

Ontario Psychological Association Early Career Psychologist Project

Introduction

A fundamental challenge facing Psychological Associations in the 21st century is how to sustain the Association given the mean age of its membership and its static or decreasing numbers. Encouraging the participation of Early Career Psychologists (ECPs) – those engaged in their initial professional, research, and teaching positions within the first five to seven years following graduation – is an essential part of meeting this challenge. This document provides an organizational guide on how to develop, start, and maintain an Early Career Psychologist presence in a Psychological Association.

Psychologists today work in diverse and demanding practice environments, and at all stages of their careers, they have different professional needs. ECPs, for example, are adjusting to new professional roles with increasing responsibilities. They are initially focused on navigating the licensing process, securing entry jobs in various institutions, and developing a professional network. However, they must quickly diversify this focus to develop multiple career directions, teach and/or provide supervision, continue professional development, and determine how to maintain a life-work balance. They are learning to adapt to the ever-changing nature of the practice environment, one whose pace has quickened and whose direction has broadened in the last several decades. Not least, they must often confront these issues while earning a lower professional income than their more established colleagues and shouldering the burdens of substantial educational debt and increasing family expenses.

This document is a compilation of the efforts of the Early Career Psychologist Taskforce in the Ontario Psychological Association. The idea for these efforts was conceived in the Autumn of 2003. By Spring 2004, the Early Career

Psychologists (ECP) Taskforce was formed to address these early professional needs.

Hopefully your Association will find this guide helpful and practical. In the collaborative spirit between Associations, please feel free to use and tailor the information in this guide, including the organizational material and templates contained in the appendices, for your own efforts. However, as the standard publication copyright and intellectual property rights remain in force for the author of this document, please make the appropriate acknowledgement.

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1.0 Organizational Plan and Strategies

1.1 Overview, Timelines, and Board Support

The idea for an ECP project emerged out of the desire to connect professionally with other ECPs working in diverse practice settings across the province of Ontario. The Ontario Psychological Association (OPA) was a natural and opportune place for this endeavour because it provided a recognized practice organization that ensured access to provincial membership and to an organizational structure able to support and facilitate the project. The endeavour also complemented the Association's desire to encourage ECP interest and membership in the Association.

A project of this nature is a multi-stage, multi-year process. Ideally it will become relatively self-sustaining. The size and scope of the project will obviously depend on the available time of the ECP Taskforce and the size and resources of the Association. Being one of the larger Associations in Canada and the United States, the OPA had the advantages of adequate financial resources and a deep pool of experienced professionals who could offer assistance. Smaller Associations may find it more practical to tailor parts of the project that seem more feasible to do in their Association, and do these parts in a more staggered timeframe. An overview of the breakdown and timelines for the project can be seen in **SECTION 1.9**

Whatever the size of the Association or the pool of resources available, the starting point for any ECP endeavour is for the Board to find an ECP Director (or two) who is strongly motivated to initiate and manage this kind of project. The Board also has to gauge its own interest and support in doing this type of project. To be successful, the project must have the political, structural, and financial support of the Board, both in the short term and in the long term. Beyond securing general Board support, it is also useful to find a particularly interested and enthusiastic Board member who is willing to work more closely

with the ECP Director as a mentor to provide organizational guidance and political support with the project. The level of this Board member's involvement will depend on many factors, including his or her interest level and availability, and the motivation and experience of the ECP Director.

1.2 Taskforce

Once appointed, the first step for the ECP Director is to build a team of fellow ECPs who can constitute a Taskforce, and to assume the role of Taskforce Chair. These Taskforce members can come from many different sources (e.g., ECP Board Members, general membership, Board Member connections, professional relationships, etc.). While issues of diversity, representation, skill complement, and nomination procedures are important, it is often more practical – at least initially – for the Director to ask interested colleagues with whom he or she has a good working relationship and who live in same city. A motivated and balanced Taskforce can break the project into manageable pieces, with members generally self-selecting pieces based on interest and expertise instead of the Director having to delegate. As the Taskforce evolves over time the various aspects of the project (e.g., programming, survey, website maintenance, etc.) can be taken on and run by individual Taskforce members.

Generally speaking, one of the more problematic challenges for a Taskforce can be dysfunctional group dynamics. The OPA Taskforce was luckily spared this problem, but it can unfortunately happen at any time. Should this occur the ECP Director may find it helpful to consult with his or her Mentor about how to handle the situation. The Mentor again can be an invaluable guide, diplomatic facilitator, and supportive advocate of the project should dysfunctional Board dynamics arise.

An important issue to consider early on is succession planning for both the Director and Taskforce members. Due to professional and demographic issues (e.g., increasing professional and family responsibilities), Taskforce members naturally move on within a few years. It is therefore crucial to develop a pool of ECPs who can be contacted as the need arises. A practical approach to developing an ECP pool is to solicit help from interested ECPs from the membership for specific projects. Those who continue to be

interested in ECP Taskforce activities can be kept in the loop via various subsequent projects and maintained as possible Taskforce replacements.

A key role of the Taskforce, via the Director, is to communicate regularly with the Board about its activities. With respect to communication, the Director is essentially the conduit between the Taskforce, ECPs in the membership, and the Board. Regular communication ensures clear understanding of, and support for, what the Taskforce is currently doing and where it is heading. It is a good idea that this communication occur a little more frequently than the formal Board reporting requirements. For instance, in addition to providing the annual and strategic planning reports, the OPA Taskforce presented a few brief written updates on current ECP activities and progress at the OPA Board meetings. **APPENDIX 3.1** includes a copy of this type of communication. The OPA Taskforce found that this communication was very useful in maintaining Board interest and support. The process of providing these brief updates was also an invaluable way for the Taskforce to formulate and motivate the next steps in the various initiatives.

1.3 Information Gathering

One of the vital initial activities of the Taskforce is to gather information on the needs and interests of ECPs both inside and outside the Association. In the beginning of the project this information serves as a starting point for determining which issues are important for ECPs and consequently which aspects of the project then become the priorities for the Taskforce. The information can be gathered in a number of formal and informal ways, such as through surveys, phone interviews, or conversations with colleagues.

For the OPA Taskforce, initially our own ECP experience and conversations with ECP colleagues provided enough information regarding ECP needs and interests for the Taskforce to design a web-based survey. **APPENDIX 3.2** contains a copy of the original OPA Taskforce needs survey used. This web-based survey, via the *survey monkey* company, with a link on the OPA Association website was an easy and efficient way to access a diverse number of ECPs in the province. To get respondents the College of Psychologists of Ontario (CPO) provided the OPA Taskforce with a list of ECPs in the province. An email invitation to participate in the survey was then sent by the Taskforce directly to these ECPs. In addition, an invitation was placed on the OPA Association listserv for any interested ECPs to participate. In that invitation OPA members were also encouraged to spread the invitation to ECPs they knew or worked with. **APPENDIX 3.3** contains a copy of the invitation placed on the Association listserv.

It is a good idea to develop some ongoing information gathering strategies so that the Taskforce can assess emerging issues and adjust current projects. Periodically redoing the survey or alternative strategies are practical options. For example, with the OPA Taskforce a few years into the project, clarifying why some ECPs maintained their membership while others did not became an important issue in regard to the membership and consequently the services provided. This was done through a brief, friendly, semi-structured

phone interview with a selection of ECPs who renewed their membership as well as those who did not. Another practical information gathering strategy is to encourage feedback from ECPs by creating several accessible communication avenues (e.g., via a central ECP Taskforce email, ECP listserv, visibility at annual Association Conference, regional ECP Taskforce representatives, feed back forms for workshops etc.). **APPENDIX 3.4** contains an example of efforts to get some new information regarding interest in upcoming workshops via the ECP listserv.

1.4 Board and Association Changes

There are several changes that an Association can make that help to establish an ECP role within the Association and encourage ECP membership. These changes deal both with the Board and with the services provided by the Association. The goal of these changes is to encourage ECP interest, membership, and involvement in the Association.

Within the Board structure and function it is important to provide the financial and policy support for ECP initiatives. Funds specifically allocated for ECP activities and policy changes necessary to incorporate ECP activities into the Board should be initiated. The financial support not only involves carrying the potential initial financial loss with a graduated fee structure, but also provides funds for specific ECP programming (e.g., announcements, speaker honoraria, venue, food, etc.) and for the participation of Taskforce members in national and international ECP events such as the APA State Leadership Conference and CPA leadership conferences.

With regard to policy, at practical level it is important to ensure that the ECP Director is directly involved in the Board activities from the start. Involvement in Board meetings and committees enables the ECP Director to orient himself or herself to the Board processes and make working connections with other Board members. This process can be greatly facilitated by the mentoring Board member. With the increasing viability of the project, the ECP Director should be integrated as a voting member on the Board, and possibly on the Executive, as soon as is appropriate. In addition the ECP Director and ECP issues should be explicitly integrated into the Board's annual strategic planning process.

With regard to ECPs in the Association in general, the Board itself can also make a concerted and systematic effort to invite ECPs in the Association to participate in various non-ECP-specific committees and projects such as

Public Education, Membership, and the Annual Conference. The Board should also solicit current ECP opinion on various issues from changes to practice, legislation, or regulation, to business-of-practice issues, and perceived career opportunities. This process can be greatly facilitated by the Taskforce or other ECPs on various committees. Efforts to spur ECP involvement and opinion can be done through the general Association listserv, the ECP Taskforce, ECP volunteer pool, and ECP listserv, as well as the Annual Conference. For example, providing ECP programming, an ECP booth, and an ECP-specific invitation for the Annual Conference can be practical ways to encourage interest in the Association.

1.5 ECP Initiatives: Services and Programming

Providing practical and creative services and programming is a crucial part of attracting and retaining ECPs who are increasingly consumer-savvy. One of the main questions that ECPs ask themselves is, “With the myriad of practice-specific Associations I could belong to and my relatively limited resources, what useful benefits and services do I receive from this Association to justify the cost of membership?”

Several Association services can be considered. The OPA Taskforce pursued and accomplished initiatives such as graduated fees; an ECP web space and listserv; convention/workshop programming for ECPs; a mentorship program; and the establishment of regional ECP representatives for other areas in the province. The goal of these initiatives was to provide useful services and to develop a sense of community for ECPs. It was hoped that this would in turn create a sense of belonging to the Association.

One of the important early initiatives of the OPA Taskforce was to develop a graduated fee structure for Association membership and activities such as convention participation, referral services, and workshop attendance. This initiative came from the web survey, which indicated that the membership fee was a significant obstacle for ECPs. The idea behind this change was that, although it represented an initial revenue loss for the Association with current ECP members, it had the potential to attract new members whose financial resources were already strained with extra early career costs and lower initial income. ECPs are often burdened with educational debt, licensure costs, other professional memberships, and family and/or moving expenses.

APPENDIX 3.5 contains a copy of the graduated fee structure.

Another important initiative of the OPA Taskforce was the development of an ECP-specific web space visible within the Association website. The web space consisted of five sections: A overview of the Taskforce and its

initiatives; a comprehensive list of resources for ECPs; an ECP listserv; a mentorship program for ECPs; and information about upcoming ECP professional and social events. Initially the website was open to both members and non-members to attract interest, but eventually the web space, like the listserv, was accessible exclusively to members.

The OPA Taskforce scoured various bookshelves and professional websites to create a list of bibliographic and web-based resources that seemed likely to be of practical assistance to ECPs. The resources were subdivided into relevant sections such as private practice, career development, research, academia, job finding, marketing, self-care, ethics, and legal/business issues. With the finished resource list on the website, the OPA Taskforce solicited ECP members for any additional resources that they found particularly useful.

For the ECPs in Ontario the ECP listserv was successful in enabling them to share information regarding the licensing process, new resources, job opportunities, and relevant upcoming events. The OPA Taskforce created a basic “user guide” for this listserv. **APPENDIX 3.6** contains these user guidelines. While these guides seemed obvious and pedantic given the professional context, the OPA Taskforce thought it was prudent to have some standards to remind users of the professional nature of the listserv and to avoid any potential problems. The ECP listserv, like many Association listservs, was and continues to be run through the APA main server as a service by virtue of OPA’s affiliation with APA.

The OPA Taskforce also developed a mentorship program in an effort to help connect interested ECPs with experienced Psychologists regarding various career issues. The idea was for the program to be a “mentors-lite” program. In other words, to attract mentors already busy with other commitments, it was explicitly intended not to be supervisory in nature or require a heavy time commitment. **APPENDIX 3.7** contains a copy of the message on the mentor

page of the ECP website that describes the Mentors Program. Periodically, potential new mentors would be invited to participate from the Association listserv and those who were interested would be added to the ECP Mentors section. **APPENDIX 3.8** contains a copy of the original invitation to become a mentor.

As part of its initiatives the OPA Taskforce created ECP-specific programming. For the Annual Conference space was made available by the Association and an explicit invitation to ECPs was made in the distributed Conference materials. Based on information gleaned from the needs survey, several Conference workshops were planned. Two well-attended workshops were “Managing a Private Practice: What Every Early Career Psychologist Should Know” and “Psyching Up: Promoting Our Unique Contribution as Early Career Psychologists.” These Conference workshops were designed as panel presentations and discussions from a cross-section of experienced psychologists on different aspects of their professional career. For example, in the private practice workshop the presenters were a private practice veteran, an ECP starting a private practice, and a member of the regulatory College (CPO). For the unique contribution workshop we had Psychologists from hospital administration, private practice, and educational settings talk about their careers. In addition, a few professionally-oriented workshops and social events were planned during the year. For example, “ECP Financial Therapy” was a successful event that involved a talk by a financial planner at a local lounge venue. For this event, a creative invitation flyer was designed by one of the OPA Taskforce members and was distributed to ECPs at the Annual Conference. Other workshop topics are almost unlimited, depending on ECP interest: a panel discussion or single presenters on legal issues, tax and accounting, business practices, marketing, professional research, and so on. Again, see **APPENDIX 3.4**, which contains an example of a strategy to gather new information regarding ECP interest in potential upcoming workshops.

Finally, the OPA Taskforce worked to establish Regional ECP Representatives in other areas of the province of Ontario besides the Greater Toronto Area. The idea was to designate Regional ECP Representatives from other centres who would be willing to connect with other ECPs in their region, establish an ECP/Association presence, and organize local events. Through this initiative the OPA Taskforce was able to establish Regional ECP Representatives in London, Ottawa, and Hamilton.

Many other possible initiatives could be considered by your ECP Taskforce:

- An ECP Award to recognize, at the Annual Association Conference, the contributions of an ECP to the Association or the profession.
- An ECP Speaker Series where ECPs from different practice settings and specialties would speak on their careers and current practices to date.
- Planned events such as an informal regular social gathering at interesting local restaurants or an organized group to a sporting or cultural event.
- A targeted effort to solicit interest and involvement of senior graduate students as they begin to plan their professional careers (e.g., those currently on internship via Internship Directors).
- Using the ECP Taskforce as a clearinghouse for practical issues (e.g., ECPs looking for a supervisor for licensing, information about upcoming job opportunities or maternity leaves).

1.6 Promoting ECP Activities

An important challenge to generating ECP and Association interest in ECP issues is getting the word out to ECPs and the Psychologists who work with them, whether they are supervisors, practice leaders, internship directors, managers of group practices, or senior clinicians. The goal of promoting ECP activities is simply to stimulate the interest and involvement of ECPs in the Association. Being novel and creative with this process is an eternal challenge. And as with any promotional efforts directed to an educated and busy audience, they can get stale quickly.

Information about the activities of the OPA Taskforce in Ontario was disseminated in several ways. Announcements regarding upcoming events, conferences, and initiatives were regularly posted on both the ECP listserv and the Association listserv. Brightly coloured flyers were included in mailed membership renewal and conference packages, and in the onsite packages at the conference. **APPENDIX 3.9** contains a copy of one of the early flyers. Efforts at stimulating various discussion topics and inviting feedback on the ECP listserv were also regularly made. The OPA Taskforce members and Regional Representatives made particular efforts to introduce themselves to other ECPs in various professional contexts (e.g., rounds, conferences, local Association meetings) and to give specific talks about Taskforce activities to potentially interested ECPs at local Psychological Association meetings, intern groups, and the like.

Additionally, several articles on the OPA Taskforce activities were written and published in the provincial and national Psychological Association's trade publications (e.g., Canadian Psychological Association: *Early Career Psychologists in Ontario. Psynopsis, Winter 2006, (28)1, 10.*; Ontario Psychological Association: *Early Career Psychologist Task Force. Psychology Ontario, 2004, 36(2), 16.*). The OPA Taskforce discovered that

both the OPA and CPA were very receptive to publishing information about ECP activities.

Finally, as previously mentioned, a free trial period allowing access to the ECP webpage was offered to ECPs who were not necessarily OPA members in order to demonstrate the services available.

1.7 External Relationships and Recruitment Efforts

Another key strategy in developing and maintaining an ECP presence within the Association is to develop relationships with the sources of ECPs and the body that regulates them. The goal is to develop broad support for ECPs and have ready access to the stream of new ECPs. The OPA Taskforce contacted the College of Psychologists of Ontario (CPO) regarding the ECP endeavours in the Association and requested their assistance. Given that the CPO maintains a list of each new group of supervised and fully licensed Psychologists in the province, it was regarded as an essential resource. In a relatively short period of time a good working relationship with the College was developed and this enabled access to the bi-annual lists of ECPs potentially interested in membership in the Association. Using the new lists of ECPs on Supervised Practice, a friendly email invitation was sent out to introduce ECP activities in the Association and encourage interest in joining the Association as ECPs. The relationship with CPO also provided ready access to presenters from the College who could speak knowledgeably about relevant regulatory information. For example, Rick Morris (Deputy Registrar/Director, Professional Affairs, CPO) gave several of his well received “Tricky Issues” talks on ethical issues to ECP groups.

Relationships could also be developed with internship sites, group practices, and other practice-specific Associations such as School Psychologists, Neuropsychologists, or Health Psychologists. The goal of these relationships would be to disseminate information about ECP activities and gain access to potential members. As well, effort could be made to develop relationships with graduate programs. Although graduate student interests concern more academic issues such as funding, research, and curricula, effort could be made to tap emerging interest in professional development in such areas as practica, internship, licensing, future practice opportunities, and networking.

Developing relationships between ECP Taskforces across provinces or states can be a ready source of practical and strategic information and moral support. The OPA Taskforce and its coordinated initiatives in Ontario appeared to be the first of its kind in Canada. OPA Taskforce connections with beginning ECP activities in the APA and the various state Associations were helpful and informative. For example, participating in the APA State Leadership Conference in Washington was an excellent way of linking with other Taskforces and sharing new strategies. Within a few years other provincial Associations in Canada became interested in ECP issues, notably those in British Columbia and Manitoba.

Finally, a possibility not fully explored in the initial years of this project is developing relationships with other professional organizations serving Physicians, Dentists, Lawyers, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and so on. This relationship could help other professional organizations start a similar project to benefit those early in their career. Alternatively, if the professional organization already had a similar project underway, a relationship could provide the opportunity to share ideas and strategies, not to mention develop goodwill, long-term working relationships, and inter-professional learning.

1.8 Long-Term Strategies and Continued Challenges

The goal of the OPA Taskforce and its activities was to create a lively and self-sustaining ECP community within the Association, with new ECPs entering the Association and old ECPs transitioning to mid-career Psychologists within the Association. Crucial to achieving such sustainability is gaining increased membership and involvement of ECPs in the Association. This ECP involvement is dependent on ECPs perceiving the Association as being as relevant and useful to their own professional practice.

Many challenges emerged for the OPA Taskforce and their activities over the longer term. One was the periodic change in the Taskforce composition as older members moved on due to steadily increasing professional demands and family commitments. We therefore recognized the importance of developing a succession process. Another challenge was to ensure a sense of relevancy of the Association for ECPs in the current professional environment. Challenging, too, was dealing with ECP's limited professional time, competing financial demands, and practice specialization. The OPA Taskforce addressed these issues by developing a variety of programming and membership-incentive strategies discussed in the previous sections. Not least, addressing the post-ECP membership dropout was a challenge. A number of Psychologists apparently turn to more practice-relevant groups after reaching more mid-career status and losing access to a graduated fee structure for Association membership. Clarifying what the reasons are for this shift in membership and developing strategies to keep these members is a constant challenge.

All of these challenges appear to reflect important changes in the professional landscape. Historically, Psychologists joined an Association because of the professional belonging and connection it provided. Association membership was generally more homogeneous and there were fewer alternative practice organizations available. The current professional landscape is much more broad, stratified, and mercurial. A consumer tendency also appears to be a factor,

where ECPs join and get what they need at the moment and then move on to other groups that are more relevant to their current practice. Unfortunately there are no easy answers or heuristics when dealing with these challenges.

One strategy to address these challenges could be to develop an earlier professional recruitment process, considering access to graduate students at all stages of their programs. Although those students in their internship year or finishing a dissertation, being on the verge of their professional career, might be particularly interested in the Association, the earlier graduate students may be interested if the ECP services were presented in such a way as to generate interest in professional development and connections. The CPA and APA provide good models for guiding students through to professional practice. Associations could offer institutional memberships to training programs, thereby developing relationships with graduate students. Offering onsite talks by members of the ECP Taskforce, announcing ECP and Association programming, organizing annual talks by all Provincial internship sites, and including interested students on the Taskforce may be good strategies. Some of these strategies could be done in partnership with the National Associations like CPA or APA, which already offer excellent student membership programs.

1.9 Project Breakdown by Years

This Project Breakdown provides an overview of the project phases, and notes parallel activities and changes at the Board level and in the ECP Taskforce. It reflects a synthesis of the OPA experience and additional organizational ideas.

Year I

Board

- Association Board and Executive establish interest in pursuing an ECP project.
- Board identifies a Board member willing to be a mentor.
- Board searches for, and chooses, an ECP interested in being the ECP Director who will Chair the new Taskforce.
- Board determines nature of involvement and expectations of the ECP Director on the Board and within the Taskforce.
- Board Mentor develops a working relationship with ECP Director and guides the initiation to the Board, its activities, and the role of Director.

Taskforce

- New Director is established on the Association Board.
Director (and Board) constitute the Taskforce of ECP members.
- Establishes regular meeting schedule and preliminary goals.
- Develops a relationship with regulatory body to procure new ECP names.
- Creates a Needs Survey and broadly circulates it electronically to ECPs.
- Generates update reports for the Board on Taskforce activities.
- Develops a budget for ECP activities.
- Develops strategies of promotion of new ECP activities to membership.
- Chair or appointed Taskforce member attends ECP-related or leadership conference (e.g., APA/State Leadership, CPA Annual Leadership Conference).

Year II

Board

- Association Board and Executive maintain interest in the ECP project (e.g., ECP issues become part of the annual strategic planning process, funding is provided).
- ECP Director continues involvement with Board (e.g., attending Board meetings and participating in committees and strategic planning).
- Other interested ECPs of the Taskforce are included on Board committees and are encouraged to consider Board positions as openings become available.
- Funds are allocated to ECP activities.
- Taskforce members participate in the annual Board strategic planning process.

Taskforce

- Data from needs survey is analyzed and it informs Taskforce project agenda and goals.
- Pursues various initiatives based on needs survey, such as developing a graduated fee structure for Board discussion and approval.
- Creates ECP programming for Annual Conference or other workshop.
- Plans an ECP website and timelines for completion.
- Continues relationship with regulatory body to procure lists of new ECPs to send invitation to join the Association.
- Produces an article for Provincial Association and/or National Psychology Association.
- Chair or appointed Taskforce member attends ECP-related or Leadership Conference.

Year III

Board

- Association Board and Executive maintain interest in the ECP project.
- ECP Director continues involvement with Board (e.g., attending Board Meetings and participating on committees etc).
- ECP Director becomes a voting member of the Board.
- Other interested ECPs of the Taskforce are included on committees and encouraged to consider Board positions as openings become available.
- Taskforce members participate in the annual Board strategic planning process.

Taskforce

- Updates information on ECP needs and interests in order to guide new initiatives.
- Continues to plan ECP programming for Annual Conference or other workshops.
- Completes the ECP website, listserv, etc.
- Develops relationships with other ECPs in the Association membership for projects.
- Finds interested ECPs to act as representatives in other centers and helps the representatives to establish themselves.
- Prepares for the possible transition of some Taskforce members away from, and the addition of new members to, the Taskforce.
- Chair or Taskforce member attends ECP-related or Leadership Conference.

Year IV

Board

- Association Board and Executive maintain interest in and support for the ECP project.
- ECP Director continues involvement with Board (e.g., attending Board Meetings and participating on committees, etc)
- Other interested ECPs of the Taskforce are included on committees and encouraged to consider Board positions as openings become available.
- Taskforce members participate in the annual Board strategic planning process.

Taskforce

- Updates information on ECP needs and interests to guide new initiatives.
- Continues to plan ECP programming for annual conference or other workshop.
- Updates website (e.g., new resources, new look etc).
- Divides up aspects of the project into portfolios that individual Taskforce members take on and maintain (e.g., updating resources, periodic mentor invitation, workshop coordination, new survey)
- Encourages regional ECP representatives to work with Taskforce or local ECPs to develop programming of interest.
- Chair or Taskforce member attends ECP-related or Leadership Conference.

2.0 Evaluation of Efforts: Successes and Directions for Change

Relatively frequent evaluation of the efforts of the Taskforce's initiatives and efforts is obviously important. Such an evaluation can be informed by a variety of sources and is useful to provide some guide to project direction and feedback about the success of that direction. The OPA Taskforce focused on increases in **ECP membership numbers** and **activity** as the standards of success (e.g., list serv activity, involvement in Association/Taskforce, attendance to events and workshops, survey responses, mentor use, and informal feedback). It was found in the Ontario experience that there was a substantial increase in membership numbers and activity by these new ECP members. Successes in other aspects of the project, indirectly related to ECP numbers or activity, were also apparent. These successes included establishing relationships with the Regulatory College, CPA, and some internships sites.

Fluctuations in the Taskforce's activity level and ECP response to various initiatives will no doubt occur. In the Ontario example, ECP activity heightened around conferences, workshops, and recent questions on the listserv. There were also fallow periods, perhaps reflecting a range of different individual, demographic, and professional factors rather than the lack of interest in, or failure of, a particular initiative.

Nonetheless not all the initiatives were always as successful as desired. In Ontario, the Taskforce found that the graduated fee structure, website, and any private practice-related workshop were the most popular. The listserv and mentors, while also important, appeared to have had more of an ebb and flow to their activity level. For example, while the primary goal of the listserv was to connect ECPs and provide a forum for ECP-related issues, most of the activity actually revolved around practical issues like licensing, study groups, Taskforce announcements and the like. It was difficult to coax and sustain ongoing user-initiated discussions beyond these practical issues. This may reflect the fact that

the Association listserv served this function and there was possibly a general ECP shyness about initiating a discussion, especially if the topic was potentially embarrassing.

It remains to be seen if these initial patterns reflect the early years of the project and whether, over time, service modifications and increasing critical mass will give rise to positive developments. The greatest challenge will be to keep abreast of the pattern of changing diverse needs and respond to those needs in a timely and practical way in order to serve ECP members and attract new members.

3.0 Appendices

In the spirit of sharing and collaboration between Associations, you are encouraged to use and tailor the information in this guide, including the organizational material and templates contained in the appendices, for your own efforts. However, as the standard publication copyright and intellectual property rights remain in force for the author of this document, please make the appropriate acknowledgement. Additional organizational material that would be a helpful resource can be found with the ECP endeavours of other Associations and the American Psychological Association.

APPENDIX 3.1: Board Communication

Update on ECP Taskforce Activities

Taskforce Chair: Michael Oosterhoff
Members: Jessica Cooperman
Trina Epstein
Peter Farvolden
Brent Hayman-Abello

Initiatives and Accomplishments:

- I. **Needs Assessment Survey:** Data for this online survey has been compiled for 43 responders. A results summary is available.
- II. **ECP Webpage** (within OPA website): We are in the process of fine-tuning the five sections of our webpage section. These five sections are:
 - a. An overview of our Task Force and initiatives
 - b. A comprehensive list of resources for ECPs sub-divided into relevant sections (i.e., private practice, job-seeking, etc.)
 - c. An ECP listserv
 - d. Mentorship program for ECPs
 - e. Information about ECP professional and social programming
- III. **Workshop at OPA Convention** (Feb. 24): “Managing a Private Practice: What Every Early Career Psychologist Should Know.” This was a successful and well-attended event that included presentations by both experienced and novice private practitioners, as well as an expert speaker in the area of ethical issues who spoke about potential ethical pitfalls for ECPs.
- IV. **“Financial Therapy” Event** (March 17): This was our first ECP social/informational event that included a talk and Q&A with a financial planner as well as an opportunity for informal networking among ECPs. An evaluation completed by attendees indicated that they were interested in participating in future ECP events.
- V. **Mentor Program:** As noted above, this will be one component of our website. We are currently determining the guidelines for how this initiative will operate.
- VI. **Reduced Fees for ECPs:** We were delighted that OPA was able to accommodate this important initiative, not only for OPA membership, but also for Convention fees. The response from ECPs has been very favourable.

Future Plans:

- **Budget:** It is our goal to determine the necessary expenses projected over the next year for our continued initiatives.
- **Forging Networks in Ontario:** Members of the ECP Taskforce are Toronto-based Psychologists. We aim to broaden our network to other major centres in Ontario and have already begun to forge links with colleagues in Ottawa and London.

APPENDIX 3.2: Original Survey 2004

OPA Early Career Psychologist Survey

1. I am: Male Female
2. I live in: The Greater Toronto Area
 Eastern Ontario
 Northern Ontario
 South Western Ontario
3. I am currently working as a Psychologist in Ontario:
- Full-time
 Part-time
 Not currently employed
4. If "Yes" to the above question, I practice in the following types of settings:
- Hospital
 School
 Community agency/mental health centre
 Industry/business community
 Academic setting
 Private practice
 Other
5. Please estimate the percentage of time you devote to the following activities:
- | | |
|-------------------|--------|
| Clinical work | _____% |
| Research | _____% |
| Academic/Teaching | _____% |
| Other_____ | _____% |
6. I am satisfied with my current job as a Psychologist.
- Yes No
7. I am currently on the Supervised Practice with the College of Psychologists.
- Yes No
8. I am already registered and have been registered for _____ years.
9. I am currently a member of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA).
- Yes No

10. I am currently a member of the Ontario Psychological Association (OPA).

- Yes No

11. If "No", please check all of the following reasons that apply:

- Membership fees are too expensive.
 I am a member of other professional organizations (e.g., CPA, APA).
 I don't see how membership benefits me.
 I don't know about OPA.
 I don't know how to join.
 Other (please specify) _____.

12. In the past I have been a member of OPA.

- Yes No

13. I feel I have a good understanding of what OPA can do for me as an Early Career Psychologist.

- Yes No

14. Mentors/supervisors/employers encouraged me to join OPA.

- Yes No

15. I have attended OPA conferences.

- Yes No

16. As a relatively new Psychologist, I feel adequately prepared to face the professional challenges of my work.

- Yes No

17. As a relatively new Psychologist, the following issues are particularly relevant to me (please check all that apply)

- Preparing for the College exams
 Interacting with the College of Psychologists
 Finding a job/negotiating a salary
 Opening/managing a private practice
 Networking with other professionals
 Staying current with the field
 Dealing with ethical issues
 Political issues and professional advocacy

- Adjusting to a supervisory role
- Grant writing
- Feeling professionally isolated
- Balancing family and career
- Other (please specify)_____

18. I feel adequately prepared by my mentors/supervisors/employers in the above issues.

- Yes No

19. I would be interested in being connected to a professional practice mentor who might help to guide me in some of the above issues.

- Yes No

20. I would be interested in posing professional practice questions on an Early Career Psychologist listserv under the following circumstances (please check all that apply):

- Anonymously
- With identifiers
- Not interested

21. I would be interested in attending programming (i.e., in areas outlined in question 17) with other Early Career Psychologists.

- Yes No

22. If so, I would be interested in attending programming in the following formats (please check all that apply):

- A full-day conference/workshop
- A half-day conference/workshop
- An evening session/series of sessions

23. I would be interested in attending social events with other Early Career Psychologists.

- Yes No

24. I would be interested in becoming involved with the Early Career Psychologist Taskforce. Yes No

25. Please use the following space to provide any additional information you feel might help OPA to better serve the needs of Early Career Psychologists.

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact the ECP Taskforce: ecptaskforce@opa.ca

APPENDIX 3.3: Survey Invitation

This year an Early Career Psychologist (ECP) Taskforce, through the Ontario Psychological Association (OPA), was formed to address early professional needs.

Psychologists engaged in their first professional, research, and teaching positions within five years of graduation face some unique challenges. These challenges include navigating the licensing process, securing jobs, peer networking, learning to practice independently, establishing a business, and continuing one's professional development.

We invite you, Early Career Psychologists across the province, to take a few minutes to fill out the survey via a link on the OPA website. This will help us to decide what the important issues are for you and help us to determine which priorities to focus on to be of help.

For those Psychologists who know of Early Career Psychologists (e.g., supervisees, new hires in the department, recent graduates, etc.) who may not be on the OPA listserv, please let them know of this survey and encourage them to participate.

APPENDIX 3.4: New Information Gathering

Subject: ECP Taskforce: Possible Events

Hello, dedicated listservers. The ECP Taskforce is wondering about planning some new events for the near future, and we want your vote on which one or ones you like and really would attend. The event possibilities are:

- A. Tax Issues & Incorporation for Psychologists
- B. Starting a Private Practice
- C. Tricky Issues with Rick Morris (CPO)

Please vote using your handsets now. Let us know which one, or the order of priority if more than one, you would like. Other event ideas are welcome.

For those outside of the Toronto area, we encourage you to contact the area reps in London (Brent Hayman-Abello), Ottawa (Paul Basevitz), and Hamilton (Marnee Maroes), and help them set up an event closer to home. For example, Rick Morris said that he is happy to be invited to speak anywhere in Ontario.

APPENDIX 3.5: Graduated Fee Structure

The membership fee for OPA has been \$510 annually for several years. A flat student rate had been included in the OPA membership structure for many years. For ECPs the membership was reduced in a 4-year graduated fashion:

Year	% Reduction	Type of Member
Year I.	75% Reduction	ECP Member (e.g., Supervised Practice)
Year II.	50% Reduction	ECP Member (e.g., Supervised/Independent)
Year III.	50% Reduction	ECP Member (e.g., Independent Practice)
Year IV.	25% Reduction	ECP Member (e.g., Independent Practice)
Year V.	0% Reduction	Full Member (e.g., Independent Practice)

APPENDIX 3.6: ECP Listserv Guide

The Early Career Psychologist listserv was developed as a vehicle separate from the OPA listserv in order to address issues specifically relevant to new Psychologists. These issues might include the registration process and starting a new private practice. We also see the listserv as a way of helping new professionals connect with one another.

Here are some listserv guidelines to keep in mind:

1. It is important to identify yourself on all listserv communication. Including a subject line is also helpful.
2. Client names should never be used, nor should any information be included by which a client could potentially be identified.
3. Discussions that occur on the listserv are for educational purposes only and should not be a substitute for supervision or direct consultation.
4. Respectful treatment of listserv members is key. It is fine to disagree with someone's professional perspective, but please refrain from personal attacks. Difficult questions often do not have one ideal solution.
5. Please do not try to send attachments. If you have something you must send, please arrange to do this back channel or via a separate link.

APPENDIX 3.7: Mentor Page on the ECP Website

Mentorship Program

The Early Career Psychologist (ECP) Taskforce is interested in helping to foster mentorships between new Psychologists and more experienced Psychologists. This mentoring relationship is not meant to be supervisory in nature, but might supplement supervision for those Psychologists on Supervised Practice (Temporary Register). Further, many ECPs who are no longer on Supervised Practice may find that while they no longer require the regular and structured support of supervision, they could still benefit from some professional guidance from a more seasoned Psychologist. The issues to be discussed will vary, depending on the area of practice and the specific guidelines agreed to by both mentor and “mentee.” Our goal is merely to help individuals to connect.

We recognize that Mentors are extremely busy, so the intent is not to make being a mentor an additional burden or hassle. The basic expectation for being a mentor is simply to respond to intermittent practice-related questions via email or phone. Beyond this basic expectation, the level of involvement depends on your own interests, time, and what you work out with the “mentee”.

Psychologists who are interested in mentoring an ECP should contact us at: ecptaskforce@opa.ca, and briefly in one or two sentences let us know your area(s) of clinical practice (e.g., mental health treatment, insurance assessment, rehabilitation), type of practice (e.g., private practice, hospital-based program), location (e.g., Toronto Western Hospital), and how you would like interested ECPs to contact you. We will post this information on the listserv as we receive it.

ECPs seeking a mentor can then peruse the list of mentors and contact those who seem appropriate to them. We will leave it to both parties to develop their own arrangement for their mentoring relationship in terms of type of contact (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail) and frequency of contact.

Mentors should let us know when they have arranged a mentoring relationship(s) and would like their names to be removed from the mentor list on the website. ECPs should therefore check the list regularly for the most up-to-date information.

If you have any questions about this mentorship program, please feel free to contact us at ecptaskforce@opa.ca. Thanks.

APPENDIX 3.8: Mentor Invitation

Hello and thanks to all of you who indicated interest in becoming mentors for Early Career Psychologists.

Included in this message is an attachment of what the mentors' intro section will be on the website & how it will work. Have a look.

The next step is that we need a little info to facilitate the connection of mentors and mentees. From the web section:

Briefly (i.e., one sentence) let us know your area(s) of clinical practice (e.g., mental health treatment, insurance assessment, rehabilitation), type of practice (e.g., private practice, hospital based program), location (e.g., Toronto Western Hospital), and how you would like interested ECPs to contact you. We will post this information on the listserv as we receive it.

Example:

Dr. Kettle, mental health treatment and assessment in a hospital based program at London Health Sciences Centre, email contact: drkettle@emailrus.ca

ECPs seeking a mentor can then peruse the list of mentors and contact those who seem appropriate to them. We will leave it to both parties to develop their own arrangement for their mentoring relationship in terms of type of contact (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail) and frequency of contact.

In the coming weeks you may see an email announcement for other volunteers over the OPA listserv. If you have already indicated your interest and have sent information, please disregard it.

If you have any questions about this mentorship program, please feel free to contact us at ecptaskforce@opa.ca

Thanks again,

Dr. X, Chair, ECP Taskforce.

APPENDIX 3.9: ECP Message Flyer

Message for Early Career Psychologists

Are you an Early Career Psychologist in Ontario?
Would you like to learn how to establish and maintain a private practice?
Do you want to connect professionally with your peers?
Would you like to know how to deal effectively with third-party providers?
Do you want practical information on the registration process?
Would you like to know where to find job opportunities in Psychology?

If you have graduated within the last 5 years, the Ontario Psychological Association's Early Career Psychologist Taskforce has important news for you. The ECP Taskforce was formed to respond to the unique needs of Psychologists who are at the beginning of their professional careers.

The Taskforce is doing several things to benefit ECPs. We are conducting an e-survey of ECPs to determine the issues of relevance to them. Look for this survey in your e-mail in the near future. We are developing an ECP section for the new OPA website. This web section will contain a broad range of ECP related resources for professional practice, marketing, and professional development. This web section will also have a dedicated ECP listserv, a place to find mentors, and announcements of more professional and social events. We are also planning a half-day workshop, "Managing A Private Practice: What Every Early Career Psychologist Should Know" for the February 2005 OPA Conference. Hope to see you there!

Through the efforts of the Taskforce, the OPA has recently approved a graduated fee structure for the OPA membership of ECPs. For those registered for Supervised Practice, the rate is 75% of the regular OPA member rate. For the first two years of full registration, the rate is 50% of the regular rate. For the third year after full registration, the rate is 25% of the regular member rate.

The rates for the February 2005 OPA Conference have also been reduced for ECPs who are OPA members. The early bird rate for the full Conference, including meals, is \$125, and \$170 after the early bird rate. For ECPs who wish to attend for one day, the cost, not including meals, is \$95.

Joining the OPA is easy, affordable, and gives you access to all these great Early Career Resources and Workshops.

Sincerely, The Early Career Psychologist Taskforce