

# WELLNESS COMMITTEE CHAIR ADDRESS

*Merida M. Grant-Garcia, Ph.D.*

It is my honor to serve as the first incoming Chair of the Alabama Psychology Professionals Wellness Committee [Code of Alabama, 1975 Section 34-26-4] under the auspices of the Alabama Board of Examiners in Psychology [ABP]. The Committee was established January 1, 2022 to promote the early identification, treatment and rehabilitation of any licensee who may be impaired. For the purposes of the Committee, impairment is defined as the inability of a licensed psychologist or licensed psychological technician to practice with reasonable skill and safety by reason of illness, inebriation, substance dependence, excessive use of drugs, narcotics, controlled substances, alcohol, chemicals, or other dependence forming substances, or as a result of any physical or mental condition, rendering the licensee unable to meet the standards of his or her profession. In general, the goal of the Committee is not to penalize impaired practitioners but to safeguard the welfare of the public, while facilitating effective amelioration of any problematic behavior and to allow the provider to continue to practice in a safe and effective manner.

In order to assist the Committee, the Board has contracted with [Dr. Garver] a nonprofit organization, health professional, or professional association to undertake those functions and responsibilities specified in the agreement, including:

- (1) Receiving and evaluating reports of suspected impairment from any source.
- (2) Intervening in cases of verified impairment.
- (3) Contracting with providers of treatment programs.
- (4) Referring impaired licensees to treatment programs.
- (5) Monitoring the treatment and rehabilitation of impaired licensees.
- (6) Providing post-treatment monitoring and support of rehabilitated impaired licensees.
- (7) Performing other related activities prescribed by Board rule.



The Committee will report to the Board the following:

- (1) Any licensee, who in the opinion of the Committee, is unable to practice as a psychologist or as a psychological technician with reasonable skill and safety by reason of impairment.
- (2) Any licensee who in the opinion of the Committee, is in need of intervention, treatment, or rehabilitation and who has failed or refused to participate in programs of treatment or rehabilitation recommended by the committee.

Crucially, we would like practitioners with potential issues related to impairment to know that all information and/or documents furnished to or produced by the Committee and any findings or reports or other proceedings of the Committee are confidential. Similarly, all records and proceedings of the Committee pertaining to an impaired licensee are confidential and may only be used by the Committee and the members of the Committee, and are not public records, nor available for court subpoena or for discovery proceedings.

I would also like to acknowledge my fellow Committee members, which consists of licensed psychologists and technicians appointed by the ABP. Voting Members include Catalina Arata, PhD, Shannon LaFramboise, M.A., Denton McKinnon Scott, Psy.D., Daniel Sullivan, Psy.D., Gregory Vander Wal, PhD., and Delisa West, PhD. Non-voting Members include Nancy Berland, PhD., Michael Garver, DMD [Ex Officio], Angie Ledbetter [Executive Administrative Assistant and Lori Rall [Executive Director]. Lastly, I am optimistic that the Committee will be viewed by practitioners as a constructive means of addressing impairment and that the upcoming year will demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach.

**Merida M. Grant-Garcia, Ph.D.**

**Wellness Committee Chair, 2022 & 2023**