

## **From Shannon Goecke-Watson, PsyD, LP, Minnesota (MPA) Representative to APA's Council of Representatives**

Hello Fellow Minnesota Psychologists,

I would like to take a moment and introduce myself. I am Shannon Goecke-Watson, PsyD, LP, owner of SGW Psychological Services LLC, a small private practice in Eagan, MN focused on treating aftereffects of domestic and sexual violence. I was recently appointed by former MPA president, Sharon Stein McNamara, Ed.D, LP, to be the Minnesota (MPA) representative to the APA's Council of Representatives (COR). My appointment came after Talee Vang, PsyD, LP stepped down from the position to assume her new role as a member-at-large on APA's Board of Directors. I would like to thank Dr. Vang, as well as her predecessor Robin Mcleod, PhD, LP, and all previous COR predecessors for the diligent work they have done while on the COR.

I am aware that, as the Minnesota representative to the COR, I am not just representing my own beliefs and hopes for APA, but also the hopes and beliefs of all of Minnesota (MPA) psychologists. As such, I would like to have an "open door" and am inviting you to reach out to discuss any and all concerns and hopes you may have for APA. I can be contacted at 651.493.9412 or [sgwatson@sgwpsych.com](mailto:sgwatson@sgwpsych.com)

## **February 2024 APA COR Meeting Highlights**

APA's Council of Representatives held a hybrid meeting Feb. 23-24, with in-person Council members convening in Washington, D.C.

### **Calling for an End to Involuntary Individual Isolation in Incarcerated Youth**

The Council passed a resolution calling for ending the placement of youths in isolation in juvenile justice settings, except for emergencies, and then only for a maximum of a 4-hour period. "Solitary confinement should never be used for punishment or disciplinary purposes, or for the protection of property," states the resolution. "The separation of youths from others must never be a substitute for adequate staffing numbers, staff training, and supervisory and/or administrative support." The resolution passed 154-2, with 1 abstention.

This resolution calls for implementing alternative, evidence-based strategies for managing behavior and promoting positive development. It emphasizes the importance of mental health support for youth subjected to isolation. The measure includes a recommendation that federal agencies and/or state youth justice authorities keep accurate track of and publicly report the frequency, prevalence, duration, conditions and rationales for various forms of individual confinement.

### **Secure Firearms Storage**

The Council approved, by a vote of 157-6, a resolution aimed at promoting secure firearm storage practices. This resolution underscores the critical role of psychologists and health care providers in preventing suicides by advocating for secure firearm storage and safety strategies.

The measure emphasizes the effectiveness of actions such as temporary removal of access to firearms during mental health crises, highlighting research indicating that such steps can prevent suicides by creating time and distance between individuals and lethal means.

The resolution also advocates for increased funding at federal, state and local levels to support initiatives aimed at preventing suicides through secure firearms storage. And it calls on psychologists, health care professionals, policymakers and the public to support efforts to implement evidence-based strategies to prevent suicides and promote mental health and safety.

### **Policy Statement on Evidence-Based Inclusive Care for Transgender, Gender Diverse and Nonbinary Individuals**

The Council passed, by a vote of 153-9, with 1 abstention, a policy statement affirming evidence-based care for transgender, gender diverse and nonbinary children, adolescents and adults. The policy affirms APA's support for access to evidence-based clinical care for transgender, gender diverse and nonbinary children, adolescents and adults. It notes that recent legislative attempts to obstruct access to psychological and medical interventions for such individuals puts them at risk of depression, anxiety and other negative mental health outcomes.

The policy statement also addresses how misinformation can distort the characterization of gender dysphoria and gender-affirming care, leading to stigmatization, marginalization and lack of access to psychological and medical care for this population. It also highlights APA's support for insurance providers to include coverage that addresses the health care needs of this population.

### **Approval of APA/APASI Strategic Plan**

The APA/APASI strategic plan was approved by the Council by a vote of 145-5, with 6 abstentions. This updated plan features revised language that enhances specificity, aligns with current EDI strategies and highlights the importance of partnerships. It replaces the previous plan, approved in August 2019, and follows the mandate requiring Council approval every five years.

### **Parents with Disabilities**

Recognizing the biases and challenges often encountered by parents with disabilities, the Council adopted a resolution to support parents with disabilities. The policy statement calls upon psychology and policymakers to support increased psychological research, intervention, advocacy and policy development aimed at informing and shaping decisions related to parents with disabilities, and to reduce disparities and biases faced by this population. The resolution passed 158-1.

### **Combating Misinformation and Promoting Psychological Science Literacy**

The Council adopted a resolution on combating misinformation and promoting psychological science literacy. The resolution recognizes that misinformation leads to mistrust and can pose a threat to public health. It states that "to fully understand the impact of misinformation, it is necessary to understand the psychological factors that drive people to believe and share it, the

levers of manipulation used by its creators, and the network effects induced by today's media and political landscape that impact its spread.”

The policy commits APA to disseminate psychological science to address misinformation and to promote psychological science literacy. It passed 151-3.

### **Revised Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Older Adults**

The Council voted 153-0 with 4 abstentions to adopt revised Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Older Adults, with an expiration date of Dec. 31, 2034. These guidelines focus greater attention on the strengths and needs of older adults, and work to develop workforce competency in working with this population. This revision addresses the increased use of technology and telehealth for the first time.

### **Discussion of Future Meeting Options**

The Council discussed whether to hold the February meeting entirely virtually and/or to remove the hybrid option from in-person meetings, which would have a positive impact on climate change and APA resources. A nonbinding straw poll showed that neither option was popular among Council members. The Council Leadership Team agreed to study the issue further.

### **Dues Adjustment**

That Council approved a \$25 reduction in APA membership dues at years 4-6 of the dues ramp-up (\$149 to \$124) and a \$27 increase in the APA base member dues rate (\$247 to \$274).

### **Address by Dr. Miriam Delphin-Rittman**

Dr. Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, administrator of SAMHSA, outlined HHS and SAMHSA priorities and major initiatives, including progress and attention to mental health across diverse populations, building the workforce, addressing substance use disorders and suicide prevention.