social). Also, we will continue to update our Facebook page, which you can follow at NVCP (Northern Virginia Clinical Psychologists).

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# Changes at the American Psychological Association

*Recent changes at the American Psychological Association (APA) have garnered attention within the profession and in national news. NVCP reached out to the VACP Council Representative to the APA, Dr. J. Kim Penberthy, for an update on the recent restructuring efforts that affected several APA directorates. We appreciate Dr. Penberthy's willingness to share the following information and provide her perspective on these organizational changes. The NVCP board is monitoring the very recent decision by the APA Commission on Accreditation to suspend the diversity requirement for graduate programs, and we will share more as the suspension unfolds.*

## An Update on the APA Reorganization of Science, Practice, Education, and Applied Psychology Offices

J. Kim Penberthy, PhD - VACP Council Representative to the APA

As many of you know, the American Psychological Association (APA) has recently undergone a significant restructuring under the leadership of CEO Dr. Arthur Evans. This transformation integrates the Science, Practice, and Education directorates, along with the Office of Applied Psychology, into a unified structure under the leadership of Dr. Mitch Prinstein. The reorganization aims to foster synergy across the discipline, ensuring that science serves as the foundation for all areas of practice, education, and advocacy. While these structural changes have generated much discussion, they also present new opportunities for the field of psychology.

### Why Restructuring Was Necessary

APA leadership recognized that the longstanding organizational framework no longer aligned with the needs of modern psychology. Historically, APA's structure created silos that limited cross-disciplinary collaboration, making it difficult to respond effectively to the evolving challenges of psychological science, practice, and education.

Dr. Evans has emphasized that this restructuring is a proactive and strategic initiative, not a response to financial instability. Instead, it is designed to increase APA's effectiveness in supporting its members, advancing psychological research, and addressing pressing societal issues. By breaking down barriers between directorates, the organization aims to strengthen its impact in advocacy, professional development, and public engagement.

### Major Changes

- **Unified Leadership:** Dr. Mitch Prinstein now oversees all areas of practice, science, education, and applied psychology, reflecting the interconnected nature of these domains and promoting a streamlined, collaborative approach.
- **Personnel Adjustments:** The departures of key staff, including Drs. Jared Skillings and Cathi Grus, have been met with understandable concern. However, APA assures members that these shifts are intended to enhance, not diminish, the organization's capacity to serve the field.
- **Enhanced Collaboration:** By integrating formerly separate directorates, APA seeks to ensure that education, advocacy, and clinical practice are informed by the latest scientific research, fostering a more cohesive approach to psychology.

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## APA Restructuring continued

- **Streamlined Member Engagement:** APA is improving its digital platforms and simplifying access to continuing education (CE) opportunities, advocacy resources, and organizational support, making it easier for members to connect with APA's services.

### Federal Policy Challenges and APA's Advocacy Efforts

While APA's restructuring is a forward-thinking initiative, recent federal policy changes have introduced new challenges for the profession. On February 7, 2025, APA leadership addressed growing concerns about the impact of federal decisions on the field of psychology, citing:

- **Elimination of training positions** due to funding cuts, which may reduce the pipeline of future psychologists.
- **Restricted access to federal datasets**, limiting researchers' ability to conduct critical psychological and public health studies.
- **Frozen clinical positions**, creating workforce shortages and reducing access to psychological services, particularly in underserved areas.
- **Decreased funding** for mental health initiatives, threatening progress in areas such as trauma-informed care, substance use treatment, and community-based interventions.

Despite these challenges, APA remains committed to advocating for policies that support psychological science and practice. The organization is actively engaging with federal agencies and policymakers to address these concerns and protect the well-being of both psychologists and the communities they serve. The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, reinforcing insurance coverage protections for mental health services, has been supported by APA, which has voiced strong support for this initiative and continues to push for broader mental health policy reforms at the national level.

### Where Things Stand

APA's restructuring is still unfolding. Interim leaders, including Dr. Lynn Bufka (Practice), Dr. Sue Orsillo (Education), and Dr. Adrienne Stith Butler (Science), have stepped into key roles to guide their respective teams through this transition. Two recent town halls provided opportunities for APA members and Council Representatives to voice concerns and gain clarity on the rationale and goals of the reorganization.

### Implications for Practitioners

For those engaged in clinical practice, education, and research, the restructuring and policy landscape have several implications:

- **Access to Resources:** APA's new member portal improves access to clinical guidelines, CE opportunities, and advocacy tools.
- **Advocacy Alignment:** With an integrated leadership team, APA's advocacy efforts are now better positioned to address critical issues, including Medicare reimbursement, telehealth policies, and funding for psychological research.

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## APA Restructuring continued

- **Educational Enhancements:** The education directorate remains committed to supporting CE sponsors, accreditation processes, and workforce development initiatives to address ongoing challenges in psychology training.

### Reflections and Looking Ahead

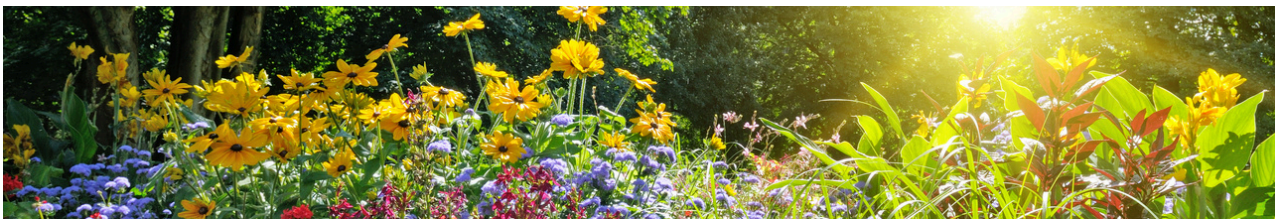
Change, especially at this scale, is never without its challenges. The departure of familiar leaders and uncertainty surrounding new structures have understandably caused concern within the field. However, APA's reorganization represents a bold vision for a more unified and responsive organization—one that can effectively navigate the complexities of psychology in the 21st century.

At the same time, federal policy shifts present real challenges to our field. APA continues to advocate for its members, working to mitigate the effects of funding reductions and policy changes that may negatively impact psychologists and the communities they serve.

As your representative to the APA Council, I remain committed to advocating for our diverse membership—whether you are engaged in practice, research, teaching, or administration. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns as we navigate this evolving landscape together.

### About the Author

*Dr. J. Kim Penberthy, Ph.D., ABPP, is the Chester F. Carlson Professor of Psychiatry & Neurobehavioral Sciences at the University of Virginia School of Medicine and a clinical psychologist specializing in mindfulness-based interventions, trauma-informed care, and psychotherapeutic innovation. As the Council Representative for the Virginia Academy of Clinical Psychologists, she advocates for practitioners, researchers, and educators within APA and beyond.*



**Look for the next issue in July!**

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

Your ad content, ideas for articles, and recommendations of resources to share are welcomed. Please contact the editor, Carole Sebenick, at [NVCPnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:NVCPnewsletter@gmail.com).

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

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

\$50 for ¼ page

\$100 for ½ page

\$125 for full page.