

Year report 2018

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1 | About the association

APAP SXM stands for: **A**ssociation for **P**sychologists and **A**llied **P**rofessionals of St. Maarten.

APAP SXM has been established in 2016 to:

- promote the practice and professional development of psychology and related fields
- serve social and professional interests of psychologists and related professions on Sint Maarten (Dutch side)

How do we do that?

1. We actively follow the necessary standards in the field of psychology to guarantee the professional expertise of our members
2. We invest in the professional development of our members with training, supervision and following the latest developments in the workfield
3. We focus on establishing and maintaining professional conduct of the profession of psychologists and related profession in the interest of proper professional ethics
4. We build and maintain relationships with related organisations, both within and outside Sint Maarten
5. We promote the education of psychology in Sint Maarten
6. We provide information about psychology in Sint Maarten to different stakeholders
7. We lobby with different stakeholders in the community of St. Maarten with the goal of stimulating the quality of mental health on the island
8. We encourage and empower the study of scientific and professional aspects of the different specialization of psychology and promote the publication of writing on topics in the field of psychology and related topics

As of December 31st 2018 the association has 10 ordinary members and 5 associate members.

2 | Introduction from the president

Build back better. #SXM Strong. Rebuilding our nation. The year of 2018 has been a very important year for the Association in this regard. In this year members of the association continued to come together to unite their knowledge, effort and ideas to support the community, organizations and government of Sint Maarten in the aftermath of the hurricanes in 2017 with psychological well being. This resulted in writing and executing project plans that received funding, support on the spot with providing information, joining meetings to discuss the importance of mental health, enhancing therapy skills like mindfulness and even going on radio and having our own radio show (Next Level Thinking). Also investment and steps are taken to invest in the quality of the profession on the island. A process where the Association is taking steps forward and notably being recognized more by the government and other entities as an important stakeholder within the field. A year to be proud of, a year where the Association has shown its own resilience all the while supporting the resilience on the island where possible. In this 2018 year report an overview of these activities are given and some insight on the goals for 2019 for the Association of Psychologists and Allied Professionals St. Maarten are given.

3 | Activities 2018

Since hurricane Irma raged over Sint Maarten in September 2017, the development and activities of APAP SXM have been extended and have gained momentum. This first year report is another step in becoming a more professional association with an increasing range of influence on Sint Maarten (Dutch part). Our most important activities of 2018 will be highlighted here.

After hurricane Irma and Maria in September 2017, APAP SXM invested in informing the public via various media. In the first weeks after the disaster struck the island, members of APAP SXM joined ESF 6 meetings, after which they joined the medical bus in reaching out to different communities, spreading information through handing out by APAP SXM developed flyers, brochures and putting up posters, all designed and developed by APAPSXM. .

Information sessions

From November 2017 until early 2018 information sessions were held specially to enforce the resilience of first responders in dealing with (hurricane) stress. During these information sessions, screening questionnaires were conducted and participants were individually advised based on the outcome of this screening. Data was anonymously collected to contribute to further research. In the first few months of 2018 more requests came in from various organizations to provide similar sessions. As the “acute stage” was over, and offering this on a voluntary basis was no longer possible, APAP SXM referred these organizations to individual members and their private practice to provide this separate from APAP SXM.

Working with government

As mentioned before, the collaboration with the Government strengthened after hurricane Irma and Maria in 2017. In 2018 the Government of Sint Maarten organized a hurricane expo in preparation for the next hurricane season. APAP SXM was invited to set up a booth to provide information to the public and give a presentation about ‘hurricane stress’. The expo was held in Belair Community Center. The attendance was less than expected but the initiative was appreciated and it was a great opportunity to create more awareness.

APAP SXM also tried to provide information and consultation to fill in the gap concerning mental health in the National Recovery Plan. The Ministry of VSA was open to hear the vision of APAP SXM after sending them a letter with ideas. There are no further results or actions known after this unfortunately concerning the adjustment of the National Recovery Plan or other activities related to this mental health by the government in relation to policy.

APAP SXM has also been involved on invitation with the Manpower planning, representing the input of the members. No official document or result has come out of this. Unfortunately the amount of psychologists remains restricted to a number that the Association does not recognize as being sufficient and adequate for the community, and where data is missing on where these decisions are based on besides only a financial standpoint where the choices being made can be questioned if this is the best for the long run of the mental health (sector) of St. Maarten.

‘Next Level Thinking’

As radio stations came back on air after the hurricanes in 2017, APAP SXM contacted various stations to do

interviews live on air. These activities led to a strengthened collaboration with the Government of Sint Maarten and a specific opportunity to create more awareness and break the taboo of mental health by starting a radio show called 'Next Level Thinking' on Government radio station 107.9 FM.

In 2018 we recorded 10 shows and it was decided for 2019 to record another 5 episodes. All members contributed to the preparation of the content of the different shows and recorded the shows in groups of three. In one show a client agreed to share his story on air which was a great addition to breaking that taboo together with the community. The shows were aired a few times each and were made available online on the Facebook page of APAP SXM via a Soundcloud Account.

Next Level Thinking season 2018:

- 1: psychology introduction
- 2: stress in adults
- 3: stress in children and adolescents
- 4: why do we celebrate
- 5: healthy lifestyle
- 6: hurricane stress
- 7: positively influencing a child's development
- 8: what if your child is developing differently
- 9: mental health, what does it mean and how is it to love with a psychiatric disorder
- 10: life with a disability

Development website and Facebook

As APAP SXM became better known and was asked for contact information as well as additional information about the association, an official website and Facebook page was a necessary next step in professionalizing the association. The website is regularly updated with general information. The Facebook page provides additional information about local and international developments in the field of Psychology and activities of the association.

Training activities

Conditions for participation in training activities

Certain conditions were set up to make sure the funds we received from 'het Nationaal Rampenfonds (NRF)' are well spent. These conditions were set for both the CBT and the EMDR training and are planned to be documented in 2019 by letters that the members who participated signed.

Mindfulness 'Basic' course + 'Train the Trainer'

In May 2018 8 members of the Association joined the Mindfulness 8 week basic course, given online from Werkplaats Aandachtig. At that moment the funds were not definitive as yet, so this was at first on a voluntary basis with a request to pay self if needed. Later that year it became clear that the funds were awarded to the Association so it was possible to finance it via that manner. This basic course was a requirement to be able to follow the Train the Trainer course that took place in October of 2018. The Train the Trainer course was 8 days in October 2019 (the 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 24st, 25th, 26th and 27th of October) at Seaside Nature Park on St. Maarten. The training was given by L. Schipper of 'Werkplaats Aandachtig'. All participants were able to follow the course in a successful manner. It was a positive experience for all.

4 | Vision for 2019

Meeting structure

Since we are becoming a larger association with more members, we decided as a board that we want to revise the structure of our meetings. In the 'old' situation we had a meeting once a month, with every other meeting a board meeting or an 'intervision' meeting (both for all members). During the intervision meeting we would also discuss our regular association points. This wasn't working as well as we wanted. Often there wasn't as much time left as we wanted for the intervision part. Therefore we brainstormed about a new meeting structure.

In the new situation we will have a board meeting every other month (6 times per year). This meeting will only be attended by the board members. Besides that there will be a member meeting every other month (6 times per year) where general association activities will be discussed. The intervision part will be done separately during 4 meetings, organized by a member. Two of these intervision meetings will be about a general topic, interesting for all members, whereas the other two meetings will be focusing on a clinical topic (only for members who work with clients in a therapy context). There will be one person coordinating these meetings, that will be done by member S. Gruijters.

Task description board

Since no task descriptions for the board functions (president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary) have been made yet, the board members will work on the task description for their own function in order to become a more professional association.

Training activities

CBT

From February until May 2019 training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) will be given to members of APAP. This CBT training is the introduction course and starts in February. It will be done partly online and partly in person on the island. This introduction course will be finished in May. The trainer is W. de Vries from the Netherlands.

EMDR

In addition to the CBT training, a training for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) will be organized. This will consist of a basic course for the trainees who haven't done EMDR before, and an advanced course for the ones that have already done the basis course. This training will take place in July of 2019.

Mindfulness Retraite

To finish the Train the Trainer Course a week retraite has to take place to meet the criteria for Mindfulness Trainer. This is planned to take place in May of 2020, for the persons who followed the earlier course in 2018.

Involvement platform 'Extramural healthcare providers'

Together with other (para)medical professions (speech therapists, physiotherapists, dietitians etc.) APAP is involved in a platform. The goal of this platform is to be able to make one stand in discussions with the government, insurance companies etc. concerning matters that are important to all of these parties (like tariffs for example). In 2019 APAP will continue to be involved in this platform.

Continuation contact with government and insurance companies

For matters that are not discussed with the government through the platform 'Extramural healthcare providers' APAP will continue to seek out discussion about improvements that can be made for psychologists as well as for clients.

Research

Following the hurricane in 2017, APAP distributed questionnaires to gather information about the psychological well-being of people. With this data APAP would like to write a scientific article to provide evidence about the percentage of people that need additional assistance after a natural disaster in the Caribbean. This is valuable information for the country of Sint Maarten. A research workgroup of 4 APAP members was established to work on this article. They will continue with this in 2019.