

APA Council of Representatives Meeting Overview

February 25 & 26, 2022

The Council of Representatives received a comprehensive audit of current anti-racism activities by APA, including policies, practices and procedures aimed at stemming racial inequities and promoting equity, diversity and inclusion. This was the next step in a process detailed in a resolution Council passed in October that accompanied an apology for past racist actions and omissions by APA and the discipline of psychology.

“We are trying to do something the association has not done before,” APA President Frank C. Worrell, PhD, said in introducing the audit. “Eradicating racism is not an easy thing ... so this will take a lot of hard dialogues.”

APA CEO Arthur C. Evans Jr., PhD, noted that APA is engaged in a wide array of racial equity activities but until now, they had not been coordinated. “Our members and our leaders want us to have impact, not just activity,” he said. “This is an organizational commitment that we’ve made.”

The audit opens the door to the next phase of APA’s work in this area: creation of a roadmap of prioritized actions aimed at dismantling racism. Those proposed actions will be presented to the Council in August, as directed in the resolution passed in October 2021.

Other key actions during the Council’s meeting Feb. 25-26 included accepting a report by the Task Force on Climate Change; adopting new standards for the teaching of high school psychology; adopting a policy on population health; reaffirming APA’s support for women’s health, including the right to legal abortion; and eliminating a question on the association’s membership application regarding whether an applicant has been convicted of a felony.

Ukraine

In response to the escalating situation in Ukraine, the Council quickly drafted and passed a motion voicing solidarity with the National Psychological Association of Ukraine, the Ukrainian people, and colleagues in the Eastern European region, as the Ukrainian nation defended itself against military invasion. The vote was 167-0, with one abstention.

Climate Change

The Council received the report of the APA Task Force on Climate Change, “Addressing the Climate Crisis: An Action Plan for Psychologists.” The report calls on the discipline of psychology to strengthen its capacity to address climate change and collaborate with other fields and sectors for maximal impact. The report was received by a vote of 155-6 with one abstention.

Reproductive Rights

The Council adopted a *Resolution for Reproductive Justice: Affirming Abortion Access*, committing the association to continuing to work for and support reproductive justice. This includes helping to preserve the right to legal abortion and supporting equal access to affordable contraception, comprehensive sex education, and freedom from sexual violence for women and child-bearing individuals, with particular emphasis on those from marginalized groups. The measure passed by a vote of 145-14 with five abstentions.

Population Health

The Council voted 154-6 with three abstentions to pass a policy regarding psychology's role in advancing population health. The measure calls for working within and across diverse systems to advance population health, which focuses on improving the health, health equity, safety, and well-being of entire populations, including individuals within those populations. The policy also advocates for working upstream by promoting prevention and early intervention strategies. It also urges psychologists to enlist and educate a diverse array of community partners.

High School Psychology Standards

The Council voted unanimously to adopt revised *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula*, with an increased focus on the scientific underpinnings of the field and the importance of incorporating diversity into understanding mental health. The revised standards promote the scientific nature of psychology by making scientific inquiry and research methods the foundation for content cutting across all units in high school psychology courses, including biological bases for behavior, cognition, development and learning, social and personality, and physical and mental health.

Interrogation of Criminal Suspects

The Council adopted, by a vote of 160-1 with one abstention, an updated resolution regarding the interrogation of criminal suspects. The new measure will strengthen APA's standing as an authoritative voice for psychology by providing more up-to-date scientific evidence on this topic, especially in light of issues related to false confessions.

Poverty and Socioeconomic Status

In recognition of later research into these issues, the Council voted to archive a policy from 2000 and adopt a new resolution recommitting APA to advocate for culturally sensitive and inclusive research that examines the causes and impact of poverty across the lifespan, including structural racism, economic disparities, and related intersectional issues. The new policy was adopted by a vote of 162-0 with two abstentions.

Changes to Membership Policy and Procedures

The Council voted to remove the question on the APA membership form asking if applicants have been convicted of a felony. Proponents of removing the question argued that it was discriminatory, deterred otherwise qualified people from joining the association and needlessly stalled the process of becoming a member. The policy change passed by a vote of 157- 9, with two abstentions.

The Council passed a motion to request APA membership to vote to amend the APA Bylaws to update the mission of the Membership Board and related amendments to the Association Rules.

Additionally, the Council voted to request APA membership vote to amend the APA Bylaws to allow associate members voting privileges after one year of associate membership.

Guidelines Adopted as APA policy

The Council voted unanimously to adopt revised *Guidelines for Assessment and Intervention with Persons with Disabilities*.

The Council also adopted *Guidelines for Child Custody Evaluations in Family Law Proceedings*, which promote ethically informed practice in disputes over decision making, parenting time, and access to children when relationships dissolve. The vote was 162-1 with four abstentions.

The Council adopted revised *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in the Care and Use of Nonhuman Animals in Research*, which are widely used in the education and training of psychological scientists. The guidelines passed by a vote of 163-0 with one abstention.

And the Council adopted revised *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct of Behavioral Projects Involving Human Participants by High School Students* by a vote of 147-9 with six abstentions.