Importance of Honoring 2020-2021 Training Program Agreements

As institutions continue to wrestle with profound financial and other impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, APPIC has begun to hear of programs considering or making decisions to inform incoming trainees that their training year may be “cancelled” or “subject to cancellation.” APPIC understands that grave financial circumstances typically underlie such distressing decisions; at the same time, it is APPIC’s position that elimination of 2020-2021 internship or postdoctoral training positions into which trainees have already been Matched or placed is not an acceptable mechanism to manage budgetary crises.

Internship programs are reminded that the APPIC Match constitutes a binding agreement between both interns and internship programs, and reneging on this agreement by either party without prior approval from APPIC is unacceptable. Postdoctoral fellowship programs are reminded that placement into a postdoctoral position is also considered binding to the extent that it is a professional commitment for the applicant and program.

While APPIC recognizes that program decisions to reneg on training agreements are not made lightly, the APPIC Board of Directors wishes to emphasize the wide-ranging costs (i.e., financial, emotional, career progression, licensure timeline, etc.) to students who may be affected by such decisions. Further, our society’s growing need for health service psychology providers warrants avid efforts and advocacy to expand, rather than contract, the health service psychology workforce.

APPIC issues the following directives and notices to APPIC-member training programs:

Directives and Notices:

1) A decision to cancel or eliminate a 2020-2021 training position into which a trainee has already been placed should not be made prior to consultation with APPIC. Any program facing such a situation is instructed to contact APPIC immediately via the Informal Problem Consultation mechanism - APPIC Consultation. The intent of the consultation is to attempt to assist Training Directors in preventing such an outcome, as it is easier to try to avert these negative outcomes rather than trying to reverse them. APPIC is able to offer a range of potential supports toward this end, as informed by a program’s specific circumstances and context, and it is incumbent upon Training Directors to avail themselves of these resources.

2) Reneging on established training commitments for the 2020-2021 training year is not viewed as an acceptable mechanism for reducing expenditures or to address budgetary crises. Many alternative budgetary reductions should be actively pursued. As noted above, consultation with APPIC is key, as it may result in identification of preferable alternative solutions and/or allow for the opportunity for advocacy efforts with institutional leadership.

3) While APPIC does not support cancellation of 2020-2021 training positions into which a trainee has been placed, there is understanding that a reduction in positions for the following training year (2021-2022) may be an unfortunate necessity. Training Directors should endeavor to advocate with institutional administration that elimination of future unfilled positions (i.e., 2021-2022 training year and beyond) is vastly more appropriate than the elimination of filled positions where the program is contractually committed (i.e., 2020-2021 training year).

4) APPIC Match Policies #1d and #12c state that violations of Match Agreements and/or APPIC Policies may result in a formal complaint and sanctions by APPIC. These sanctions may include, but are not limited to, termination of APPIC membership, being barred from future APPIC Matches, and/or other public or private actions, as determined by the APPIC Board of Directors. Furthermore, such violations may result in legal action by other Match participants.

Please feel free to reach out to our Executive Director, Dr. Jeff Baker (jeffbaker@appic.org), with any specific questions or concerns. We deeply appreciate your commitment to training and welcome the opportunity to collaborate with you as we continue to honor the agreements made to the 2020-2021 interns and fellows.