

Ad-Hoc COMMITTEE ON PSYCHOLOGY AND AIDS (COPA)  
ANNUAL REPORT 2006

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2006 Committee Members:

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The mission of the Committee on Psychology and AIDS (COPA) is to guide the development and implementation of the American Psychological Association's organizational response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Members of COPA carry out this mission each year by attending two, face-to-face meetings held in conjunction with the spring and fall consolidated board and committee meetings and by participating in monthly, one-hour conference calls. Additionally, members of COPA regularly communicate with AIDS Office staff and each other by e-mail and phone in order to plan and implement the committee's various initiatives.

In 2006, COPA's membership was diverse in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Most importantly, its membership mirrored the HIV/AIDS case's distribution in the United States in 2005, the last year for which data are available. During calendar year 2005 in the United States, racial and ethnic minorities comprise 68.4% of the HIV/AIDS case reported in the 33 states with HIV name reporting, while 72% of COPA' members were racial/ethnic minorities. Almost 43% (42.9%) of the members were gay men and 2 of the 3 gay men were racial and ethnic minorities. More specifically, the racial/ethnic distribution of COPA's membership was as follows: two African-American females, two Latinos and one Latina, one Caucasian woman, and two Caucasian men. In terms of sexual orientation, 4 were openly gay or lesbian. The committee participated in the diversity and sensitivity training offered during the Spring's consolidated meeting.

During the past year, COPA performed a variety of consultative functions and also developed and implemented numerous projects. These consultations and projects are briefly summarized below in terms of general areas of COPA's mission:

**1. Provide Direction and Oversight for Policy and Advocacy Activities Related to HIV/AIDS:**

COPA members held periodic meetings with Public Policy Office (PPO) staff to receive updates on important legislative issues and to provide direction to PPO about HIV/AIDS policy issues. Dr. Karen Chen took the lead in working with COPA and provided updates for members during monthly conference calls. COPA members provided written and oral feedback to the staff of PPO on policy initiatives associated with HIV/AIDS. During the past year, members of COPA, in collaboration with AIDS Office and Public Policy Office staff, have engaged in the following advocacy activities:

- A. **Advocacy on behalf of the Ryan White CARE Act.**  
 COPA continued advocacy activities to support re-authorization of the Ryan White Care Act during the past year emphasizing the importance of delineating mental health and substance abuse treatment as core services in the proposed language of the bill. COPA members continued to work with PPO office and members of other committees to ensure that mental health and substance abuse services were included as core services in the reauthorization language of the Ryan White CARE Act. In addition, COPA members wrote letters to their congressional representatives to strongly endorse this expanded definition.
- B. **Coordinated Advocacy Campaign and Hill Visits.**  
 On September 28, PI-PPO hosted the first PI-wide advocacy training for representatives of all seven PI Committees. Drs. Soto and Gore-Felton participated in this training. After the training Drs. Soto and Gore-Felton, along with the other participants at the training met with offices of their House members to advocate for legislation of vital importance to psychology. The bills included the Older Americans Act/Positive Aging Act, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Modernization Act, the Child and Media Research Advancement Act, and the Lifespan Respite Care Act. Drs. Soto and Gore-Felton met respectively with members of the staff of Rahm Emanuel and Zoe Lofgren. During the congressional meetings, emphasis was placed on establishing relationships with Congressional staff and the reauthorization of the Ryan White Care. In a remarkable stroke of good fortune, the first two pieces of legislation were passed by the House that afternoon. Several participants including Dr. Soto were even invited to the House gallery by their Representatives to witness this momentous, long-awaited occasion.
- C. **CDC's Revised Recommendations for HIV Testing of Adults, Adolescents, and Pregnant Women in Health Care Settings.**  
 COPA reviewed CDC's revised guidelines for HIV testing in health care settings. Several concerns were raised including: 1) eliminating a separate informed consent for HIV testing could result in people being tested without their knowledge; 2) reducing emphasis on providing HIV prevention counseling represented a missed opportunity to provide essential information to people at risk; 3) increased emphasis on testing is leading to the "medicalization" of the response to the epidemic and a declining commitment to proven behavioral approaches; and 4) more testing is likely to result in more people being diagnosed in an era of declining resources. In response, COPA is considering sending an APA delegation to CDC to express these concerns.
- D. **Integrating HIV testing into mental health and substance abuse delivery systems.**  
 COPA continues to support and participate in advocacy efforts to support the integration of HIV testing in mental health and substance abuse delivery systems.

**2. Advise APA Staff and Establish Liaisons with Governance Groups and Organizations Outside of APA Regarding HIV/AIDS Issues:**

- A. Cross-Cutting Issues

COPA provided written feedback to APA governance boards and committees in response to the following items placed on the Cross-Cutting Agenda during the spring and fall consolidated board and committee meetings:

1. Multicultural Leadership Workshop: Follow-Up Activity. In response to the issues discussed at the workshop, COPA adopted the following norms:
  - Create time within the committee meetings to process unconscious biases, including exclusion and diversity issues; and,
  - Examine the plans/actions we develop through the lens of biases to ensure the needs of the communities and constituents we serve are met with particular consideration for factors that typically do not get as much attention as the dominant diversity factors (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity) such as disabilities, religion, socioeconomic status, and age to name but a few.

Although COPA is currently a very diverse committee with respect to gender, race, age, language, and sexual orientation, members acknowledged the ongoing challenge of retaining diverse membership and thus decided to adopt the following specific guidelines in selecting future committee members:

- a. Expand “Call for Nomination” requests to include the following:
  1. The 12 Ethnic Minority Associations (National Level)
  2. Emerging Scholars Program
  3. Minority Fellowship Program and its applicants
  4. Psychology programs at HBCUs
  5. Committee member’s networks
  6. National conferences and conventions
  7. Add diversity issues to COPA’s mission statement

The revised mission statement will be used as a tool to orient new members to the normative culture of creating time and space to discuss unconscious biases that may occur during meetings

2. Request for Updates on Diversity Plans and Recommendations for Enhancing Multicultural/Diversity Capabilities. During the Fall Consolidated meeting Dr. Gore-Felton represented COPA at the conference committee where the representatives from all committees discussed their diversity plans and the progress that had been made towards implementing these plans. In addition, Dr. Gore-Felton drafted COPA’s recommendation to the APA Committee on Structure and Function of Council for enhancing multicultural/diversity capabilities.
3. Resolution on Religious, Religion-Based, and/or Religion-Derived Prejudice. Dr. Soto attended the conference committee representing COPA’s position and raised a number of concerns regarding the resolution. COPA’s comments about the resolution were as follows:
  - a. COPA believes the substitute motion was an improvement over the main motion;
  - b. COPA was concerned that the resolution overemphasized the term “religion” and thus the broader term “spirituality” was offered as an alternative;

- c. COPA thinks it is important for the resolution to point out that religion is sometimes used to stigmatize people living with chronic illnesses, including HIV/AIDS;
- d. COPA noted that the resolution does not articulate the implications of religious discrimination for psychological practice, research, and education; and,
- e. COPA recommended that the substantial body of research on spirituality and end-of-life care should inform the resolution.

#### B. Consultation with Office on AIDS staff

COPA provided feedback to APA staff regarding the ongoing activities of two federally-funded training and technical assistance programs administered through the Office on AIDS (i.e., the HOPE Program, funded by the Center for Mental Health Services; and, the BSSV Program funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

#### C. Psychology and AIDS Exchange

COPA members assisted Office on AIDS staff in providing HIV/AIDS updates for the field through its newsletter entitled, *The Psychology and AIDS Exchange*. This publication provides APA members and others with breaking developments in HIV/AIDS practice, research, education, and policy. During the past year, COPA members took the lead in developing two theme-based editions: (1) an edition on internet-based HIV prevention interventions under the direction of Dr. Parsons and (2) an edition on men and heterosexual risk behaviors under the direction of Dr. Bowleg.

#### D. HIV/AIDS Programming at the APA Convention

COPA has worked closely with APA divisions to enhance the diversity and scope of HIV/AIDS programs and COPA's visibility at the 2007 APA convention. COPA developed and submitted 4 symposia for consideration at the convention on the following topics: (1) International Issues; (2) Internet and HIV; (3) HIV and Incarcerated Populations; and (4) Invited addresses by the recipients of the COPA leadership awards.

### **3. Formulate New APA Initiatives and Policies to Meet the Continually Changing Challenges Posed by the Epidemic.**

#### A. Developing and Effective Organizational Response to Address International HIV/AIDS Issues

During the past decade the federal response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic has been expanded to include increased emphasis on HIV/AIDS as a global issue particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa where HIV prevalence in some countries exceed 50%. COPA shares this concern and has prioritized HIV in Africa as part of its agenda. In keeping with this emphasis, COPA's call for nomination has included expertise in international AIDS issues with particular emphasis on Africa. In 2006, Dr. Janet St. Lawrence joined COPA bringing to the committee this much needed expertise. To address this priority, COPA submitted an item for BAPPI's consideration at the November 3-5, 2006 meeting requesting funds to support the development of an international HIV/AIDS training. BAPPI supported the idea of developing international HIV/AIDS training partnerships with national psychological association but they declined to support the request for funds without further documentation that national psychological associations and other relevant partners are interested in collaborating and recognize a need to do so.

Dr. Anderson of the APA Office on AIDS, in consultation with Dr. St. Lawrence, is currently exploring potential training collaborations with the Kenya Psychological Association (KPsyA) And the Society for Women and AIDS in Africa (SWAA) ( <http://www.swaainternational.org/> ).

COPA and the APA Office on AIDS organized and sponsored a presentation by psychologist and APA member Dr. Sandra Lewis at the UN's 2006 World AIDS Day celebration in New York City. Dr. Lewis, a professor at Montclair State University who also works at the University Medical and Dental School of New Jersey's Francois Xavier Bagnoud Children's HIV/AIDS Center, participated in a symposium entitled, *The Impact of HIV and AIDS on Children and Families*. Dr Lewis described best practice approaches to treating the mind and body of children affected by HIV and AIDS and ways in which to involve the whole family.

Given that the global HIV/AIDS epidemic has heightened attention to the marginalized status of many women in the developing world, COPA and staff of the Office on AIDS worked with Deanna Chitayat, the APA UN representative designated to take the lead with HIV/AIDS issues, to develop a proposal for an educational symposium to be held in conjunction with the Fifty-First Meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women which will occur from February 26 – March 9, 2007. The proposed symposium entitled, *Violence and Discrimination Against Women and Girls Related to HIV and AIDS*, will provide participants with an overview of scientific findings related to the link between violence toward women and girls and HIV/AIDS. It will also provide participants with an overview of best practices of HIV prevention for women and girls and how these practices incorporate strategies for addressing deeply rooted gender imbalances that contribute to violence and HIV risk. This symposium will be co-sponsored by APA and SWAA.

COPA submitted a memo to the Committee on International Relations in Psychology (CIRP) which provided: (1) a rationale for working on HIV/AIDS-related issues through the United Nations (UN), (2) proposed goals for that work, a summary of recent HIV/AIDS-related activities associated with APA UN representatives, (3) proposed objectives for the future, and (4) a recommendation to appoint Mark Winiarski, Ph.D., as an Associate Representative to the APA UN delegation to advise on HIV/AIDS-related issues. CIRP approved the proposed goals and planned activities as well as the appointment of Dr. Winarski.

#### **4. Improve Psychology Education in the Area of HIV/AIDS and Educate Psychologists and Society at-Large About the Roles Psychologists Can Play in the HIV/AIDS Epidemic**

##### **A. Educational Pipeline for Ethnic Minority Researchers**

Members of COPA have been working on strategies to promote and enhance the educational pipeline for minority HIV/AIDS researchers. At the Fall 2005 consolidated meeting David M. Stoff, Ph.D., Chief of the HIV/AIDS Neuropsychiatry Program at the Center for Mental Health Research on AIDS at the National Institute of Mental Health meet with COPA and recommended that APA submit an application to train minority researchers in HIV/AIDS using the Research Education Grant (R25) mechanism. In response, COPA drafted a concept paper outlining a proposed program and which was submitted it to Dr. Stoff for review and feedback. In March 2006, Drs. Fernandez and Anderson met with Dr. Stoff to receive feedback on the initial concept paper. Dr. Stoff informed Drs. Fernandez and Anderson that an RFP would be issued in the summer of 2006, and recommended that COPA follow the guidance in the RFA to submit this application.

When the RFP was issued, COPA reviewed the RFP and re-worked the proposal to meet with the guidelines outlined in the RFP. Drs. Fernandez, Parsons and Anderson, developed a draft of the training program which was submitted for COPA's review. They also drafted an outline for rest of the narrative and identified a series of questions and issues, whose responses were essential to APA's application. These questions were submitted to Dr. Stoff for guidance. Because the response to these questions were not received in sufficient time for COPA to prepare a quality response to the RFP, the committee decided to post-pone submission for the next application receipt date, September 17, 2007. COPA has continued to work on this proposal and has developed a survey to query and identify potential mentors and mentees whose results would yield much needed preliminary data in support of the proposal application.

Dr. Lula Beatty, Chief of the Special Populations Office of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), is working with COPA and the Office on AIDS to develop a training workshop to train minority researchers who are interested in doing work in the area of HIV/AIDS. This workshop will occur in conjunction with a national NIDA-sponsored HIV/AIDS conference entitled, *Drug Abuse and Risky Behaviors: The Evolving Dynamics of HIV/AIDS*, to be held May 8-9, 2007. Recruitment announcements will be disseminated through a broad array of APA communication channels. Dr. Beatty is also working with COPA and the Office on AIDS to develop a web-based resource for students interested in pursuing a career in HIV/AIDS research.

#### B. APA Convention

Members of COPA and staff of the APA Office on AIDS developed three symposium proposals for presentation at the 2007 APA Convention. These symposia focused on international HIV/AIDS issues, HIV/AIDS issues among incarcerated populations, and internet-based approaches to HIV/AIDS prevention.