

## School Psychologist

### Essential Requirements:

- Must be fully registered by the Psychology Board of Australia under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, or
- have provisional registration based upon possession of a degree with a fourth or fifth year qualification in psychology and a supervision agreement accepted by the Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA), which will enable full registration following one to three years of supervised practice as a psychologist.

*Comment: the supervision of provisionally registered Psychologists:*

*Supervision of provisional psychologists is a joint responsibility of the employer, the supervisor, the provisional psychologist and the Allied Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). Employers should conduct their own due diligence regarding appropriate qualifications and contact AHPRA for confirmation of eligibility.*

*Employers should also conduct their own due diligence regarding registration and contact AHPRA for information.*

### Desirable Requirements:

- A current driver's licence.
- Eligible for membership of the Australian Psychological Society.
- Eligible for membership of the College of Educational and Developmental Psychologists.
- Endorsement under the PsyBA as an Educational and Developmental Psychologist
- Teaching qualifications and/or Teacher Registration.
- Working with children check / National police criminal history check (as appropriate to jurisdiction)

**Role:** To provide a child and adolescent psychological service in the school and to work with other staff to support students and families. To facilitate access, participation and to maximise educational outcomes for students, and to utilise psychological expertise in education and learning to support and build the capacity of the school community toward the same goals.

### Duties:

1. Undertake educational and psychological assessment and diagnosis in all areas of child and adolescent development, including:
  - a. Psycho-educational assessment involving intellectual and ability assessment tools, clinical measurement, clinical interview and observation,
  - b. Diagnosis requiring analysis and synthesis of multiple measures, other information and understanding of diagnostic criteria as set out in DSM-IV or ICD 10.
  - c. Knowledge, experience and understanding of developmental disabilities.
  - d. Clear understanding of normal and abnormal child and adolescent development.
  - e. Psychological assessment of mental health issues involving clinical measures, clinical interview skills, and observation and information from other sources
  - f. Knowledge and understanding of mental health disorders and their relationship to child and adolescent development.

*Comment: the use of assessment instruments:*

*Psychologists are required to utilise appropriate, current, evidence-based instruments in their assessments. Accepted practice is for the employer to provide such essential equipment as for any other member of staff. These requirements serve to accurately inform decision making, and protect the organisation from legal liability.*

2. Provide psychological counselling, therapy and programs for individuals and groups for a range of mental health, emotional and family issues. This involves:
  - a. Experience and competence with individual psychological therapy, including a range of evidence-based therapies (eg. CBT, IPT)
  - b. Familiarity and experience with evidence-based group programs for mental health issues and resilience building.
  - c. Delivery of system level programs for students e.g. transition programs, peer support, study skills, remedial, etc
  - d. Facilitating small group preventative and proactive programs for students (e.g. social skills and anger management)
3. Plan evidence-based interventions in collaboration with other staff, relevant professional and parents. This may involve:
  - a. Communication and planning evidence-based interventions with school staff
  - b. A good knowledge and understanding of diversity of the student population and school community (e.g., CALD, ATSI, disadvantage, disability, giftedness etc.) and principles and practices for inclusion.
  - c. Ability to coordinate and participate in a multidisciplinary team.
  - d. Developing interventions to facilitate the educational services provided to students
  - e. Communication and planning evidence-based interventions with parents
  - f. Writing reports and professional letters
  - g. Liaison with external professionals and agencies
  - h. Developing links with relevant community agencies
  - i. Referring parents and students to professionals or agencies as needed
  - j. Advocating for students with special needs and other issues
4. Participate as a member of School Staff and provide psychological input to the development, implementation and evaluation of school or system learning programs, goals and outcomes. This will involve
  - a. Attending administrative meetings (school staff and colleagues) as appropriate to role.
  - b. Contributing to school level policy input, e.g. behaviour, student well being, supportive school community strategies
  - c. Developing interventions to assist students at points of transition
  - d. Participating in relevant curriculum development as requested
  - e. Participating in the life of the school community as required, within the limits of ethical boundaries.

*Comment: Participation in School activities:*

*Psychologists participation in general school activities can be extremely valuable for the school and the psychologists role, sometimes facilitating and enhancing client work. However, there are risks of dual relationships with clients and exposure to possible conflict of interest and boundary breaches. Clarity of role boundaries and informed client consent need to be established prior to such activities to ensure the Psychologist is not in breach of the Code of Ethics.*

*Psychologists participating in school activities and events (eg: with sports teams, school camps, excursions) also need to be fully informed and supported to implement school policies and procedures for the safety and management of students.*

5. Provide professional learning and information to build capacity of schools and families to improve students' learning and developmental outcomes. This may involve:
  - a. Providing advice to principal and senior staff regarding management of individuals, groups or events
  - b. Providing and facilitating professional learning and information for teaching staff
  - c. Providing professional learning and information to parents
  - d. Writing items for the school newsletter on relevant issues.
  - e. Clearly articulating the role of the School Psychologist, including ethical boundaries to the staff and broader school community.
6. Respond to and assist schools and the organisation in their response to critical incidents and emergencies. This can require:
  - a. Knowledge of current evidence on management of traumatic incidents
  - b. Participation in the development and review of school policies and plans for critical incident response
  - c. Assisting with school wide management of, and response to, critical incidents and emergencies
  - d. Providing individual and group support to students and families
  - e. Liaison with external service providers where necessary
  - f. Advising and supporting school staff and parents with managing their own responses

*Comment: on the counselling of school staff:*

*The APS is aware that on some occasions, School Psychologists must provide psychological support and self-management strategies to other members of school staff, for example, those involved in critical incidents, or other significant events occurring in the course of their duties. Early intervention in the form of "Psychological first aid" in such instances is critical to reducing trauma, and the likelihood of chronic stress response and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. It is also common that School staff may seek advice from the school psychologist regarding their own personal or family issues. In such circumstances, school psychologists may provide initial advice, but it is imperative that school psychologists refer staff members on to other service providers for ongoing therapy or counselling. Provision of personal counselling to other staff members constitutes a clear breach of ethics, and places the psychologist's registration at risk, and may*

*place the organisation at risk of legal liability and substantial penalties under the registration act.*

7. Collect, collate and maintain student information and records to meet legislative and system requirements to inform research and policy development, such as:
  - a. Keeping and maintenance of individual records, files and notes
  - b. Collection, collation and maintenance of practice related data, e.g. caseload demographics, outcome measures
  - c. Maintaining an awareness of school community issues and events which may impact on the school, and work with staff to manage such.
  - d. Informing the Principal and senior staff regarding current referral issues and suggest strategies to manage these.
8. Maintain professional competence and continued professional learning.
  - a. Familiarity with PsyBA mandated APS Code of Ethics and Guidelines
  - b. Continuing professional development
  - c. Peer consultation

*Comment: Psychology-specific professional learning:*

*The Code of Ethics and Guidelines are mandated by the PsyBA under the registration act. Breaches of the Code can lead to Practitioner suspension, de-registration and individual and corporate fines.*

*Continuing Psychology specific professional development, including specified amounts of peer consultation is mandated by PsyBA. Failure to meet these requirements can lead to registration being refused, and inability to practice.*

*Generally accepted practice is for the psychologist and the employer to negotiate a Professional Learning Plan which specifies activities that incorporate the psychologist's ongoing learning needs with the employer's requirements.*

*Psychologists with endorsement in a particular area of expertise, and/or APS College Membership are also required to undertake an amount of professional learning in their specialist area.*

9. Senior Psychologists' responsibilities may include:
  - Providing professional leadership for a team of Psychologists and/or other pastoral care providers
  - Gathering data relating to the operation of Psychological and other services.
  - Establishing and reviewing policy, procedure and practices of operation, such as referral, case management and reporting processes.
  - Supervision of provisional psychologists for registration (4+2)
  - Supervision of provisional psychologists for registration (post graduate program)
  - Supervision of other Psychologists in a team
  - Provision of Professional learning and management of a professional learning budget for a team
  - Managing Test Equipment purchases and budget for a team
  - High level policy construction and advice to the organisation

Other Components:

The Position Description should also include:

- Industrial Award and Classification
- Other conditions of Employment
- The context and manner in which the organisation works
- Lines of management and reporting structures
- The location of the position
- Organisation statements about Purpose, Vision, Values and Mission
- Relevant policies and procedures, such as the organisation's Principles and Code of Conduct

It may also include:

- Statements about the selection process
- The Selection Criteria, based upon the duties performed, and personal and professional characteristics required by the employing organisation.

*Comment: Industrial Award and Classification.:*

*In most jurisdictions, school psychologists are on the Teaching Award, with their own stream. Expectations around conditions of employment also fit with the work required by teachers. Psychologists working in schools are usually expected to perform substantial work out of hours: e.g.: writing reports, scoring assessments, meeting with teachers, corresponding with other professionals, seeing parents, writing case notes, managing files, accessing resources, and preparing individual and group sessions. In some jurisdictions, Psychologists are employed on a separate Professional Officer Award. Salaries and conditions for these awards are comparable across systems. Attempts to employ psychologists on other awards, such as clerical or administrative awards are inappropriate and are often the subject of industrial challenges.*