

**Private Practice Viewpoints from the SCP Section on Professional Practice**  
**By Marcy Rowland, Ph.D. and Mary O'Leary Wiley, Ph.D.**

I recently opened my passport to look at the growing number of stamps and was reminded, once again, of the many reasons I am thrilled to be in private practice! The private practice setting grants the flexibility in my schedule to maintain a full- or part-time practice seamlessly around my family, travel dreams and dog-walking responsibilities, among many others. As the designer of my own schedule, I am able to be responsive to my own needs (time-off) as well as the needs of my clients (adding appointments as needed or during less traditional hours). It is a unique opportunity to create the right amount of structure and flexibility to suit your lifestyle.

In addition to the personalized scheduling, private practice has allowed me to build a caseload of clients specific to my own personal and clinical strengths. By doing my own phone-triage and screening, I am able to increase the likelihood that the clients I work with are a good match for my specialty. As a result, I feel I am able to maximize my therapeutic effectiveness and take on new clients as the mix of my current caseload allows. Working with adolescents, I can plan my schedule to avoid awkward waiting room interactions with peers from the same school and plan my continuing education topics to match the therapeutic issues of my community.

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I find myself loving independent practice because it has really allowed me to tailor my practice to my passions, interests, and values. I control my schedule, and only have meetings with people I choose and topics I am passionate about. My clinical areas of focus have evolved over the years, and I am able to develop new skills and knowledge to serve clients most effectively. I also value working with a truly representative group of clients, and so I am able to choose to work with clients on a pro bono basis, or make other financial arrangements with them. My work with professional organizations and research are priorities for me, and with an independent practice I am able to flex my schedule to allow space for both research teams and working with colleagues on a national and state level. I look forward to going to work every day and feel very fortunate to feel that way.

In my experience, students and ECPs are far too worried about the business aspect of independent practice. I say that if you can handle a university bureaucracy, then insurance companies and clinical software is super easy! Other students and ECPs I have spoken with say that they choose their employment site because they want to “do it all,” combining clinical work, research, outreach, supervision and professional activities. I have designed my independent practice so that I can “do it all,” but financially I am supported by my clinical work. It works, and I have created a wonderful community of colleagues with whom I collaborate.

Communities are different in terms of independent practice. Some areas are desperate for good clinicians (even more true in more rural and small communities) and some may not welcome new faces. This is important to check out prior to making the plunge. Sometimes people will start independent practice “on the side,” to get a feel for what it is like in a location. I have found in doing independent practice in three communities/states over the years, that both my professional network and my Counseling Psychology training have served me well. After all, even people

with more significant psychological issues want to work with someone who views things from a strength-based approach based on non-institutionalized individuals with both cultural and clinical humility. Independent practice? I highly recommend!

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