



AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

February 6, 2009

The Honorable Richard Durbin  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

On behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA), I am pleased to express our strong support for the *Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act*.

As you may know, APA is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. APA's membership includes more than 148,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through our 53 professional divisions of psychology and affiliations with 59 state, territorial, and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession, and as a means of promoting health, education, and human welfare.

The *Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act* allows for the critically needed provision of direct services to students on college campuses. APA is especially pleased that funds under the "Grants to Improve Mental and Behavioral Health on College Campus" program can be used to provide mental and behavioral health services to students; outreach services; educate families; employ appropriately trained staff; expand mental health training through internship, post-doctorate, and residency programs; develop and support evidence-based and emerging best practices; and evaluate and disseminate best-practices. We also strongly support the establishment of both a National Public Education Campaign and an Interagency Working Group on College Mental Health, as they will raise awareness and foster discussion about this important population.

We believe the issue of mental and behavioral health on college campuses merits attention and investment by the federal government. As noted in a new report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the rates of seriously psychologically distressed (SPD) persons was highest among the 18- to 25-year-olds (17.9%). This age group was also far less likely to receive mental health services (29.4%). The serious and growing mental and behavioral health needs among college students within this age group pose a significant impediment to their success in post-secondary education.

The 2007 American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment reported that many of the factors affecting individual academic performance are mental

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or behavioral in nature. They include stress (32.9%), depression/anxiety (15.5%), relationship problems (15.5%), and alcohol use (6.6%). Given this level of need, college counseling centers are overburdened. According to the 2007 Survey of College Counseling Center Directors, 95% of directors reported that the recent trend toward greater numbers of students with severe psychological problems continues to be in evidence on their campuses; 64.2% of directors noted that staff shortages during peak times was a concern.

In closing, we appreciate your leadership on this issue of significant importance to the current and future health and strength of our nation. We also welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff to ensure that the *Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act* is enacted into law. Please have your staff contact Jenny Smulson of our Education Government Relations Office at [jmulson@apa.org](mailto:jmulson@apa.org) or 202.336.5945, if we can be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "L. Michael Honaker".

L. Michael Honaker, Ph.D.  
Deputy Chief Executive Officer