

APA Council of Representatives Overview

A summary of highlights from the October 29 and 30, 2021 Council meeting

The APA Council of Representatives October 2021 meeting marked a historic moment for the association and field of psychology when the Council passed resolutions apologizing for APA's and psychology's roles in contributing to systemic racism, committing to long-term efforts to dismantle racism and advance health equity.

The Council also adopted several guidelines pertaining to professional practice and approved amendments to the Association Rules establishing lifetime term limits to Council.

In addition, the Council passed a motion to support the CDC's addition of mental health conditions to its list of underlying medical conditions that increase the risk of illness or mortality from COVID-19.

APA Apology for Longstanding Contributions to Systemic Racism

The Council voted unanimously to adopt an [apology](#) for APA's role—and the role of the discipline of psychology—in contributing to systemic racism. The apology acknowledges that APA “failed in its role leading the discipline of psychology, was complicit in contributing to systemic inequities, and hurt many through racism, racial discrimination, and denigration of people of color, thereby falling short on its mission to benefit society and improve lives.” The resolution also acknowledges that the association should have apologized sooner. “APA, and many in psychology, have long considered such an apology, but failed to accept responsibility,” the resolution says.

The Council also adopted two accompanying resolutions, one delineating APA's and psychology's role going forward in [dismantling systemic racism](#) and the other pledging to work to [advance health equity in psychology](#). The former directs APA's CEO to develop a long-term plan to prioritize, operationalize and ensure accountability for achieving real action toward the goals identified in the resolutions. This plan is to be presented to the Council by its meeting in August 2022.

The three resolutions were accompanied by a [chronology of the long history of psychology's and APA's harms to communities of color](#), which served as a resource to inform APA's work on the apology and the path forward. These resolutions also build on [Harnessing Psychology to Combat Racism: Adopting a Uniform Definition and Understanding \(PDF, 95KB\)](#), passed by Council in February 2021.

Supporting CDC guidance

Council approved a motion to support the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's October 21, 2021, guidance to add “mental health conditions” to its list of “underlying medical conditions that are directly related to increased risk of severe illness or mortality from COVID-19.” The motion passed 160-1.

Guidelines adopted as APA policy

Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Military Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families with December 31, 2030, as the expiration date. The purpose of these guidelines is to “provide recommendations for psychologists who provide services to SMVF outside of Veterans Health Administration or U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) facilities.” In addition, these guidelines aim to

“highlight the main issues that are unique to this particular population that would not necessarily also be of consideration in the civilian population.”

Guidelines for Optimal Use of Social Media in Professional Psychology Practice with December 31, 2030, as the expiration date. These guidelines are designed, “to educate psychologists and provide a framework for making decisions regarding optimal social media use in professional psychological practice. They were developed as a companion document to the *APA Guidelines for the Practice of Telepsychology* (APA, 2013) which serve to educate and guide psychologists on aspects of health service provision using telecommunications technology, often referred to as *telepsychology*. Health services offered through *telepsychology* occur in a very different context than social media which are, by definition, accessible to the public. Therefore, efforts have been made throughout this document to distinguish the optimal use of social media by psychologists from the practice of telepsychology.”

New Journal: Educational Psychology for Policy and Practice

Council approved the creation of a new Division 15 journal, *Educational Psychology for Policy and Practice*. The new journal’s purpose is to advance educational psychological science in the public sphere as well as to inform educational policy and practice and to serve as a peer reviewed outlet for scholarship.

Renewals and extensions

Council approved the continued recognition of counseling psychology as a specialty in professional psychology for a period of seven years, a one-year extension of both the recognition of sleep psychology as a specialty in professional psychology and clinical psychology as a specialty in professional psychology.

Student Learning Outcomes for Introductory Psychology

Council adopted the *Student Learning Outcomes for Introductory Psychology* as APA policy and approved December 2031 as the expiration date. The APA Introductory Psychology Initiative created a set of proposed outcomes as part of its effort to transform the introductory course to meet the needs of 21st century education.

Council Effectiveness and Operations

Lifetime Term Limits for APA Council of Representatives

Council approved amendments to the Association Rules to establish a twelve-year lifetime term limit for service on the Council of Representative by a vote of 100-64, with one abstention. An exemption may be requested by a Division, State/Provincial/Territorial Psychological Association or Ethnic Psychological Association when the entity is unable to find two candidates who do not exceed the twelve-year term limit requirement and will have only one seat on Council during the year in which the member would serve, if elected. The twelve-year term limit does not include service on the Board of Directors, nor does it extend term limits to service on APA boards and committees. This amendment does not affect the current requirement that a Council member who has six consecutive years shall not be eligible for a term on Council for a period of one year.

New Task Force to Oversee Recommendations and Proposals of the Council Effectiveness Work Group

Council also adopted a resolution to establish a task force to oversee recommendations and proposals related to the September 2021 Council Effectiveness Work Group Report, and a separate task force to evaluate the Council Leadership Team. The resolution is intended to advance the operating principles of APA's strategic plan by helping to build a stronger association through greater collaboration and alignment of APA resources and increasing organizational effectiveness. Next steps involve a call for nominations for each of the task forces who will be selected by the APA president. The resolution passed by a vote of 140 to 15, with nine abstentions.

Ombuds Assigned to Council

Council approved a measure (by a vote of 127-20, with one abstention) to appoint at least one and up to three ombuds to work with individuals and groups within Council to assist in resolving conflicts, problematic issues or concerns. The ombud(s) shall be appointed for a three-year term by the Council Leadership Team chair, in consultation with CLT members. Much like the parliamentarian, the ombuds will not be members of Council.

Presidential Citations and Awards

APA President Jennifer F. Kelly, PhD, ABPP, honored several psychologists and psychology societies with Presidential Citations and awards for outstanding contributions to the field. Psychologists Geoffrey M. Reed, PhD, and Jessica Henderson Daniel, PhD, 2018 president of APA, were presented with the APA 2021 Award for Outstanding Lifetime Contributions to Psychology. Antonio E. Puente, PhD, 2017 president of APA, received the 2021 Raymond D. Fowler Award for Outstanding Member Contributions. Presidential Citations were presented to Germaine Awad, PhD, Joseph Patrick Gone, PhD, Kisha B. Holden, PhD, the Society of Indian Psychologists, and past participants of the Ethics Committee /Ethnic Psychological Associations' Joint Ethics Initiative.