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Understanding APA's Model Licensing Act

What is the Model Licensing Act?

The Model Licensing Act (MLA) is APA's recommended guidance to states on psychology licensure. It represents the discipline's collective thinking about what effective psychology licensure should include—covering areas like educational requirements, supervision standards, scope of practice definitions, and credential titles.

The MLA is not binding to states in enacting their licensing laws but does reflect current APA policy. It serves as a reference document that states can consult when developing or updating their own psychology licensure laws.

How do states Use a Model Licensing Act?

States have complete control over their own licensure laws. When states update their psychology licensure statutes—which they do periodically in response to workforce needs, legislative priorities, or changing professional landscapes—states look to APA's Model Licensing Act as one reference point among others.

States may:

- Adopt portions of the MLA that fit
- Modify MLA recommendations to address state-specific needs
- Use the MLA as a starting point for their own deliberations
- Consider other model acts, such as those from ASPPB (Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards)
- Develop approaches independent of any model act

MLA adoption differs markedly from state to state. Each state's legislative process, workforce needs, and regulatory priorities shape how they approach psychology licensure.

Why does APA produce a Model Licensing Act?

States regulate psychology licensure independently, but many seek input from the discipline's main professional organization when updating their laws. By producing a Model Licensing Act, APA ensures that psychology's perspective—informed by training standards, scientific evidence, and professional expertise—is available to states engaged in these deliberations.

The MLA provides guidance to state psychological associations, licensing boards, and legislators on what the profession considers best practices in psychology licensure, even as they make their own decisions about what works for their jurisdiction.

History of APA's Model Licensing Act

APA first developed model licensure language in the 1960s to guide states as psychology licensure was emerging across the country. The Model Licensing Act has been updated periodically to reflect changes in the profession and in health care delivery:

- **1987** : Comprehensive revision addressing independent practice
- **2010** : Updates incorporating health service psychology designation and clarifying doctoral requirements

Between major revisions, states continued developing their licensure laws in response to their own workforce needs and circumstances. Some state laws diverged significantly from APA's model act over time.

What's being updated in 2025?

The 2025 MLA proposes guidance in two major areas:

Master's-level health service psychology licensure

The revised MLA includes a framework for states that choose to license master's-level health service psychology professionals. This reflects the reality that a number of states have already created or are considering such pathways. The MLA proposes standards for education, training, supervision, and scope of practice and designates the title licensed practitioners of psychology (LLPs) for master's-level psychology providers.

Applied psychology title provisions

Both the previous and revised MLA address the use of the title "psychologist" by doctoral-level applied psychology professionals working in non-clinical contexts (such as organizational consulting, research, or technology). The revised MLA proposes maintaining "licensed psychologist" as the protected title for health service psychologists and provides the title "psychologist" with a licensure exemption for applied psychology doctoral holders.

Public comment period

APA is accepting public comments on the revised Model Licensing Act from January 2 through March 3, 2026. Comments will be reviewed by the task force that developed the MLA, the Board of Professional Affairs, and APA governance, and often lead to important refinements that strengthen the final document that will go to APA's Council of Representatives for adoption.

[ADD YOUR COMMENTS \(HTTPS://COMMENTINGGOV.APA.ORG/\)](https://commentinggov.apa.org/)

[2025 Draft Model Licensing Act - Clean Version \(PDF, 299KB\)](#) [↗ \(/education-career/grad/model-licensing-act.pdf\)](#)

- [Comparison Version Showing Changes from 2010 \(PDF, 533KB\)](#) [↗ \(/education-career/grad/comparison-model-licensing-act.pdf\)](#)
- [2010 Model Licensure Act for Reference \(PDF, 111KB\)](#) [↗ \(/about/policy/model-act-2010.pdf\)](#)

Questions?

For questions about the MLA development process, [contact APA staff \(mailto:MLAstaff@apa.org\)](mailto:MLAstaff@apa.org).

For questions about psychology licensure in your state, contact your state psychological association or state licensing board.

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