

Reflections of My Time With APSAC and the *Advisor*

Bri Stormer, MSW

I've recently announced that I will be moving on from my position at APSAC to join Illinois Action for Children as the Project Manager of their Community Parenting Support Saturation Program. The new program is a pilot project designed to saturate target communities with high-touch, medium touch, and low-touch universal parent support strategies for parents and caregivers of 0–5-year-olds with the goal of increasing kindergarten readiness. While I am thrilled to be helping such an exciting project grow, I will miss my colleagues at APSAC tremendously.

As my time with APSAC comes to a close, Drs. Schelbe and Panlilio were kind enough to invite me to share reflections on both the organization and the journal. I'm sure I could run out of digital ink sharing every lesson I've taken from my five years here, so I've focused this essay on a few parting thoughts:

1. The mission of APSAC remains as important as the day it was founded.

As we prepare to celebrate 35 years of incorporation, there will be many opportunities to reflect on APSAC's legacy on the field, as well as look to the organization's role in the future of child maltreatment. I will leave it to the experts to capture the achievements of the last 35 years, but I will say a few words about our future.

APSAC's mission is "to improve society's response to the abuse and neglect of its children." APSAC has always been unique in its multidisciplinary approach to its mission—not only bringing together

child-serving professionals but also working to unify the best research evidence with practice and policy. As we prepare to enter year three of a global pandemic, a coordinated, evidence-based response to child maltreatment prevention and intervention is as important and as challenging as ever. We are all experiencing a global trauma that strains our mental and emotional resources while managing practical barriers to the ways we used to work and interact. At the same time, we are grappling with the knowledge that our child- and family-serving systems were set up in a white supremacist society and will continue to reinforce white supremacy (despite the best efforts of many well-meaning individuals) until we work together to overhaul those systems. This moment, perhaps more than any other since APSAC's founding, requires professionals across disciplines to work together to support child-serving professionals—promoting research that meets our current needs, translating that evidence and making it accessible to workers on the front lines, and offering opportunities for connection through virtual platforms. As we work to meet these needs, we must also envision better child- and family-serving systems, free of white supremacy, and develop and implement practical steps toward making that work possible. It is a tall order, but I believe APSAC can meet that moment because:

2. APSAC's members are tireless in their convictions to make the world a better place for children.

Truly the highlight of my time at APSAC has been getting to know its membership. APSAC's members are some of the smartest and hardest working people

I have ever met. I never cease to be amazed by the generosity with which they share their time and their expertise. If any group of people can come together and meet the needs of this moment, I believe that group is APSAC members. While I will no longer be on staff, I will be honored to count myself among you as a member and will work to develop my own expertise so that I may find new ways to give back to this organization and its members. One way I hope to give back in the future is through contributions to the *Advisor*, as I believe that:

3. The **APSAC Advisor** is a vital publication for the field.

In my time at APSAC, I've worked on each of its publications, but the *Advisor* holds a unique and special place in my heart. It is an extraordinary publication with an extraordinary history (all of which is available in APSAC's [members-only library](#), for those interested in learning about the history of the field and watch experts' thinking grow and change over the course of three-and-a-half decades). The practice focus of the *Advisor* provides those working on the front lines with much-needed translations of evidence, innovations in practice

and policy, and rapid-response articles that can be published quickly to address current priorities (see the [open-access special issue on COVID-19](#) for an excellent example). The *Advisor* creates a space for difficult conversations without easy answers (see [this issue with a special "contested issues" section](#) focusing on the issues of whether substance use in pregnancy should be considered abuse and whether the Indian Child Welfare Act protects the best interests of Indian children in its current form). It also allows professionals to share evidence-based and evidence-informed practice models that practitioners can use in their communities (see [this issue with a special section on the work of the National Initiative to End Corporal Punishment](#) and [this issue outlining the major forensic interview models](#)).

Few of the articles mentioned here would find a home in the more traditional academic journals, but the information outlined within them is necessary to improve practice. Without the *Advisor*, the field would be missing a space for professionals across disciplines to come together with the primary goal of improving practice among child maltreatment professionals. This is an especially exciting time for the *Advisor*, because:



4. I can think of no better team to lead the **APSAC Advisor** through this moment than Drs. Schelbe and Panlilio

APSAC could not be luckier to have this editorial team at the helm of the *Advisor*. Both are academics with a commitment to improving practice, highlighting the best of what the *Advisor* has always offered. They are also deeply committed to stepping up to the challenges of this particular moment in our history, having completed a special issue on COVID-19 and identifying two extraordinary guest editors—Drs. Jessica Pryce and Reiko Boyd—to lead a special issue on systemic racism (currently in production). Their commitment to ending systemic racism does not begin and end with a special issue, however, as they have committed to including a commentary on the topic in each issue they produce. Keeping this topic at the forefront and integrating it with other special issue topics help professionals reframe their thinking from the idea that systemic racism is a single issue in child maltreatment policy and practice and instead see it as a part of every issue, something we should always be considering and working to dismantle.

What makes Drs. Schelbe and Panlilio unique, however, is their commitment to going the extra mile to develop new voices. They understand the challenges of academic publishing and work to make the *Advisor* a space that brings down a number of those barriers. From offering webinars on writing for the *Advisor* and holding writing groups to specifically instructing reviewers to be constructive in their feedback, Drs. Schelbe and Panlilio are creating space for individuals whose valuable work may not otherwise have an outlet. This commitment will be especially pronounced in an upcoming 35th Anniversary special issue, in which new voices interview pioneers in the field. None of the authors will have ever written for the *Advisor* in the past, providing a unique opportunity for the trailblazers and the next generation of leaders to come together to reflect on the important work that's been done

and the important work still to do. This is what Drs. Schelbe and Panlilio do best—highlighting the best of what the *Advisor* has always been while realizing their unique vision for the publication, which is why I implore you:

5. If you've been on the fence about writing for the **Advisor**, there is no better time than now.

I will borrow from Dr. Jon Conte's words in the first issue of the *Advisor*, published in 1988. “[F]ull vitality comes as members voluntarily take up the work of APSAC.... [W]rite *The Advisor* if you have a problem or an issue that you want help with. Your question is probably shared by many other professionals. Alternatively, write *The Advisor* when you have information other professionals should have (Conte, 1988, p. 1).” In this time of great challenges and great innovation, the contribution of APSAC's members to the field of knowledge is necessary to move forward. Tell APSAC about your new and exciting programs, write a commentary on a topic close to your heart, and share the preliminary evidence that can help inform other members' practice. If you are new to this type of writing, know that you will be supported in bringing your ideas to print. I have no doubt that many of you have something to share that others would benefit from learning about.

Final Thoughts

It has been my honor to work on behalf of you—the APSAC membership. I have been lucky to find APSAC in a period of extreme growth and change, and am proud to have been a part of it.

I could never name all of the people I've met through APSAC that I am thankful for, but know that if we know one another, I count you among them. If you'd like to keep in touch (and I hope you will!), please feel free to [email me](#).

References

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Conte, J. R. (1988). From the president. *The APSAC advisor*, 1(1-4), p. 1. http://apsacliibrary.org/publications_all.php?dir=1988%20Number%201#

About the Author

Bri Stormer, MSW, is Project Manager of the Community Parenting Support Saturation Program at Illinois Action for Children. Until recently, she was Director of Publications and Member Services with APSAC, where she managed production of the peer-reviewed journal *Child Maltreatment*, the peer-reviewed practice journal the *APSAC Advisor*, the quarterly news blast *the*, and APSAC's *Practice Guidelines*, among other duties. Bri earned her Bachelor of Arts in psychology and theatre from Case Western Reserve University and her Master's in social work with a concentration in community organizing, planning, and administration from University of Southern California. Contact: bri.stormer@gmail.com

