

# **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**of the APA Task Force on the  
Interface Between Psychology and Global Climate Change**



**AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION**

**August 2009**



## **Encourage psychologists to become involved in understanding and responding to human and psychological dimensions of global climate change.**

- Help psychologists understand the physical science evidence and data on climate change and the relation between this information and psychological research.
- Provide materials to integrate information about climate change and, more broadly, environmental sustainability, into psychological curriculum. For instance, APA could develop videos or class demonstrations that could be integrated into undergraduate and graduate courses.
- Develop and distribute materials on global climate change for continuing education for psychologists.
- Develop materials to address therapy issues for practitioners that can be connected to actual, perceived, and anticipated consequences of global climate changes ranging from everyday stress and anxiety about climate change, to crises resulting from natural disasters.
- Prepare psychologists to assist in community based coping with the psychosocial consequence of global climate change.
- Encourage psychologists to understand and alter their own behaviors to reduce emissions in their personal lives as well as in their places of work.
- Review current divisional involvement in global climate change and more generally sustainability issues. As necessary, encourage divisional involvement in climate issues by increasing their awareness of the role that their organizations can play in this topic and, when more assistance is needed, provide suggestions and resources to help engage divisions in their efforts to be involved in these issues.
- Encourage the development of research and applied contributions to environmental issues, particularly those related to global climate change, via for instance, awards for research or applied contributions to addressing global climate change, training on new quantitative and methodological techniques to study adaptation and reduction of greenhouse gases, and supporting cross-disciplinary meetings.

- Establish a post-doctoral fellow position at APA that deals with environmental issues.
- Develop workshops at conferences and at institutes for improving methodological expertise useful for studying global climate change and interventions.
- Develop workshops at conferences and at institutes for educating students and faculty about research findings and relevant theory on the interface between psychology and global climate change.
- Provide funds to aid psychological involvement in community and governmental activities to address climate change such as funds for developing and evaluating interventions.
- Provide additional task force reports on specific aspects of the impact of climate change (e.g., changes in water supplies, migration due to climate change, changes in disease transmission) and explain how they are relevant to psychologists.
- Develop a list of programs where students might obtain a Ph.D. in psychology that contains significant work on the environment.

## **Address the American Psychological Association's environmental impacts that contribute to global climate change.**

- Develop a permanent committee on psychology and environmental sustainability to develop, monitor, and implement policy recommendations related to human-environment relations.
- Expand APA's report on its environmental practices to include an assessment of APA's energy consumption and contribution to green house gases in its buildings, transportation done by staff, and its meetings (e.g., boards, committees, task forces, council meetings). Use this report to set goals for reducing APA's contribution to greenhouse gases, for instance, setting the goal of reducing APA's contribution to green house gas 20% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 75% below 1990 levels by 2050.
- Develop ways to minimize the environmental impact of APA's production and distribution of its publications.

- When engaging in business with others, including selecting of conference centers and hotels, require businesses to provide information on their efforts to address their green house gas contributions and use the information about the most environmentally responsible businesses as a criterion in APA's selection of businesses.
- When selecting goods to purchase, buy products that minimize impact on the environment such as buying Energy Star equipment, biodegradable products, and locally grown food for events.
- The APA Ethics Committee should include discussions about the ethical implications on climate change within its discussions. This should include recognition of potential ethical duties of psychologists to address the human health impacts of environmental issues and climate change.

**Create effective outreach programs that assist the public in understanding climate change, mitigating its human causes, and adapting to climate change impacts. Facilitate international, cross-disciplinary, and trans-disciplinary collaborations that address climate change.**

- Provide materials to the general public about psychological research on climate change where we have already have good evidence and research backing it. Public education can include efforts to increase awareness of the psychosocial and community impacts of global climate change and information about the scientific basis of psychological interventions.
- Increase the availability of supportive interventions to help people overcome stress, worry, and despair regarding climate change.
- Develop a traveling demonstration on "Psychology and the Environment" targeted toward pre-college age students. Psychologists could use these materials to make presentations at schools in their area.
- Develop a database of psychologists willing to provide advice and consultation to organizations looking for assistance in efforts to respond to current and future climate change.
- Develop a list of psychologists who are willing to consult with media representatives on environmental issues.

- Use evidence-based policy to frame statements about current status of global climate change and responses to global climate change. Disseminate information broadly—from the general public to organizational bodies.
- Support psychologists' involvement in the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, as well as other related United Nations bodies (e.g., Committee on Sustainable Development).
- Add staff members to the APA Government Relations Office to address climate change issues. For instance, develop congressional briefings on psychological research related to global climate change for the federal, state, and local governments. These briefings can be important because policies to address climate change need to take psychosocial reactions into account if they are to avoid unintended negative consequences.
- Seek out ties with psychological organizations in the United States and in other countries that are addressing climate change and work on joint projects with these organizations.
- Foster connections between psychologists and those in nonpsychological fields (e.g., engineering, business, sociology, political science) and environmental organizations (e.g., World Wildlife Fund, Sierra Club) addressing climate change.
- Lobby government and other funding agencies to support psychological research on global climate change.

*These recommendations are not official American Psychological Association policy.*

*This document as well as other materials produced by the American Psychological Association Task Force on the Interface Between Psychology and Global Climate Change can be found online: <http://www.apa.org/science/about/publications/climate-change.aspx>.*