

PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Legislative Update

by Lori Valencia-Greene, APA Public Policy Office

APA's Public Interest Policy staff coordinated with the Surgeon General's Office to arrange for the official release of the Surgeon General's report, *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity - A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*, on August 26 at the APA Convention in San Francisco. The Surgeon General's Office specifically requested a plenary session at the APA Convention in recognition of the major contributions of a number of APA members to the development of the report. Most notably, the report's science editor, **Jeanne Miranda, PhD** (UCLA), and three of the four chapter contributors, **Steven Lopez, PhD** (UCLA), **Lonnie Snowden, PhD** (Berkeley), and **Stanley Sue, PhD** (UC Davis), are all APA members.

Following a major public interest policy outreach effort to the APA membership through Listservs, fliers, meeting announcements, and Web postings, over 700 members attended the standing room-only program. The presenters included **U. S. Surgeon General David Satcher, MD, PhD**, the Deputy Surgeon General, along with CM HS Director **Bernie Arons, MD**, APA President **Norine Johnson, PhD**, APA Executive Director for Public Interest, **Henry Tomes, PhD**, and an ethnically diverse panel of service providers and recipients, including APA member **Lillian Comas-Diaz, PhD** (Transcultural Mental Health Institute, Washington, D.C.). Public Interest Policy will work closely with the Surgeon General's Office and CMHS to implement the recommendations of the report to increase the availability and utilization of culturally appropriate mental health services for ethnic minorities.

Public Interest Policy staff have also been actively involved in arranging for APA members to be presenters at various programs sponsored by the **Congressional Black Caucus (CBC)**. On September 24, **Rhonda Boyd, PhD** (University of Pennsylvania), discussed the impact of postpartum depression on a panel entitled, "Postpartum Depression and the African American Mother: It Ain't Just Baby Blues." This presentation was sponsored by Rep. Bob by Rush (D -IL), as part of the CBC's 31st Annual Legislative Conference.

A key focus of Public Interest Policy's efforts has been to secure additional funding from SAMHSA for the **Minority Fellowship Program (MFP)**. Public Interest Policy staff have been working closely with staff of Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) to expand the MFP to include a new PPO-developed program that would encourage minority mental health professionals to pursue careers serving children and adolescents. The FY 2002 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill includes \$43 million more than the President had requested for SAMHSA programs of regional and national significance. Public Interest Policy staff are hopeful that this increase will provide enhanced support for the MFP.

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Racial profiling, the practice of targeting people for police examination based on their race or ethnicity, continued to receive attention during the 107th Congress. The End Racial Profiling Act of 2001 sponsored by Representative John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI) and Senators Russ Feingold (D-WI), Jon Corzine (D-NJ), and Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) was introduced but not considered during this session of Congress. This legislation aims to: (a) concretely define racial profiling and declare it illegal; (b) give victims of racial profiling the ability to sue police departments that have violated their rights; (c) allow the Attorney General to mandate data collection by federal and state law enforcement agencies on any police "stops," including those by police departments and immigration and customs agents; (d) provide grants to police departments to establish data collection and other management programs; and (e) require the Attorney General to report the results of the data collection studies. Public Interest Policy staff are collaborating with national police and civil rights organizations and with APA Division 45 (the Society for the Psychological Study of Ethnic Minority Issues), which along with APA's Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs, sponsored APA's resolution on racial profiling, to organize support for this important legislation.

In addition, Public Interest Policy staff collaborated with staff of the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) to review upcoming police policy to eliminate racially biased policing. Public Interest Policy staff continue to work with APA's Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA) and the Committee on Urban Initiatives (CUI) on issues pertaining to the racial profiling resolution and other law enforcement activities.

The Indian Health Service (IHS) provides health care, including mental health and substance abuse services to American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN). There is a great need for suicide prevention services, given that suicide is the second leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year-old American Indians and Alaska Natives. More specifically, the suicide rate for this age group is nearly triple that for all races (i.e., 31.7 versus 13.0 per 100,000). Public Interest Policy staff continue to work with members of Congress and the Friends of Indian Health to secure additional funding to support effective suicide prevention programs in AI/AN country.

In the FY 2002 appropriations bill, there are reallocations for Indian health professions of \$50,000 each for the "Indians into Psychology (InPsych) program at the University of North Dakota and the University of Montana. Legislation to re-authorize the Indian Health Care Improvement Act was introduced last year, and PPO staff have been providing assistance to the Senate Indian Affairs Committee on sections pertaining to the Behavioral Health Programs.

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These programs include prevention and intervention programs for Indian women and youth, along with treatment and prevention programs for fetal alcohol syndrome. Though the Committee held hearings on the bill (S. 212), no further action was taken.