Local School Psychology Organization (LSPO) representatives are very important members of the MSPA Executive Board. They are responsible for being aware of MSPA issues and business so that they can be informed voters and speakers at Board meetings. They are also charged with bringing MSPA Board information back to their local organization members. Though this role is important in maintaining MSPA’s network and outreach, it can be lonely. Unlike committee chairs and elected officials, these Board members may not have a built-in organization of people in similar roles or with similar interests.

This year, MSPA’s Public Affairs Committee identified D’Andrea Jacobs as the Assistance to Locals subcommittee Chairperson. This is a role that Shira Levy held several years ago, but that has not been consistently established by MSPA. The role of the Assistance to Locals subcommittee is to identify and develop ways that MSPA can be a more welcoming and beneficial place for LSPO representatives and their constituents. A big part of this work is creating space for these representatives to come together to discuss important issues facing local school psychologist organizations across Maryland.

On October 16, the Assistance to Locals subcommittee held its first of three forums for LSPO representatives to come together to network and feel supported. Representatives engaged in “get-to-know you” conversations, shared outlooks and issues, and discussed solutions to engaging local membership virtually. The facilitators also used internal survey data, NASP leadership, and organizational outreach tools to frame a conversation about engaging local members. Other topics included setting up School Psychology Practitioner of the Year candidates for success and increasing membership to LSPOs and to MSPA. Future topics will include supporting social justice on a local level and providing professional development and other resources to local members.

The feedback from the forum was positive. LSPO representatives indicated that they liked having a place to feel welcomed, engaged, and among people in similar positions. MSPA strives to represent school psychologists across the state, and the Executive Board can not do that effectively without the support of our LSPO representatives. This forum was a promising start to developing space for mutually beneficial partnerships between the Board and our local organizations.

If you have any questions about Assistance to Locals, Local School Psychology Organizations, or upcoming forums and events, please contact D’Andrea Jacobs at AtL@mspaonline.org.