

Council Passes Resolutions Reaffirming, Updating Some Past Policies

WASHINGTON – The Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association adopted updated resolutions regarding LGBTQ issues and reiterated its positions on violent video games and climate change at its meeting Feb. 29-March 1.

Council archived three outdated policies related to LGBTQ issues and replaced them with new versions that also address interventions, programs and societal changes that have come into being since the original resolutions were passed.

“It was important that APA bring these resolutions into line with the latest research because these are areas that are of great interest to psychology,” said APA President Sandra L. Shullman, PhD. “Public attitudes toward LGBTQ people have evolved swiftly in the last several years as well, resulting in legal changes that needed to be reflected in the association’s positions.”

The Resolution on Supporting Sexual/Gender Diverse Children and Adolescents in Schools includes updated references and addresses the issue of restricting bathrooms for transgender children. This resolution also updates definitions of gender diversity, intersex and differences of sex development. It replaces a similar resolution that was passed in 2015.

The Resolution on Supporting Sexual/Gender Diverse Children and Adolescents in Schools was also reviewed by the National Association of School Psychologists, which has committed to adopt the same resolution. It is intended to guide APA and NASP public education efforts promoting safe and supportive schools for all children and adolescents, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Resolution on Opposing Discriminatory Laws, Policies and Practices Aimed at LGBTQ+ Persons replaces a 2007 resolution (Opposing Discriminatory Legislation and Initiatives Aimed at Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Persons). The new resolution uses more inclusive, updated language and takes into account changes in the laws and legislation affecting LGBTQ+ people since 2007 — including the legal right to same-sex marriage. The intentions of the original resolution are still relevant, and many have been preserved.

The Resolution on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Parents and Their Children replaces a 2004 resolution to include data on transgender parents and include more recent research on gay fathers and bisexual parents.

Council also received a task force report on violent video games that found there is insufficient scientific evidence to support a causal link between violent video games and violent behavior.

Council seated the task force to review its August 2015 resolution in light of many occasions in which members of the media or policymakers have cited that resolution as evidence that violent video games are the cause of violent behavior, including mass shootings.

“Violence is a complex social problem that likely stems from many factors that warrant attention from researchers, policymakers and the public,” Shullman said. “Attributing violence to video gaming is not scientifically sound and draws attention away from other factors, such as a history of violence, which we know from the research is a major predictor of future violence.”

The 2015 resolution was updated by the Council with this caution. Based on a review of the current literature, the new task force report reaffirms that there is a small, reliable association between violent video game use and aggressive outcomes, such as yelling and pushing. However, these research findings are difficult to extend to more violent outcomes. These findings mirror those of an APA literature review conducted in 2015.

Council also reaffirmed its assertion that psychologists have a key role to play in addressing climate change and treating the mental health effects that arise from changes to the planet's weather patterns, according to a resolution adopted March 1.

The resolution reaffirms the organization's 2011 policy on the issue and commits the organization to working with other scientific, professional, policy and community organizations in the U.S. and around the world.

"The natural disasters that we are experiencing are associated with a number of mental health problems, including anxiety and depression," Shullman said. "As experts in human behavior, psychologists must be in the forefront of devising strategies to change the actions — by individuals, corporations and governments — that lead to climate change."

The resolution notes that recent research on the psychological dimensions of climate change — including research on beliefs, attitudes and communications about climate change and studies of behavioral change related to energy use and conservation — can guide new actions to mitigate and promote human adaptation to climate change.

"Building on such work, APA can further address the climate change crisis by promoting and sponsoring advances in research, interventions, services, education and training, public policy and advocacy, group and community organization, and other domains in which psychologists work," the resolution states. "All areas of psychology have valuable knowledge and experience to contribute to this effort."

The resolution also calls for APA's president to create a task force of leading experts to review APA's past and current activities related to climate change and recommend goals and strategies that will have an impact on the climate change crisis.

In other business, the Council voted to adopt the Education and Training Guidelines for Psychological Assessment in Health Service Psychology as policy. The guidelines address the didactic and supervised experience students receive in psychological assessment, providing recommendations for faculty and supervisors about practices associated with quality education and training in psychological assessment. Use of the guidelines will promote learning opportunities for students that will develop their competence in psychological assessment, a core competency in health service psychology.

Council also approved Association Rules amendments to continue to delegate certain duties to the Board of Directors. Specifically:

- Duties related to the evaluation and reconfirmation of the CEO will remain with the Board. (Council will continue to confirm the Board of Directors selection any new CEO.)
- Decision-making related to the budget and financial matters will remain with the Board.

Additionally, recommendations by the Board of Directors, Finance Committee and Membership Board for dues increases will be submitted to Council for approval.

Draft minutes from the February 28-March 1, 2020 Council meeting can be found on the [APA webpage](#).