

# NPA Member Spotlight

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## Ashleigh Clarke, PsyD

**How long have you been a member of NPA, and why did you join?**

I joined during my internship year in 2018 and have been active ever since. I had a supervisor turned mentor, who is also an NPA member, who felt I would benefit from being involved with the Legislative Committee given some of my experiences, interests, and long-term career goals. She sponsored my membership, and I loved the experience from the very beginning.

**What do you like most about being a member? How has your career benefited from being a member?**

I love how much I have learned and continue to learn through NPA. One of the biggest benefits has been gaining a better understanding of all the different pieces that go into being a psychologist, the workings of Nebraska, the systems we work within, and how psychology intersects with those systems.

Just as importantly, I have benefited from the support of other NPA members. Learning new things and taking on leadership opportunities can be intimidating, but I have always found experienced psychologists who are willing to share their knowledge, answer questions, and offer guidance. I do not think I would have pursued many of these opportunities if I felt I had to do it alone.

**Do you now, or have you ever volunteered for NPA?**

I have been part of the Legislative Committee since I first joined NPA. I currently serve as Legislative Committee Chair and recently began serving as NPA’s Federal Advocacy Coordinator.

**Where are you now working and what is your role?**

I am still with the same organization where I completed both my internship and residency, Nebraska Mental Health Centers. I am a Staff Psychologist and member of our training team within the APA-accredited internship program.

My role includes a little bit of everything. I work in both our Lincoln and Beatrice offices providing school-based services, supporting rural mental health initiatives, supervising trainees, and conducting psychological assessments. Much of my assessment work is in forensic contexts, including evaluations for DHHS and juvenile probation departments across the state.

**Tell us about your path to becoming a clinical psychologist.**  
This answer could probably fill an entire book chapter.

My path was not particularly traditional or linear. Although I always wanted to be a psychologist, I viewed that goal as largely unattainable when I was younger. I started at community college, took several years off between periods of enrollment, and explored different options before eventually earning a degree in Sociology, which remains my first academic love.

I attended Portland State University during a particularly active political period, including the Occupy Wall Street movement. Being immersed in sociology in Portland during that time profoundly shaped how I understand people, systems, power, and the ways social, political, and economic forces influence our daily lives. It reinforced my belief that individual experiences rarely exist in isolation and that understanding people requires understanding the broader systems around them.

I later pursued a Master’s degree in Counseling. During that time, I developed a mentorship with my statistics and research professor, largely because I spent a fair amount of time in her office crying over statistics homework. She saw something in me that I did not fully see in myself and encouraged me to consider doctoral training. On a whim, and very late in the application cycle, I applied to Psy.D. programs across the country, interviewed, and was accepted into my first-choice program.

Even then, the journey was not straightforward. During graduate school at Marywood University, my educational assessment professor worked hard to recruit me into school psychology, pointing out that it required less schooling and often offered better pay. I was genuinely tempted, but ultimately realized that clinical psychology was where I belonged.

While at Marywood, I also attended the first Women’s March alongside a group of fellow students. How a group of retired Catholic nuns helped facilitate that trip is probably a story for another day, but it remains one of my favorite graduate school memories.

Looking back, the common thread through all of these experiences has been a desire to understand people within the context of the systems they live in and to find ways to create meaningful change, whether through clinical work, training, assessment, or advocacy.

**What experiences and past roles have led you to where you are today?**  
Oddly enough, I think one of the most influential roles I ever had was working as a live-in nanny while I was in high school.

One of my mother’s close friends was a single parent who was working full time while completing a Master’s degree in a psychology-related field. After the children were asleep, I would often find myself reading her textbooks for fun, especially abnormal psychology and social psychology. Looking back, that was probably where my love of psychology, learning, and understanding people really began.

Over time, experiences in sociology, counseling, psychology, assessment, supervision, and advocacy all built upon one another. What connects them is a curiosity about people, systems, and how we can create meaningful change.

**If you could choose anyone as a mentor or collaborator, who would you choose and why?**

My sister-in-law, who lives in Spokane, Washington, is a Ph.D. research psychologist. I think it would be incredibly fun to collaborate with her on a research project. Beyond the fact that she is brilliant, we genuinely enjoy spending time together and can happily spend hours nerding out about psychology. Combining her research expertise with my clinical experiences would make for a pretty fun project.

**What is your favorite place you’ve traveled to, or what’s on your travel bucket list?**

I am a city girl at heart. My dream is to live somewhere that does not require owning a car. If there are tall buildings, public transportation, and city noises drifting through an open window, I am happy. Drop me in the middle of a city with my phone’s GPS, and I will find coffee, good food, and interesting things to explore.

Some of my favorite cities are New York City, Philadelphia, and Boston. If anyone would like to sponsor my relocation, I would happily move into a tiny city apartment tomorrow.

**If you had to eat one meal every day for the rest of your life, what would it be? What is your go-to comfort food?**

Thai food, without question. My comfort food favorites are chicken panang curry and pad thai (hold the bean sprouts!).