

Public Policy Article Guide

Article: Why We All Need to Shape the Profession of Behavior Analysis through Advocacy and How to Get Started by Christy Evanko, Tricia Moss-Lourenco, R. Kramer, & Debbi Napolitano

Brief Summary

This article looks at the history of Psychology as a profession to draw parallels to behavior analysis. It takes learnings from nursing, speech-language pathology, and pediatric medicine professions and translates them into actionable items. Through this lens, the authors make recommendations for national organizations, state organizations, and individual behavior analysts. The authors touch upon their experiences in policy in three states (New York, Texas, and Virginia) to encourage those who care about our profession to take action.

Key Takeaways

1. **History:** Although psychology seems to be a much more established profession, its progression to recognition and licensure appears to be slower than that of the practice of behavior analysis. Psychology met some of the same obstacles facing behavior analysis today.
2. **Need for Advocacy:** While advocacy for our profession is essential to its long-term survival, its importance can be overlooked by those focused on the daily demands of practice. Behavior analysts must take an active role in shaping the laws and regulations that govern our work. If we are not proactive, external forces may define the field for us—potentially narrowing its scope and threatening its sustainability.
3. **Professional Learnings:** There are many actions that other professions take that behavior analysis can adopt, including embedding advocacy into education, ethics, and professional practice.

4. National Organizations: The authors hope that national organizations will take a stand and lead behavior analysts following the lessons of other professions.

5. State Organizations: The authors urge state organizations to coalesce and aid their members in following the lessons learned by New York, Texas, and Virginia. Fundraising, hiring lobbyists, and collaboration with allied groups can impact the success of our advocacy efforts.

6. Individual Behavior Analysts: The authors provide recommendations for those not in state or national association leadership positions, including getting to know local lawmakers as well as those in parallel professions.

Discussion Questions

- How does the profession of psychology parallel that of behavior analysis in terms of early growth and advocacy?
- What is one advocacy action that the authors learned from nursing, speech-language pathology, or pediatric medicine professions that behavior analysts could also put into practice?
- Why is it important for state and local associations to hire a lobbyist?
- How can inviting a state lawmaker to see behavior analysis in action help with advocacy?
- What is one thing you can do now to disseminate the profession of behavior analysis?

Reference

Evanko, C.D., Moss-Lourenco, T., Kramer, R. & Napolitano, D. Why We All Need to Shape the Profession of Behavior Analysis through Advocacy and How to Get Started. *Behavior Analysis in Practice* 18, 577–593 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40617-023-00895-w>