

# Year report 2019

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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

## 2 | Introduction from the president

I am proud to present you with the year report for 2019 together with the vision of 2020, written and revised by our board members. In the last year we have been investing in professionalizing our association with documentation, with this as one of the results. It has been quite a busy year with continuation of the activities for the projects we have engaged in to support the community directly and indirectly through our members in the psychological recovery after the hurricane. Looking back on this year we can really say we also contributed to this, for example with the Mindfulness training that we started to provide free of charge for persons to participate in and the radio shows we hosted or got interviewed at. Something to be proud of as an association that first had been focused mainly on connecting psychologists in the field, to now being recognized as an important stakeholder in the psychological field: nationally but also internationally.

With this writing I would officially like to thank all of our members who contributed actively to this in the last year, and have made sure through their work that psychology gets more attention on St. Maarten. Steps towards breaking the mental health stigma, making sure that psychological help is accessible and of good enough quality. Those are important elements to invest in, and need to be continued to be invested in. In that sense we have enough work to do still, and hopefully will also be able to grow since mental health hopefully will get more support and attention not only by talking but also with backing up by policies and financial resources.

So, more to do, and hopefully more to come!

### 3 | Activities 2019

#### Training activities 2019

In 2019 the activities of APAP have mostly been directed towards improving and expanding the professional skills of its members. The different projects initiated after the experience of hurricane Irma and approved for execution in 2018 translated in 2019 in several trainings:

##### *February 2019                      Mindfulness retreat*

As the final part of the training to become Mindfulness trainers, a retreat was held on St. Maarten for 8 APAP members. All participants spent a full week retreat (with overnight stay) at a location under guidance of the trainer from the Netherlands, Ms. Linda Schippers, where they experienced and further deepened their knowledge of the mindfulness experience throughout the week. After this week this part was closed off with receiving the certifications by participating members who were able to fulfil all parts of the Mindfulness training. The advantage of the Mindfulness program is that it can be offered for groups and in that way can be more efficient in offering assistance at a larger scale, so this final activity gave the start sign to be able to start investing in the next activity (providing mindfulness groups to the community, more to be found on this further in this report).

##### *May 2019                              Cognitive Behavior Therapy training: basic and advanced*

CBT training has been a central part in the training package organized by APAP in support of maintaining and improving therapeutic interventions available by their members on St. Maarten, and with that indirectly investing in the quality of the mental health field for the community. This training has been organized online, first by all members, and in the last week the groups came together in the St. Maarten University with the trainer present on video. It was the intention to have the trainer present as well during that week, but due to personal reasons of the trainer this could not happen. It gave us the opportunity and experience to get introduced to online learning, a concept that worked really well. Two members followed both basic and advanced programs, the rest of the members either followed the basic or the advanced program.

The CBT training offered a great opportunity to (re)-install quality skills in therapeutic approach, especially for those members offering therapy to clients on a daily basis. The program was designed by W. de Vries, Dutch psychotherapist and accredited CBT trainer, and offered the latest literature and insights of the CBT research and protocols, as well connection to the CBT professional network in the Netherlands. It was also one of the requirements for the persons who did not have the BIG registration of GZ psycholoog as yet to be able to follow the EMDR training

##### *July / August 2019                EMDR basic and advanced training*

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is considered one of the most effective therapeutic interventions in relation to trauma treatment. For APAP the guarding of the professional level of its members has been at focus by the training set up for its members: to (re)-install the basic

EMDR intervention skills and to expand and build the amount of available EMDR providers, with also advanced approaches available among its members. As the EMDR accreditation in the Netherlands consists of an approach in accordance with most of APAP's members and experiences, the choice for the Dutch EMDR certification within the training traject became at focus.

A trainer from the Netherlands (I. Spierts, from EMDR Zuid, by EMDR Europe certified for both Adults as for Youth trainer, supervisor and practitioner) had been selected after approaching several providers. She arrived in St. Maarten during the summer and offered the introduction to EMDR training and the advanced training for members who already had the introduction training before, both including techniques for both children and adults. The training location was set up in the building of the St.Maarten University and the office of SHTA (St. Maarten Hospitality & Trade Association) and offered a base for daily training and practice. All participants finalized their training with success and evaluation indicated that the training was experienced as very valuable and especially beneficial for those professionals working in the field with clients.

One of the advanced training participants started their advance training in the Netherlands, in an individual traject. Together with the member who already started this the year before, this training was concluded on St. Maarten where further advanced training also took place with another member who practiced on an advanced level, with attention for EMDR treatment options for addiction together. All these advanced levels have been rounded off successfully as well.

#### *August / September 2019      Mindfulness advanced training*

End of the month of August the Dutch Mindfulness trainer came to St.Maarten to offer the advanced MBCT Mindfulness advanced training program. This training was the final part of the professional training traject organized by APAP. The participants from the basic MBCT training had the opportunity to expand their Mindfulness traineeship to an advanced level by following the intense 16 days full time program. The sessions were organized at the location of combined practice of InterVision Practice / PCTC (from two members). Eventually three members followed this training.

#### *November 2019*

In November the post doctoral training for health care psychologists started, for the first time ever, in Bonaire. Although APAP is not directly involved, it did provide the platform for persons to contact each other who were involved in organizing or now participating and hence worthwhile to mention here. The training has been initiated by the Mental Health Caribbean (MHC) in collaboration with RINO Zuid (accredited training institute from the Netherlands). We are proud to inform you that St. Maarten has two participants: Zuleima Violenus Salmon and Stephanie Haseth, two members of our association. They will do their practical part of the training at the White and Yellow Cross Care Foundation and Mental Health Foundation. It is a great opportunity for our workfield that this training is now provided for the first time in the Caribbean.

## Community activities

As part of the activities directed towards connection to the community, several activities have been scheduled for 2019. This short overview shows the variety of activities as well as the increasing connection to the different organizations on the island. With these activities APAP has been more recognized by the Government as well as the business and NGO community and the general public, both national and international.

### *Information sharing*

<p>Next level Thinking Season 2 recording</p>	<p>This radio show informed the public at large about different topics connected to Mental Healthcare. Besides being informative, the intention is to bring awareness and take mental health out of the taboo sphere. The recordings of season 2 took place as a follow up on the recording of season 1 in 2018. The airing has been postponed to 2020.</p>
<p>World Mental Health Day: Supporting Happiness Event MHF at Community Center during event + radioshow</p>	<p>APAP representatives participated in the different projects for the community. These activities were well attended and deserved lots of attention in the local media, where the topic of (accessibility) of psychological help was discussed and stimulating attention for psychological well being in general.</p>
<p>Radio Interview SZV: Me and SZV Episode 9</p>	<p>Information has been given for the public at large in the SZV radioshow by two APAP representatives about psychology and psychological well being in general and the psychological services that are offered on the island.</p>
<p>Hurricane Expo at parking lot in Town: information stand</p>	<p>Representatives of APAP assisted the public at large with information during the Hurricane Expo for the second time that was organised by the government of St. Maarten. Information was provided at an information stand, where flyers were given about stress management, psychological recovery after a disaster and how to psychologically prepare for a disaster. Connections were also made during this expo with other organisations in the field, like Unicef and Red Cross.</p>
<p>Attendance International Conference on Disaster Medicine &amp; Hurricane Resilience AUC</p>	<p>APAP representatives took part in the conference, while exchanging professional experiences and networking.</p>

### *Services*

This year the Mindful Community Project has started. In September 2019 the first pair of trainers started with a group of 20 persons. This has been made possible with the support of the National Disaster Fund. A training has been designed, based on Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, for the community at large to support in a group intervention to deal with stress. The training is designed for persons who are at risk due to heightened stress or experienced problems in the past, and are selected by the psychologists of APAP in collaboration with the general practitioners who have been informed of this initiative by the association. It is planned to run until April 2020 with 6 groups of 20 participants in total at different locations on the island, executed by several trained members. The first experiences have been very positive. The outreach of this Mindfulness program goes further than the personal experiences of the actual participants. From the first feedback we noticed that participants report effects noticed at their work and their family situation, while experiencing less stress.

### **Professional interest psychologists**

#### *Private Practices representation*

SZV contract private practices	In connection to the negotiations with the private practices, the finalizing and signing of the work contracts with SZV took place in the summer months of 2019. There are 4 APAP members that signed a contract.
Presentation at other insurance companies (Nagico, Ennia)	In further follow up of improving the position and reimbursement for members with private practices, Nagico and Ennia, as large private insurance companies, were approached as part of the process to inform them of the tariff adjustments and discussing improvement of work procedures.
presentation SZV & VSA adjustments tariffs	A presentation has taken place targeting the adjustments of tariffs and requirements to be able to receive psychotherapy covered by insurance.

#### *Involvement platform 'Extramural healthcare providers'*

Several meetings have taken place with other associations of paramedical professions. We collaborated so that we can make a bigger stand in important issues towards government, insurance companies etc. and send out one clear message. The main issue that has been discussed in 2019 is with low tariffs and payment problems of OZR-clients by the main insurance company on the island. Several letters have been sent to the insurance company and government to address these issues.

The matter of Turnover Tax has also been addressed by this platform. The psychologists are still the only health care professionals that are not mentioned in the law to be exempted from this. Lobbying started to get this changed in 2018 and continued in 2019. A reaction from the tax office was received: a law amendment should be made. A letter has been sent about this to the government with so far no clear answer as yet.

## **Member and Board Matters**

### *Changes in memberships*

We have said goodbye to three active participating members who left the island(s), namely Henriette Schreurs (who was also a board member), Honey Sheridan and Whitney Frimpong. We welcomed Alexandra van Luijken as a new board member during this year. There have been several persons who showed interest in becoming a member, even attended several meetings or activities but this did not finalize in becoming formal members in this year.

### *Membership categories adjustments*

The board proposed to add a new category of membership. This new category is called 'student membership'. This is meant for people who are still studying. Their membership contribution will be a bit lower and has been added to the description of the memberships on the website after discussing this in the member meeting of February 2019. The name of extraordinary members has also been adjusted to associate members, bylaws have been started to be drafted to have all these adjustments described in one place. Also concerning the task description of the board member functions initiatives have started this year to get this more clarified by documenting them.

### *Intervision meetings*

Brainstorming has taken place to set up more focused meetings for intervision. Topics that have been discussed are: clinical therapy, professional integrity/ ethical practice, research activities, (diagnostic) assessments. A 'broad' meeting was preferred 2 times a year, about a topic that can be for everyone and 2 times a year a small/specific meeting focused on clinical topics (you need to have client contact to participate in these groups). Sanne Gruijters became the coordinator of the intervision activities.

## 4 | Vision for 2020

For APAP 2019 has been a successful year. Besides the many training opportunities for its members, the power of unity as one association has been translated in focus for the private practice practitioners. For 2020 the seeds of negotiation with large private insurance companies as well as the SZV are on the agenda. Hereby the contracts with specific focus on the criteria to be able to receive psychological help, clear quality indicators for professionals with consideration of international differences translated to the local situation as well as the tariffs are topics of attention. The involvement and the unity of the different members of APAP offers a common ground in order to bring these concerns forward as one and can be transformed in agreements and clarity with all insurance companies and/or clients. *In 2020 the re-negotiation with SZV is planned again.* The goal is to continue with these matters, not only towards the insurance company but also in contact with the government, for example concerning the matter related to turnover tax. We also hope to be able to continue to lobby and advocate for the attention for mental health for the people on St. Maarten and being able to have sufficient resources for this. We will try to get in contact with the Ministry of Public Health, Social Development and Labor (**VSA**) again concerning the Manpower planning, since this was not clearly defined for psychologists in the last year.

For the first months of the year 2020 the last training for the Mindful Community Project approach is planned and will be rounded off in *April 2020*. As projected, between 100 – 130 persons from the St.Maarten community then will have participated in a mindfulness program. This expanding influence and connection to the community of St.Maarten is hoped to be continued on all areas of action of APAP for 2020, by joining activities again like the hurricane expo and the airing of the radioshow ‘Next Level Thinking’ - season 2 that has been recorded in 2019 and publishing the document ‘Psychological Recovery after Hurricanes Irma and Maria September 2017 on St. Maarten- Insights, Information and Experiences from the field’ as part of our project funded by the National Disaster fund (NRF).

With the rounding off of the training projects and the successful participation of different members for different parts and levels of all training, the projects with NRF and VWS are planned to be rounded off by *April-May 2020*. The plan is to communicate the upgrades in training and skills of the members via (social) media and to continue the learning experience with intervision and supervision activities and investing in literature resources.

*“She stood in the storm and when the wind did not blow her way, she adjusted her sails.”*  
— Elizabeth Edwards