

Board of Psychology  
2021 Annual Report

April 2022



## Introduction

Boards serve an important and often unrecognized service as they quietly protect the public. Board members possess unique technical expertise and function to assure a competent workforce in exercising this duty. Complex issues that surround complaint investigations, health policy, establishment of rules and regulations, and issuance of licenses are some examples of these important duties.

The mission of the Board of Psychology is to protect the public through enforcement of standards for licensure and ongoing clinical competence.

## Board Composition

RIDOH obeys the statutory and regulatory guidance on the composition of the Board. Currently, the Board has 6 members, which consists of the following board members and their appointed positions:

- Rowland Barrett, Ph.D., Psychologist,
- Jonathan R. Gershon, Ph.D., Psychologist
- Karen Gieseke, Ph.D., Psychologist
- Peter M. Oppenheimer, Ph.D., Psychologist, Chairperson
- Margaret Paccione-Dyszlewski, Ph.D., Psychologist
- John F. Todaro, Ph.D., Psychologist Academia

The following position is vacant and RIDOH is actively recruiting to fulfill and appoint individuals to these vacancies:

- Representative of the Public

Board members do not receive compensation of any type for their many hours of service.

## RIDOH Staff

The Board is housed entirely within RIDOH and is staffed by RIDOH employees who divide their time to effectively ensure the Board has the resources it needs to function at the highest level.

The following RIDOH staff include:

- Ellen Balasco, Esq., Chief, Center for Professional Boards and Licensing
- Donna Valletta, Assistant Health Program Administrator
- Lauren Lasso, Board Manager
- Steven Sullivan, Chief, Board Investigator
- Emely Castillo, Licensing Aide
- Julia Wyman, Legal Counsel

### Meetings

RIDOH follows the statutory requirements when scheduling board meetings for the calendar year. In 2021, the Board met 6 times, on January 21, February 12, April 15, May 26, December 13, and December 16. Members of the public can attend the Open Session meetings.

### Statute and Regulations

There were no changes to the Statute, <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE5/5-44/INDEX.HTM> or the Rules and Regulations [https://risos-apa-production-public.s3.amazonaws.com/DOH/REG\\_12157\\_20211222144600.pdf](https://risos-apa-production-public.s3.amazonaws.com/DOH/REG_12157_20211222144600.pdf)

### Licensing

Licensing of Psychologists by examination or by endorsement, represents one of the essential functions of RIDOH and the Board. Ensuring that Psychologists who are eligible to practice in Rhode Island are competent, ethical, and professional is critical to the licensing process.

As of December 31, 2021, total active licenses: 984

From January 1 through December 31, 2021, the following Psychology applications were processed:

Licenses issued	
Psychologists	138
License applications denied	0

### Complaints and Disciplinary Actions

Health equity and justice extends to all areas of RIDOH. When a complaint is filed there is usually a desire, on the part of the complainant, to assign blame. RIDOH investigate complaints and strive to achieve consistent and just outcomes for all parties involved. If an investigation is opened, the Board needs to determine if a Psychologist must be held accountable or if the error/issue was more likely caused by systems issues beyond the control of the Psychologist. The Board strives to arrive at consistent decisions which protect the public and hold Psychologists accountable.

An essential role of the Board is to investigate and adjudicate complaints. Complaints come from a variety of sources, including patients, patient advocates, notices of litigation, licensed facilities, and other healthcare professionals. Each complaint is reviewed prior to being opened for complete investigation. The complaint process is detailed on RIDOH's website at <https://health.ri.gov/complaints/>

