

## **Resolution on the Americans with Disabilities Act**

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Adopted by the APA Council of Representatives, February 2008

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WHEREAS there are nearly 1 in 5 U.S. residents (or 49.7 million people) with at least one disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000);

WHEREAS the population of people with disabilities is increasing among all age groups (Field & Jette, 2007);

WHEREAS census data, national polls, and other studies have documented that people with disabilities are more likely to be severely disadvantaged socially, vocationally, economically, and educationally (ADA, 1990);

WHEREAS persons with disabilities are often denied access to services, and are denied appropriate accommodations and resources to fully participate in education and training programs, employment, and the political process (e.g., Hauser, Maxwell-McCaw, Leigh, & Gutman, 2000; Roessler, & Sumner, 1997);

WHEREAS psychological research has shown that a variety of psychological and sociological mechanisms jeopardize relationships between people with and without disabilities, increasing the likelihood of prejudice against individuals with disabilities, along with stereotyping, stigmatization, psychological discomfort, avoidance, and patronization (e.g., Banks & Kaschak, 2003; Fine & Asch, 1988; Katz, Hass, & Bailey, 1988; Longmore & Umansky, 2001; Wright, 1988);

WHEREAS psychological research has been able to demonstrate significant deleterious health and mental health effects for victims of discrimination (e.g., Markowitz, 1998; Wahl, 1999; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000);

WHEREAS some persons with disability also experience oppression due to their racial/ethnic identity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or gender expression (transgender, transsexual);

WHEREAS it is essential for psychologists to understand how stereotypical and stigmatizing language, attitudes, and behaviors can demean and devalue people with disabilities and have an adverse impact on self concept, self esteem, self efficacy, and relationships with others;

WHEREAS the American Psychological Association (APA) has endorsed a set of Ethical Principles for Psychologists that recognize the dignity and worth of all people, including their right to self-determination, and the duty of psychologists to safeguard the welfare and rights of those with whom they interact professionally and other affected persons (APA, 2002);

WHEREAS over the past several years, the APA, through legislative efforts, has affirmed its opposition to discrimination and stereotyping based on age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, and ethnicity;

WHEREAS the APA through education and training has contributed to increasing awareness of discrimination and stereotyping based on age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, and ethnicity;

WHEREAS the APA was instrumental in the development and passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 – a landmark piece of civil rights legislation;

WHEREAS Congress, in enacting the ADA, recognized that persons with mental and physical disabilities have a history of being subjected to unequal treatment, and that the nation's goals regarding individuals with disabilities are to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency (ADA, 1990);

WHEREAS Congress, in enacting the ADA, intentionally provided a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities in addition to defining a central role for the federal government in enforcing the standards of the ADA on behalf of individuals with disabilities (ADA, 1990);

WHEREAS Congress, in enacting the ADA, recognized the critical need to address the unnecessary institutionalization of individuals with disabilities and concluded that failure to serve such individuals in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs is a form of discrimination (*Olmstead v. L.C.*, 1999); and

WHEREAS despite the great strides that people with disabilities have made with the benefit of the ADA, barriers remain.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT

The American Psychological Association (APA) reaffirms its opposition to discrimination based on disability status, and promotes full implementation of the ADA;

The APA vigilantly seeks to ameliorate adverse mental health effects of discrimination against people with visible and invisible disabilities;

The APA encourages the reduction of stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities through education and training;

The APA supports the use of services, supports, and environments that are least restrictive, most integrating, and most effective in allowing people with mental and physical disabilities to participate in their communities;

The APA pursues activities at the federal level and with its state psychological associations, and in international contexts where appropriate to ensure that the spirit and founding provisions of the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are maintained, implemented, and enforced.

References

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