

February 2025 Council Meeting Highlights

APA's Council of Representatives held a hybrid meeting Feb. 21-22, with in-person Council members convening in Washington, D.C.

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APA's Continued Commitment to Justice, Human Rights, Fairness and Dignity

Acknowledging concern raised by recent policy changes, the Council voted (156-4 with 1 abstention) to adopt a statement reaffirming APA's commitment to justice, human rights, fairness, and dignity for all, recognizing these values as central to psychology.

The statement recognizes that research shows that discrimination and systemic barriers contribute to health disparities and harm mental health among marginalized populations. It also notes that psychologists are integral to addressing systemic inequities and creating inclusive systems and that "psychologists engaged in these efforts are at the forefront of combating disparities and advocating for historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities."

It also calls on legislators to support programs promoting fairness and inclusion; to promote culturally responsive mental health services; to prioritize grants and research initiatives that focus on addressing mental health disparities faced by underserved and marginalized communities; to safeguard the role of psychology in public policy; and increase public awareness and education on inclusivity in psychology.

Protecting psychological test data

The Council passed (150-14 with 1 abstention) a resolution calling for securing psychological test data. Such data includes tests used in psychological assessments, evaluations in child custody disputes and competency to stand trial, identification of educational disabilities or qualification for educational programs, fitness for duty and presurgical evaluations.

"The focus of this resolution is to establish policy on APA's position and role in protecting the validity of psychological testing so that public safety is upheld and access to services for marginalized communities is bolstered," the resolution states. It was developed to address legal proceedings in which psychologists have been pressured to divulge test materials and data, at times contrary to the policies of APA and state laws that protect test security.

Calling for Stronger Privacy Protections for Neural and Cognitive Data

Recognizing the increasing use of devices that collect and analyze personal biometric data, the Council adopted a policy aimed at safeguarding the privacy of people's neural and cognitive data.

The *Resolution on the Protection of Neural and Cognitive Data*, which was approved unanimously, addresses the need for ethical collection, storage and use of data gathered from direct-to-consumer software and wearable devices. These technologies, ranging from smartwatches to virtual reality systems and eye gaze technology, are capable of collecting biometric and neurophysiological data that can provide insights into an individual's mental state, cognitive processes, and even attitudes and thoughts. Though this technology has enormous potential to benefit humanity, the resolution highlights the

sensitive nature of such data, which could be used as markers for mental health diagnoses or workplace performance.

The resolution reaffirms people's right to mental privacy, including protection against uninformed collection and potential misuse of biometric and neural information. It also calls for the development of comprehensive mental privacy legislation.

Council Policy Manual: Revisions to Doctoral and Master's Degrees

The Council passed two motions to approve revisions to policies to better align APA's efforts to support and integrate master's degree psychology professionals into the profession. These revisions aim to protect the title "psychologist" and who can use it (doctoral-trained professionals) while creating opportunities for master's-trained psychology professionals to provide psychological services.

The Council voted 133-24 with 5 abstentions to accept revisions to "Doctorate as the Minimum Entry into the Professional Practice of Psychology" (2006) and voted 126-34 with 7 abstentions to accept revisions to "Policy on Challenges to the Doctoral Standard for Psychology" (2002).

Advancing Population Health and Health Equity

The Council unanimously adopted as APA policy a statement elevating APA's ongoing work to advance population health and health equity. The policy statement, entitled "Advancing Evidence-Based Prevention Across the Lifespan," acknowledges the social determinants of health and urges support for prevention and early intervention, as well as training and research in health promotion and the promotion of community-based and community-led programs. It also calls on payors to allow reimbursement of health care practitioners for addressing social and structural determinants of health and implementing interventions to advance population health.

Guidelines Adopted on PTSD, Measurement-Based Care and Practice in Health Care Delivery Systems

The Council adopted three sets of guidelines:

- The Council voted 142-12 with 4 abstentions to adopt revised *Clinical Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Adults*, with an expiration date of December 2035. The guideline addresses the efficacy of treatments, as well as the comparative effectiveness of approaches for treatment of PTSD and complex PTSD in adults. It is an update to the original clinical practice guideline for PTSD in adults issued in 2017.
- The Council unanimously adopted the first ever *Professional Practice Guidelines on Measurement-Based Care*. These guidelines aim to educate psychologists on competencies for conducting measurement-based care, "a clinical process in which data are used to monitor treatment progress and processes to enhance communication and inform treatment planning during the provision of psychological intervention." MBS is an evidence-based practice that has been shown to improve symptom outcomes and reduce treatment dropout.
- The Council unanimously adopted revised *Guidelines for Psychological Practice in Health Care Delivery Systems*, with an expiration date of December 2035. These guidelines note the expanding role of psychologists as an integral part of interdisciplinary teams in health care systems in the U.S. and offer recommendations on how to practice psychology in evolving health care delivery systems.