

*Rebecca A Schroeder, PhD  
P.O. Box 4, Curtis NE 69025  
Or  
108 E 2<sup>nd</sup> St, North Platte NE 69101  
308-367-4141 or 308-367-7035*

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Members of the Prescribing Psychologist Permit Technical Review Committee  
c/o Ron Briel, Program Manager, Credentialing Review Program  
Licensure Unit, Division of Public Health  
P.O. Box 95026  
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Committee Members:

This letter is to express my strong support for the recently submitted proposal by the Nebraska Psychological Association to allow appropriately trained psychologists to prescribe psychotropic medication.

I am a licensed psychologist practicing and residing in rural Nebraska. I have lived in Curtis, Nebraska, for over 25 years and I have practiced in the North Platte and the Curtis area since 1989. Over my years of practice, I have become well aware of a significant problem in the delivery of mental health services – specifically the lack of psychiatric prescribers.

There continues to be a strong need for mental health professionals in our state. Almost all counties in Nebraska are in need of mental health workers – especially psychiatrists. The mental health shortage maps provided by state and federal offices show a continuing need for psychiatrists in rural areas. The maps are based on number of psychiatrists licensed in each county and clearly show almost all counties in Nebraska as being shortage areas. These maps are updated annually and the latest Health Shortage Map for Mental Health clearly shows the need throughout the state. It has been my experience that psychiatric shortage maps have changed very little over the years and that it is unlikely they will change in the near future. There has been a constant, continuing need for further psychiatric practitioners in these underserved areas.

Unfortunately, this lack of psychiatric prescribers results in consumers having difficulty in receiving services. Access to care is a continuing issue. These problems include delayed or long waits for appointments, frequent long distances to travel, and financial struggles (such as in paying for gas and time away from jobs). Presently, in my area, the only psychiatrists in South-Central Nebraska are located

in North Platte. This problem translates to the fact that patients in towns such as McCook or Benkelman have to travel between 75 to 120 miles in order to receive psychiatric services.

I believe that one solution to help increase the number of psychotropic prescribers is the support of the present proposal. Psychologists with specialized, post-doctoral, advanced training in psychopharmacology could help fill this glaring gap in mental health services. Psychologists with this specialized training have been successfully prescribing medication for the Department of Defense for many years. In addition, several other states, including New Mexico and Louisiana, have approved psychologists with advanced training to prescribe psychotropic medication.

As you are likely aware, psychologists already independently treat major mental illness, and with the added training, a psychologist with a prescribing permit could help fill this gap in services and could help in providing effective, safe and efficient care for consumers.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Rebecca A Schroeder Ph.D.  
Licensed Psychologist, Nebraska