

## Illinois law allows psychologists to prescribe

Illinois joins New Mexico and Louisiana as states that allow licensed clinical psychologists with advanced, specialized training to prescribe certain medications for the treatment of mental health disorders.

“This is a landmark moment for mental health care,” says Norman B. Anderson, PhD, APA’s chief executive officer. “Allowing properly trained clinical psychologists to prescribe is a logical step in helping to improve access to quality mental health care for consumers, especially the underserved. And the collaborative approach between prescribing psychologists and physicians in Illinois should help to ensure coordinated patient care.”

Illinois Senate Bill 2187 requires that licensed clinical psychologists in Illinois who want to prescribe successfully to complete advanced education and training in psychopharmacology as well as supervised clinical training in various settings, such as hospitals, outpatient clinics, community mental health clinics and correctional facilities. One notable provision of the new law paves the way for psychology graduate students to begin studying clinical psychopharmacology at the predoctoral level, setting the stage for them to apply for prescriptive authority in Illinois once they complete their doctoral training and licensure.

The new law stipulates a collaborative practice agreement between prescribing psychologists and physicians. It does not permit psychologists to prescribe for children, adolescents or adults age 66 or older, or for patients who are pregnant or have serious medical conditions or developmental/intellectual disabilities. Psychology advocates are hopeful that prescribing psychologists in Illinois will eventually earn a broader scope of prescriptive authority.

“Giving prescriptive authority to licensed clinical psychologists with advanced specialized training in clinical psychopharmacology will improve access to care and expand options for Illinois residents seeking treatment for mental health conditions,” says Beth N. Rom-Rymer, PhD, past president of the Illinois Psychological Association. “With state resources stretched to the limit, psychiatrists and other mental health professionals are in short supply, and the demand for mental health services far exceeds the capabilities of the existing provider network. This law will help ease the enormous pressure on the state system.”

More than 50 Illinois counties have no inpatient psychiatric services in their hospitals. Another 24 counties have no hospitals at all. Yet 614,000 Illinois residents currently need treatment for serious mental illness. The unmet need is greatest



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among people who need help the most: low-income, rural and minority populations whose needs are often underserved.

“Obtaining prescriptive authority for qualified, licensed psychologists will help fill the nationwide need for access to comprehensive, quality mental health care,” says APA Executive Director for Professional Practice Katherine C. Nordal, PhD. “We’re excited to see another state take this important step.”

New Mexico was the first state to pass a prescribing law for psychologists in 2002. Louisiana followed in 2004.

— APA PRACTICE DIRECTORATE STAFF