



Lobby Day Recap

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What a day!

On Tuesday, May 9.....

- Over 40 NYSPA members.....
- Divided strategically into 6 teams.....
- Visited the offices of a record-number 51 legislators.....
- As we advocated for NYSPA's position on five bills!

Lobby Day always provides an energizing, natural "high." It's a unique opportunity to speak face-to-face with legislators about issues important to psychology and the people we serve.

Significantly, legislators listened, wanted to hear our stories and why these pieces of legislation are important to us, asked excellent and probing questions, and expressed strong support.

OK, you may say. Don't legislators generally say "yes" but really mean "no?"

Not this year.

Several legislators offered to sign on as co-sponsors of our bills before we even got around to ask! Others responded "yes" when we did ask!

That's different from what usually happens. More typically, legislators will express empathy for an issue and then say they need to "study" the bill.

Not this year.

It was very apparent that.....

- Legislators have become quite familiar with our issues
- Legislators have come to recognize the strong merits of these issues
- Legislators appreciate our honest and direct communication about the issues
- Legislators like our forthright approach in answering questions and responding to their concerns

Familiarity with psychology...familiarity with NYSPA...compelling arguments...our concern for access to services (and not only psychology as a profession)...legislators have come to know us, and then they begin to "get it."

Consider briefly and admittedly succinctly the essence of the four bills NYSPA seeks to enact:



- Prescriptive authority (RxP): First get a post-doctoral master's degree in psychopharmacology, take an exam, then intern under supervision, and practice with a specific limited formulary. It's now done safely in five states (New Mexico, Louisiana, Iowa, Illinois, Idaho) plus the military. Plus the obvious access to care issue due to the limited availability of psychiatrists. All compelling arguments.
- Forming business partnerships with physicians (PLLC): An archaic law going back some 100 years, now obstructing current models of integrated health care. Plus the obvious access to care issue when behavioral health services are separated from physical health. All compelling arguments.
- Duty to Protect: If someone in treatment makes a serious threat to harm oneself or someone else, what is a psychologist (or other mental health professional) to do? Break confidentiality and risk professional liability? Keep confidentiality and risk professional liability for failure to act? Psychologists employed in state facilities are protected by law, but private practitioners are not. Nor is a psychologist giving his/her best when one is looking over one's own shoulder assessing potential liability rather than focusing solely on the patient. All compelling arguments.
- Out of Network Benefits: Consider an eight-year-old girl in therapy for elevated anxiety, slowly forming a trusting relationship with a psychologist across, say, four months. Anxiety slowly diminishes as the child gains self-confidence. The girl gingerly begins to reach out to friends; she starts to raise her hand to answer questions in school. Suddenly.....bam! Her parent's employer changes health insurance companies, and the girl's psychologist isn't in the network of the new company, which, by the way, does not offer an out-of-network benefit. With the parent's budget stretched to the limit, this vulnerable eight-year-old girl immediately regresses as she starts treatment all over again with a new psychologist. (Full disclosure: Often it's this type of persuasive story that makes the compelling argument when one meets with a legislator.)

Perhaps best of all, the "work" of Lobby Day is "fun."

And behind the "work" and the "fun" that we NYSPA members enjoyed on Lobby Day were two groups of dedicated individuals who made it all happen. So I give a very large and sincere "thank you" to our strong, knowledgeable, well-connected lobbying firm Jackson Lewis, with its team of Lisa Marrello, Emily Whalen, Thomas Buchan, and Bradley Pryba, who led us through a "crash-tutorial" in lobbying and opened the doors and arranged our record-51 meetings with legislators. And I give a very large and sincere "thank you" to our NYSPA office staff, Dee Fisher-Golden, Lori Cote, and Sara Wheeler, who made all the logistical arrangements (hotel, meals, etc.) essential for a satisfying and smooth-flowing experience, and to Jerry Grodin, NYSPA's Director of Professional Affairs, who so strongly, steadily and consistently serves as our psychologist representing psychology in the capital.

So where is NYSPA with its ambitious legislative agenda at the conclusion of Lobby Day 2017? Don't legislative efforts take years of perseverance?

Yes they do. And perhaps we're approaching a tipping point!