

Consultation on developing a new health role – plain language summary

Many people in Aotearoa/New Zealand are waiting for help with mental health and addictions. There aren't enough mental health workers, including psychologists, to meet this need. To help, Health New Zealand/Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) is increasing funding for psychologist training. Health NZ also believes creating a new role will mean there are more people who can provide help. This role is being called AP (Associate/Assistant Psychologist) until it has an official name.

Psychologists are one group of mental health workers. Psychologists have at least six years of study and use their training help people with their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. Their work is backed by research. Psychologists are registered with the New Zealand Psychologists Board (the Board). The Board's job is to protect the public by making sure psychologists have good training, stay within the limits of their role and do their jobs well.

Health NZ asked the Board to develop the AP role. This includes:

- scope: the limits of an AP's role;
- title: what to call an AP;
- competencies: an AP's skills;
- what's needed for supervision.

The idea is that an AP would have some training in psychology, but not as much as a psychologist. They would have at least four years of study, including an undergraduate degree in psychology ("Bachelors degree") and a new postgraduate university qualification. This would include practical training as well as academic learning.

Compared to psychologists, APs would provide a lower level of support to people with less complex problems. To help APs do a good job, they would:

- only work in teams (not by themselves in private practice);
- be supervised by psychologists.

APs would be registered as health practitioners with the Board. This means any concerns about an AP's practice could be raised with the Board.

To develop the AP role, the Board **needs to hear from people** who may be affected, including clients/tāngata whaiora, families/whanau, psychologists, other health workers, employers and training organisations. This is the consultation phase of the project. Your feedback will help decide what an AP does, as well as what they need in their training.

You can read more about the AP role in the Consultation Document. You can provide your feedback using the [online link to the survey](#) or email your feedback to projects@nzpb.org.nz. The consultation is open until 16 June 2025.