MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

8 WAYS TO ADVOCATE FOR PSYCHOLOGY

PLUS:
APA’s Advocacy Priorities for 2018
It’s been a discordant year for many Americans. According to APA’s 2017 Stress in America survey, some 63 percent of Americans report that they feel distressed over the future of the country, citing specific worries about social divisiveness, the state of health care and the government’s trustworthiness.

The good news: Americans are doing something about it. Fifty-nine percent said they had taken civic action in the past year, such as volunteering and signing petitions. Want to take a stand for causes that are important to you and to the field of psychology? Here are eight ways to get started. By Tori DeAngelis
8 Ways to Advocate for Psychology

Sign up for APA alerts. APA’s Federal Action Network issues action alerts when Congress is considering issues of importance to psychology. To receive email reminders, which will guide you to call or email members of Congress at critical moments, visit http://advocate.apa.org. The alerts provide key messages to deliver, or you can personalize messages to share your knowledge of how an issue may affect your state or district.

Think locally. Make sure that the issues you bring to your member of Congress are important in his or her state or district. And consider meeting your elected officials on their home turf, says Karen Studwell, JD, APA’s associate executive director for the Education Government Relations Office. “They’ll be easier to reach in their district offices than in Washington, and they’ll have more time to spend with you,” she says.

Tap staff, too. Cultivate relationships with congressional staff—they can be your biggest allies, says APA Senior Policy Advisor Ellen Garrison, PhD. “They serve as the eyes and ears of their members, who often rely on them heavily for recommendations on legislative matters,” she says.

Stay engaged. A common obstacle to getting involved in advocacy is the belief that your efforts won’t make a difference. Override that reaction by taking small steps. Start with an email or phone call, and work up to bigger things. Once you start, you’ll probably be hooked. Studwell says: “When people see that their actions have an impact, it motivates them.”

TAKE IT TO YOUR LAWMAKERS

CONNECTING WITH YOUR LAWMAKERS may seem daunting, but an important part of these officials’ jobs is making themselves accessible to constituents. On APA’s new advocacy website (www.apa.org/advocacy/index.aspx), you can find out who your members of Congress and state and local officials are, how to connect with them and what policy issues are most important to them. APA advocacy experts offer these additional tips to help maximize your impact:

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HILL STREET STUDIOS/BETTY MAH/GETTY IMAGES
VOLUNTEER FOR A CAUSE OR A CANDIDATE

Volunteering is a great way to dip your toe into the political process. If you wonder whether volunteers can really make a difference, look no further than the 2017 Democratic victories in the Virginia State Assembly. Analysts and advocacy organizations including Emily’s List credited the Democrats’ success in large part to the unprecedented number of volunteers who mobilized to help get out the vote.

Volunteerism takes many forms. It can be as short term as joining a one-day event such as the Women’s March, or as extensive as working for the length of a candidate’s campaign. And many find it highly rewarding. “Volunteering for a political campaign is very different from what psychologists typically do,” says Garrison. “You’re working with a whole network of people who share your values and interests. You’re branching out into new territory and getting new experience. And you are personally involved in making a difference.”

Use your expertise. Depending on your circumstances, you can also offer psychological services as a volunteer, Garrison adds. If appropriate, practicing psychologists might provide stress-management strategies to campaign staff, for example. Or, industrial-organizational psychologists might help candidates set up their offices, choose staff and reward their employees’ good performance.

Funding for veterans’ mental health care and the need for research on how environmental problems affect children’s mental health are the top priorities for Flores, an associate professor at The City University of New York.

To champion these causes and many others, she helps to review legislation for APA, advocates for psychology on Capitol Hill and serves as an APA representative to the United Nations, to name a few of her efforts.

On the local level, as part of the Bay Ridge Democrats, she meets regularly with her district representative to advocate for the needs of her community. Flores also joins her church in sending letters to Congress on social justice issues and teaches her students about the importance of political involvement.

Her credo? “We always say that we don’t have a voice and we can’t impact things,” Flores says, “but in fact we can.”
8 Ways to Advocate for Psychology

THE FELLOW

CHRISTIN M. OGLE, PhD

Puts science to work in building violence-prevention programs

As an APA Executive Branch Science Fellow from 2016 to 2017, Ogle served in the violence and victimization research division of the National Institute of Justice in the U.S. Department of Justice. She saw this as a golden opportunity to share her psychological knowledge and to help inform federal projects related to these issues.

Ogle provided expertise and support for several initiatives, including a large multisite research and evaluation project—partially funded by the Violence Against Women Act—that tested interventions designed to prevent domestic violence deaths. The experience broadened her perspective on what her training can offer. “The fellowship deepened my understanding of how to develop innovative solutions to social problems,” she says, “and of how scientists can collaborate with policymakers and practitioners to promote health and advance social justice.”

RUN FOR OFFICE

3

Psychologists’ strong analytical and communication skills, as well as their commitment to the public, make them prime candidates for public office, says Rep. Alan Lowenthal, PhD (D-Calif.), one of two psychologists in the U.S. Congress. When interacting with constituents, he draws heavily upon his professional experience listening to and empowering community members as a psychologist. “Building relationships—a skill critical in psychology—plays an important part in my work in Washington,” Lowenthal says. Such skills transfer well to any public office at the national, state or local level.

PUBLISH AN OP-ED

4

If writing is your forte, consider penning an op-ed for a newspaper or an online forum. Follow these strategies for the best chance to get your editorial published:

- Connect your article to current news events.
- Tailor the article to the community you are writing for. If you are writing for a national audience, make sure the op-ed has broad appeal.
- Write in engaging, jargon-free language.
- Consider a range of outlets—including top-tier publications such as The New York Times, your local newspaper, news websites including The Huffington Post or magazines such as Time.
- Read the publication you are targeting to understand its style, and be sure to determine the publication’s word-length restrictions.
- Finally, ask a layperson to critique your article to ensure that it’s accessible to the general public. If it passes inspection, send it to the editor.
5 RAISE YOUR VOICE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

AT A TOWN HALL MEETING in 2015, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush made the mistake of disparaging the importance of psychology degrees, saying that students with such liberal arts degrees would have limited career options.

In response, former APA Board of Directors member Ali Mattu, PhD, a cognitive-behavioral therapist and assistant professor at Columbia University Medical Center, launched #ThisPsychMajor, a Twitter campaign featuring early career psychologists who spelled out what their education had allowed them to do, such as helping people overcome debilitating anxiety and counseling young people against suicide.

Mattu, who also hosts a YouTube series called “The Psych Show,” is just one of the psychologists using social media to advance the field’s messages, says Alicia Aebersold, chief communications officer at APA.

“Social media outreach like Dr. Mattu’s Twitter campaign allows you to gather with others who believe what you believe and raise your collective voice—exactly what you need for effective advocacy,” she says.

Harness the power of personality. If you are interested in using these tools, Aebersold recommends developing a distinctive voice and using social media to reinforce your perspective—in who you follow or connect with, and in what you share.

“These media take away old-school gatekeepers and put the power in your hands,” says Aebersold. “And, they’re free and easy to learn—worthy tools for your advocacy toolbox.”
SUPPORT ADVOCACY BY YOUR STUDENTS

Psychology faculty have a tremendous opportunity to advance key psychological issues by mobilizing their students. They can, for example:

Help the community. One way to fuel such advocacy is to make community involvement an integral part of undergraduate coursework, known as “engaged scholarship.” In APA’s new book, “Making Research Matter: A Psychologist’s Guide to Public Engagement” (2017), Jamie Franco-Zamudio, PhD, and Regina Langhout, PhD, advise that faculty seek out organizations whose work relates to their students’ coursework and that have the capacity to supervise students. Ideally, such projects should contribute to student learning as well as benefit the host organization—for example, having students help develop psychology curricula for local high schools or conduct surveys for community health organizations to help improve their services.

Mobilize the students. Some psychologists help students get organized and support their activism campaigns. Lisa Flores, PhD, who directs the counseling psychology program at the University of Missouri, backed students who protested racial injustice on their campus in 2015 by providing opportunities to share their concerns in small group forums and at larger town hall meetings.

Faculty can also urge their students to subscribe to APA’s Federal Action Network, and to take advantage of the advocacy tool kit of the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students at www.apa.org/apags/resources/advocacy.

McQuaid has played an extensive and influential role serving the mental health needs of our nation’s veterans, receiving the 2015 APA Presidential Citation for that work and now serving as associate chief of staff for mental health at the San Francisco VA Health Care System.

He also advocates for veterans’ mental health issues as part of the Association of VA Psychologist Leaders, which meets yearly with APA’s advocacy team for a Capitol Hill briefing and visit. The team has helped to inform legislation related to VA psychologists’ pay, care for veterans in the community and funding for VA research.

It’s gratifying telling members of Congress about the ways that psychologists’ work helps to improve the lives of veterans, says McQuaid: “I go in with the goal of giving lawmakers the information they need to make healthy, effective decisions for their constituents,” he says. “It’s a great starting point.”
SERVE AS AN APA FELLOW

FOR A DIRECT HAND in shaping national policy, apply for one of APA’s fellowships, which enable psychologists to work with Congress or in an executive branch agency.

Through APA’s Congressional Fellowships, psychologists work with members of Congress or congressional committees. Specialty fellowships include the Catherine Acuff Fellowship for midcareer and senior psychologists; the William A. Bailey Health and Behavior Fellowship for psychologists with backgrounds in health disparities, HIV/AIDS or LGBT health; and the Jacqueline Goldman Congressional Fellowship, funded by the American Psychological Foundation and geared toward developmental or clinical psychologists who work with children.

In addition, APA’s Executive Branch Science Fellowships for psychological researchers offer opportunities to shape science policy in federal agencies.

For more information, visit www.apa.org/advocacy/index.aspx#fellowships.

BECOME A CITIZEN PSYCHOLOGIST

8 PSYCHOLOGISTS, by nature, seek to serve the public good. That’s why so many volunteer for causes such as the American Red Cross, serve on school boards and local committees, and otherwise lend their expertise beyond their everyday careers. APA President Jessica Henderson Daniel, PhD—who dubs these psychologists “Citizen Psychologists”—has made it a presidential priority to quantify and honor such work and to develop training resources to help guide such efforts.

“My dream is that the APA Citizen Psychologist concept will be infused into the discipline through education at all levels—from high school to lifelong learning,” says Daniel. “It is important to me that this concept of service to the public good endures as an integral part of APAs future.”

Through the project, Daniel will:

- Gather data on the roles psychologists are engaged in as Citizen Psychologists and use that information to show how the field advances society beyond the confines of their offices. To take the survey, go to http://bit.ly/apacpsurvey.
- Develop educational materials to help teach psychologists and psychology students across the life span about the ways they can serve as successful APA Citizen Psychologists.
- Recognize Citizen Psychologist leaders through APA presidential citations.

For more information about the Citizen Psychologist initiative, go to www.apa.org/about/governance/citizen-psychologist/default.aspx.
8 Ways to Advocate for Psychology

APA’S ADVOCACY PRIORITIES FOR 2018
Health-care reform, immigration, the opioid epidemic, funding for education and research, and development of the psychology workforce top the list.

With its more than 115,000 members and dedicated advocacy staff, APA is the largest and most visible national group advocating for psychology. The association speaks out on a wide range of issues, but only pursues issues for which psychology has recognized expertise and that are consistent with APA’s mission to advance psychology as a science and profession, and as a means of promoting health, education and human welfare. In addition, APA prioritizes issues that are supported by its governance groups, as well as issues in which psychology’s role is an important factor in advancing a legislative goal.

Health-care Reform
Health-care reform, and the critical role that psychologists play in health care, has been an APA advocacy priority for decades. The association’s most recent efforts have centered on safeguarding the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA), which increased access to health insurance for 32 million Americans.

Increasing access. The law expanded Medicaid and established health insurance exchanges, which offer consumers comprehensive coverage and financial assistance with their premiums and cost-sharing obligations, such as copays and deductibles. The ACA also requires insurance plans to cover mental health and substance use disorder services, including behavioral health treatment, and extends mental health parity to small group and individual market plans.

Due in part to strong advocacy by APA and the APA Practice Organization (APAPO), the ACA also opened up new opportunities for psychologists in the private health-care system and in public health programs, and prohibited insurers from denying coverage or increasing premium rates due to pre-existing conditions.

Protecting patients. During 2017, psychologists voiced strong opposition to every new proposal by Congress and the Trump administration to repeal or dilute the ACA’s protections, destabilize its insurance markets, and eliminate or detrimentally alter Medicaid for millions of Americans. APA and APAPO joined together to issue more than 25 Action Alerts and Information Updates about the ACA. Our members rose to the occasion each time, sending almost 60,000 messages to Congress, urging them to preserve the law.

Government relations staff for both APA and APAPO led the charge on multiple responses. This advocacy included opposing President Trump’s executive order on association health plans and short-term insurance plans as well as on the president’s decision to halt cost-sharing reduction payments. In addition, APA spoke out on a variety of legislative efforts, such as the American Health Care Act, the Better Care Reconciliation Act, the Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson proposal, and the “skinny” repeal.

Moving forward. APA strongly supports bipartisan efforts to stabilize the nation’s health insurance marketplaces, lower costs to consumers and expand access to mental health care. APA and APAPO will continue to monitor and engage members to support psychologists’ interests on these and other key health-reform issues.

For more information, go to www.apa.org/advocacy/health/affordable-care.aspx.

Immigration Reform
President Trump has vowed to build a wall along the Mexico-U.S. border, issued a travel ban affecting six predominantly
Muslim countries, as well as North Korea and Venezuela, ended the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and initiated many other anti-immigrant policies. APA has a long history of advocating for immigration policies that keep families together and discourage deportation. The Trump administration’s actions have intensified these efforts.

**Mental health risks.** Research has found that threats to immigrants and their families have significant psychological impacts and are linked to increased risks of overall health problems. Sustained or sudden separation of parents and children due to deportation is particularly damaging. The trauma that results from this experience often leads children to experience ongoing difficulty trusting adults and institutions, and places them at risk for housing and food insecurity as well as post-traumatic stress disorder, among other adverse effects.

**APA action.** The association hosted a congressional briefing on the Dream Act of 2017 and sent a letter to Congress in support of the legislation, which would provide a path to citizenship for undocumented youth and young adults who were brought to the United States illegally as children.

Both the letter and the briefing informed Congress about the latest research on the mental health risks of separating families. In addition, APA has issued statements calling on President Trump to protect DACA and sent letters to then-Secretary of Homeland Security John F. Kelly opposing the separation of families at the border. APA also spearheads an immigration working group in which psychologists collaborate with policy experts to strategize on sound immigration policy.

APA works to inform and mobilize the public and members about the importance of DACA as well. In December, then-APA President Antonio E. Puente, PhD, of the University of North Carolina Wilmington, published an op-ed in *USA Today* in support of the Dream Act.

And, in January, APA sent an Action Alert to its members, urging them to write to members of Congress to advocate for the Dream Act. At press time, APA members had sent more than 250 letters. APA will continue to advocate for the DACA program until it becomes law.


### OPIOD EPIDEMIC

In 2017, President Trump declared the opioid epidemic a public health emergency. Some 91 Americans die each day from opioid overdose, according to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the number of youths entering the child welfare system is increasing due to opioid use among parents.

This public health crisis has been driven largely by the overuse and overprescribing of opioids for pain management. The number of prescription opioids sold to pharmacies, hospitals and physicians’ offices nearly quadrupled from 1999 to 2010. The number of deaths due to opioid overdose has also quadrupled since 1999, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**A starting place.** In November, the President’s Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis issued a comprehensive list of recommendations for preventing and treating opioid addiction. While APA applauded this much-needed effort, it is only a first step. Congress has yet to provide dedicated funding to implement these recommendations.

**Urgent needs.** APA is urging Congress and the administration to take the following actions to address the opioid crisis:

- Launch a public service campaign about the dangers of opioids.
- Fund research into and promote nonpharmacological alternatives for pain management by mental health professionals.
- Decriminalize opioid use and establish federal drug courts that focus on treatment and rehabilitation over incarceration for nonviolent offenders.
- Allow governments to negotiate lower prices for naloxone, the life-saving drug that can counteract the effects of overdose.
- Increase funding for research on effective treatments by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and for substance use prevention and treatment services at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- Improve training on evidence-based addiction treatment.
- Ramp up enforcement of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, a federal law that requires insurance providers to cover substance use disorders at the same level as physical conditions.
- Provide additional funding for mental health counseling in schools and other social service systems that are seeing an increased need for services due to this epidemic.

FUNDING FOR RESEARCH

Federal funding is the lifeblood of psychological science. Agencies including the NIH, National Science Foundation (NSF) and Institute of Education Sciences (IES) support research by a broad variety of scientific disciplines, including psychology, in service of their missions to improve health, expand basic scientific knowledge, and improve education, respectively. Research funding in the aggregate is higher than it was after substantial cuts in 2013 (NIH lost $1 billion that year). However, the spending caps adopted as part of the Budget Control Act of 2011 will reduce overall spending each year through 2021.

APA's priority. APA advocacy is focused on increasing the overall budgets for research funding, with a specific focus on boosting funding for the behavioral and social sciences. To amplify its message, APA participates in broad funding coalitions, including the Coalition for National Science Funding (to increase the NSF budget), the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research (focused on NIH), the Coalition for Health Funding (focused on all Public Health Service agencies), and the Friends of IES (focused on education research). In addition, APA signs joint letters to members of Congress, meets with congressional staff and members, engages association members via Action Alerts and participates in joint social media events designed to help move Congress toward APA’s funding goals.

What's ahead. Among other priorities, APA is calling for Congress to:

- Support significant, sustained increases in FY 2018 appropriations for the research budgets of the NIH, CDC, NSF, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Justice and Department of Education.
- Oppose cuts to NSF’s Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences.
- End sequestration and take a balanced approach to deficit reduction that does not rely solely on discretionary spending cuts.
- Empower agencies to choose which scientific advisers are most appropriate and refrain from imposing partisan or ideological tests on research results.

Outlook for 2018. As the Monitor went to press in late January, the funding picture for psychological science was still unknown because the federal government was still operating on temporary funding authority (a continuing resolution). The leadership of the U.S. House and Senate must negotiate overall funding levels before they can vote on any appropriations bills.

For more information and to get involved, go to www.apa.org/advocacy/federal-funding/index.aspx.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

As health care in the United States continues to embrace integrated primary care, the next generation of psychologists must be prepared to work in these settings. There is also a dire need for more psychologists to treat high-need, underserved communities.

To help meet these demands, APA has worked to establish and support federal programs that expand access to care and provide critical training for psychologists and graduate students—particularly the Graduate Psychology Education (GPE) Program and the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) Program.

Critical funding. While the association has made significant progress in increasing funding for these programs, more work is needed. GPE currently supports 31 grants that provide training for psychology practicum students, interns and postdocs who work to address the behavioral health needs of vulnerable populations, including older adults, children, ethnic-minority populations and veterans. The program, established in 2002 after years of advocacy by APA, is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services’ Health Resources and Services Administration. Because of APA's efforts, the program has grown from $2.7 million in FY 2013 to $8.9 million in FY 2017. For next year, APA has requested an increase to $10 million.

APA also fought to secure funding for the BHWET Program, which was formally authorized as part of the 21st Century Cures Act of 2016. The program—which supports 12 disciplines, including psychology—seeks to develop the behavioral health workforce by supporting interdisciplinary training for students, graduate students, faculty and field supervisors. APA's successful advocacy efforts resulted in two important expansions of the program: eligibility for doctoral programs in health service psychology and targeting patients across the life span instead of including only youths. These changes led to an increase in grant funding from $875,000 in 2014 to more than $5 million across 21 programs supporting doctoral psychology training in 2017.

Ongoing threats. Despite a shortage of psychologists in many at-risk communities, these programs may be
targeted for elimination by the Trump administration. To find out how you can help keep this funding intact, go to http://cqrcengage.com/apapolicy/edgro.

PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS

Today’s psychology graduate students and early career psychologists have an average of $110,000 in student loan debt—financial pressure that can keep many graduates from pursuing lower-paying public service careers.

To help address this problem, the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program offers debt relief for psychology students and others who commit to working in government or the nonprofit sector for 10 years. These careers may include working in public health, serving veterans or providing behavioral health services to communities in need.

Preserving the PSLF Program is one of APA’s top priorities. Legislation passed in December by the Committee on Education and the Workforce in the U.S. House of Representatives—called the PROSPER Act—would eliminate the PSLF Program for new borrowers if Congress passes the legislation.

The PSLF Program is also facing challenges from the U.S. Department of Education, which announced last year that it may stop providing debt relief for some students—even for those who have already started training and were counting on loan forgiveness. Eliminating or changing the PSLF Program would prevent many of these students from pursuing graduate education in psychology and would jeopardize behavioral health care in communities with the most need.

Fighting for forgiveness. To protect PSLF, APA signed on to a letter—along with 35 other concerned associations—to Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, calling for her to uphold the program’s initial promise.

In addition, APA Action Alerts directed 1,700 messages to Congress opposing the elimination of this program, and the association worked independently as well as with a coalition of 50 other organizations to educate members of Congress about the value of the program. As part of that effort, APA helped secure Republican support for an amendment that would have reinstated the program. While the amendment failed, APA is building on this bipartisan demonstration to seek to reauthorize the program.

Finally, the association continues to work to maintain the accessibility and affordability of graduate study, including preserving tuition waivers and the student loan interest deduction. Learn more and sign up for action alerts at: www.apa.org/advocacy/higher-education/student-debt/loan-forgiveness.aspx. ■