

Establishing and Building Partnerships at the State and Local Level



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION PRACTICE
ORGANIZATION

This guide is intended to provide State, Provincial and Territorial Psychological Associations (SPTAs) with tips for building relationships with state- and community-level primary care and health-related organizations.

Partnerships—collaborative relationships between two entities—can provide organizations with opportunities to **advance common goals and educate local communities** about good health. Your SPTA might find success partnering with a local chapter of a professional health association such as a pediatric or family physician association, nursing group or disease-based group like the Brain Injury Association, to **educate the public** about health issues in your state such as an increase in depression, obesity and diabetes, and highlight their potential impact on mental and behavioral health. Depending on your shared interests, you may also partner to **advocate for legislation** affecting your professions and the constituents you serve or to create a new program that will help increase access to integrated community health care services.

Partnerships can be formed to help organizations accomplish a variety of shared goals related to:

- **Shared resources.** Partnering is a chance to pool resources.
 - **Strength in numbers.** Larger numbers supporting similar efforts can help advance legislation and public health causes.
 - **Cross-promotion of issues** via organizations' newsletters, websites, social networks, mailing lists and e-mail blasts.
 - **Expanded networks.** Participation in each organization's events such as conferences and monthly membership meetings provides exposure and offers excellent networking opportunities for SPTAs and your members.
- **Advocacy**, which focuses on changing public policy or passing specific legislation.
 - **Promotion**, which raises public awareness about an issue and often includes public education initiatives.
 - **Program development**, which leverages the expertise of each organization to create a new program to advance a specific community issue.

While the idea of partnering with another organization might seem overwhelming, there are clear benefits to the partnership approach that should be considered:

Partnerships between your SPTA and compatible organizations can add value to SPTA membership by creating visibility and opportunities for psychologists to network. Interdisciplinary and inter-organizational connections can enhance professional exposure for your SPTA members and create potential revenue streams. This collaborative model can help your SPTA cast a wider net to formalize existing relationships and establish new mechanisms for psychologists to showcase their expertise while providing a valuable public service.

Imagine the benefits for referrals and consultations that could arise for your members from an evolving relationship with a statewide veterans' organization or a consumer group that focuses on autism spectrum disorders and learning disabilities. Your annual SPTA convention could benefit by attracting members of partner organizations to learn from and network with psychologists.

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Getting Started

Partnership development starts with your SPTA staff and board. It's important first to **review your association goals and priorities**. This can help you identify organizations with goals and initiatives that align with your association's priorities. For example, APA and the YMCA of the USA partnered in an effort to raise awareness about the behavioral health aspects of managing stress and chronic illnesses. The organizations' public education campaigns share similar goals tied to increasing healthy lifestyles and behaviors, which made the partnership a natural fit.

Here is a checklist to help you kick off your partnership efforts:

1. Determine which SPTA goal or program could be strengthened through a partnership.

2. Consider all of the ways that a partner organization could work with your SPTA.

It is important to have a range of possible collaborative activities when starting a relationship with a partner organization.

3. Know what benefits your SPTA will bring to the partner organizations you plan to engage. While it may be clear how the partnership will help your SPTA reach its goals, think about the ways you can help the other organization. Both groups involved in a partnership should clearly benefit from the collaboration.

4. Research potential partner organizations so that you thoroughly understand the scope of their initiatives. For example, review consumer materials to make sure that you are comfortable with the organization's message and search for news coverage about the organization to ensure that it is positive. This will help you narrow and prioritize your list.

5. Start small—with just one partner organization

—and grow your partnership efforts over time. Partnerships take effort, and it's important that both organizations have the resources to ensure success.

Building Relationships

Partnership cultivation requires time and patience. It starts with an invitation to talk and then moves into a series of conversations and meetings to get to know each other and explore collaborative opportunities. Following are some basic steps in the relationship-building process.

1. Identify a point of contact. Leverage existing relationships you or your board members have either directly with an organization employee or indirectly through second and third parties. Your initial point of contact does not need to be someone at the executive level. Ask a colleague who may already have a contact to help make an introduction.

2. Send a letter or email of introduction from your SPTA executive director or president to your point of contact. If you do not receive a response, it may be wise to reach out to the public affairs, public relations or communications staff at the organization who are often in charge of partnership activities.

3. Coordinate a conference call or meeting between executive directors and/or presidents as an opportunity to get to know each other and explore common ground.

4. Once opportunities for collaboration are identified discuss details of how to work together and what each organization hopes to accomplish through the partnership. Be sure to identify staff at each organization who can move the process forward and help carry out joint activities.

5. Identify any potential costs such as hosting meetings, developing and printing of joint

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resources or documents, travel, lobbying, or public education events. Determine how you will share costs.

6. Draft a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Always have a legal document that captures the purpose of a partnership and specifics of what each

organization agrees to do. (See the tip sheet *Partnership Agreements: Memorandum of Understanding*.)

Once you have an MOU, the two organizations can move forward on efforts. Maintain consistent and regular communication and track progress on joint efforts.

WHAT DOES COLLABORATION LOOK LIKE?

Partnerships take many forms and so do the collaborative activities that two organizations may choose to work on together. Examples of collaborative activities for you to consider include:

- Participating in presentations or exhibit tables at each other's state and local conferences and meetings
- Supporting advocacy initiatives by jointly lobbying in support of legislation or agreeing to testify on behalf of each organization
- Presenting on a public education initiative or sharing an exhibit booth at health fairs
- Writing letters of support for each other to other organizations or legislators
- Referring reporters to experts from each other's association
- Hosting a joint press event to raise awareness about a health-related issue
- Contributing content to each other's public education and media materials
- Participating in each other's social media outreach efforts
- Preparing materials and coordinating local, grassroots events
- Sharing information and resources about each other's association in an office or other consumer-oriented setting

Examples of State Level Partnerships

Virginia Conservation Network represents more than 100 nonprofits and community groups working together for conservation and quality of life – vcnva.org/anx/

Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action – campaignforaction.org/resources

Center for Science in the Public Interest's Food Day Partnerships – foodday.org/partner_organizations

Additional Reading/Resources on Nonprofit Partnerships

Making Nonprofit Partnerships Effective – boardsource.org/Spotlight.asp?ID=116.375

Partnerships: Frameworks for Working Together
By National Resource Center for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/ccf/ccf_resources/partnerships.pdf

Improving Your Chances for Success in Partnerships
By Institute for Local Government – ca-ilg.org/post/improving-your-chances-success-partnerships