



Dr. R. Chris Steilberg has been selected by the President of the Society for Industrial Organizational Psychology (SIOP) to chair a taskforce charged with examining certification and licensure issues among I/O psychologists. As chair to this taskforce, Dr. Steilberg was invited to attend the 50th meeting of the Association for State and Provincial Psychology Board (ASPPB). ASPPB is the agency responsible for regulating both title and practice law of psychologists. Their job is to protect the public from harm due to unqualified ‘professionals’.

“In the US, licensure for psychologists is inconsistent across states and biased toward health care.” notes Steilberg. “We need a viable solution for those I/O psychologists who should be ‘qualified’ one way or another to protect the public from incompetent practitioners.”

I/O psychologists are real psychologists, having obtained doctoral degrees in psychology. But most states do not distinguish them from clinicians when it comes to licensure. To be licensed in the majority of states, one must be clinically educated and trained. Literally, to be a psychologist in some states requires an internship in a mental health facility. This is neither the case nor the desire of I/O psychologists who, despite not being clinicians, can still do harm via incompetent practice, and therefore should be monitored.

According to Steilberg, “I/O psychologists apply principles of psychology to deal with issues confronting real people at work. I guarantee that if you want a trained professional to assist with hiring staff or improving their productivity at work you’ll want an I/O psychologist, not a clinician – this is what we’re trained to do. Conversely, you wouldn’t typically use an I/O psychologist as a grief counselor – this is what clinicians do.”

Recommendations from Steilberg’s taskforce will have wide impact as this taskforce is also seen as a means of standardizing the practice of I/O psychology across the world. The taskforce will make its recommendations to the president and executive board of the Society for Industrial Organizational Psychology in January, 2011. Until then, it’s ‘buyer beware’ when contracting an I/O ‘psychologist.’

