

Public Interest
Government Relations Office (PI-GRO)

September 2016 Update



www.apa.org/about/gr/pi





This report, including links to additional information about our activities, is available online at www.apa.org/about/gr/pi.

COVER: Photo top left: Wizdom Hammond Powell, PhD, MPH, a member of APA's **Working Group on Health Disparities in Boys and Men**, at a congressional briefing on May 24 about the health disparities that vulnerable boys and men face. **Photo bottom left:** Minority Fellowship Program's Psychology Summer Institute participants Melany Rivera-Maldonado (*left*) and Lora J. Henderson, MEd, at the office of Sen. Cory A. Booker (D-NJ). **Photo on right:** Participants taking the online advocacy training offered by the Committee on Aging visit with their members of Congress to advocate for the Elder Justice Reauthorization Act (H.R. 988). *From left:* Catherine Escher; Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA); and Lisa Brown, PhD, ABPP.



About PI-GRO

PI-GRO actively engages in shaping federal policy to promote psychology in the public interest. As part of APA's Public Interest Directorate, the office promotes the application of psychology to the fundamental problems of human welfare and the promotion of equitable and just treatment of all segments of society. This work involves informing Congress, the White House, and federal agencies about psychological science and practice and their relevance to federal policy.

PI-GRO regularly works with APA membership to help ensure the success of its advocacy efforts and to enhance the ability of the field to advocate on key issues. PI-GRO relies on member experts to assist in the development and dissemination of educational and advocacy materials that are shared with Congress and the executive branch.

In addition, PI-GRO provides APA members and student affiliates with a variety of public policy and advocacy opportunities, including:

- Federal advocacy trainings and congressional office visits
- Congressional Fellowship Program
- Public Interest Graduate Student Policy Internship
- APA Federal Action Network

In this report you will find information about the significant achievements and efforts of PI-GRO. To learn more about PI-GRO initiatives, please visit PI-GRO's website at www.apa.org/about/gr/pi and consider joining the Federal Action Network at <http://advocate.apa.org>.

Meet Our Staff

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Empowering Members to Bring Psychology to Policymakers

PI-GRO regularly engages APA membership through advocacy trainings and congressional office visits. In the last year, PI-GRO trained 88 members and supported them on 86 congressional office visits. Trainings typically include the fundamentals of congressional processes, an advocacy primer, issue-specific presentations, role plays, and meetings with members of Congress or their staff. These opportunities focus on the association's key public policy objectives, allowing participants to make a direct impact in ongoing GRO initiatives.

ADVOCACY TRAININGS AND HILL DAYS

Committee on Aging (CONA) in-District Visits. In June, PI-GRO and the Science Government Relations Office organized a webinar training for members of CONA and colleagues, in preparation for in-district visits with members of Congress and staff during the August recess of the 114th Congress. CONA members played a key role in developing the training curriculum as well as recruiting other psychologist colleagues and students with an interest in geropsychology to help advocate for elder abuse prevention (i.e., **Elder Justice Reauthorization Act, H.R. 988**) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding.

Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) Psychology Summer Institute (PSI). In July, 15 PSI participants were trained in advocacy and met with staff members of 24 House and Senate offices. In these meetings, the fellows encouraged congressional staff to support the Senate mental health reform legislation (**S. 2680**) that authorizes funding for MFP. For the fifth year in a row, PSI activities included a day devoted to federal advocacy concerning MFP; participants used their experience and knowledge to champion the program.

Lynette Greybull speaks at APA's congressional briefing in March on Native American youth suicide prevention.



Empowering Members to Bring Psychology to Policymakers *continued from page 2*

Leadership Institute for Women in Psychology (LIWP).

For the third consecutive year, participants in APA's LIWP program undertook advocacy training and visited Capitol Hill in March. Thirty APA member advocates met with 11 congressional offices and urged their representatives to prioritize gender-responsive policies in criminal and juvenile justice reform. LIWP participants provided background on the issue to congressional staff and shared APA's fact sheets regarding gender-responsive justice and the shackling of incarcerated pregnant women.

CAPITOL HILL BRIEFINGS

Native American Suicide Prevention. APA staff organized a briefing on Capitol Hill regarding Native American youth suicide prevention in light of alarming suicide rates among young Native Americans. In March, the briefing brought together a panel of experts in the areas of mental health, trauma, and Native American culture.

The Effects of Discrimination on Immigration. Calling upon researchers and other experts in the field, PI-GRO staff organized a briefing titled "Psychology of Prejudice and Discrimination: A Scientific Perspective on Immigration," which explored the impact of discrimination and prejudice on attitudes toward immigrants. This distinguished panel provided guidance on combatting prejudice and stereotypes about immigrants.

Health Disparities Among Vulnerable Boys and Men. In May, APA partnered with the co-chairs of the Congressional Men's Health Caucus, Reps. Donald Payne Jr. (D-NJ) and Markwayne Mullin (R-OK), to host a congressional briefing on health disparities in men and boys. This briefing explored issues related to physical, mental, and behavioral health, particularly among low-SES populations and ethnic minorities.



Presenters at a March 17 congressional briefing on immigration. *Front row:* John F. Dovidio, PhD; Linda Tropp, PhD; and Gabrielle Jackson, MSW. *Back row:* APA staff members Gabe Twose, PhD, and Serena Dávila, JD.

PI-GRO Advocacy Issues and Portfolio Updates

For complete information about PI-GRO activities, please visit the office's issue-specific webpages.

AGING

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/aging/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Ben Vonachen

Healthy aging, integrated health care, suicide prevention, family caregiver support, and improving anti-poverty and community-based services

- In June, APA submitted comments on the **U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Draft Research Plan for Intimate Partner Violence and Abuse of Elderly and Vulnerable Adults**. The comments focused on applying psychological expertise and guidance to the plan's proposed analytic framework, screening guidelines, research questions, and targeted populations.
- The Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization Act of 2016 (**S. 192**) was signed into law by President Obama in April after passing through the Senate and House of Representatives. Prompted through PI-GRO's **Federal Action Network**, APA members sent messages to their members of Congress urging support for the bill's passage.

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/cyf/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Amalia Corby-Edwards

Child abuse, access to child care and preschool programs, improving mental health, juvenile justice, and violence prevention

- In July, APA joined several national and state organizations in signing on to a letter in support of **S. 3065**, the Family First Prevention Services Act.

Sponsored by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR), this bill is the Senate counterpart to **H.R. 5456**, the House bill under the same name.

- Also in July, APA joined with other leading child welfare organizations to comment on **proposed regulations** under the Every Student Succeeds Act. The comments clarified a number of concerns regarding at-risk youth, including those in foster care and those in the juvenile justice system.

CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/criminal-juvenile-justice/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Micah Haskell-Hoehl

Priority populations, disparities, human and civil rights, diversion from incarceration, and mental and behavioral health

- In June, APA provided extensive input into the Improving the Juvenile Justice System for Girls Act (**H.R. 5512**), which reflects consensus in the psychological literature on the nature and treatment of traumatic stress.
- In March, APA sent Congress recommendations for the 2017 Department of Justice budget. APA's statement stressed the need for funding to address mass incarceration, police-community relations, and the needs of individuals with mental illnesses.

ETHNIC MINORITY AFFAIRS

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/minority/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Serena Dávila

Improving health and promoting wellness, cultural competence, the Minority Fellowship Program, American Indian/Alaska Native health services, and immigration

- APA advocated for increased funding for the Indians Into Psychology Program (In Psych). This program

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promotes the study of psychology among American Indians and Alaska Native students. Initial legislative reports show that the effort led to possible increased funding in both the House and Senate.

- In April, APA and 176 other organizations sent a letter to the U.S. Attorney General expressing objections to the government practice of pursuing deportation proceedings against children—some as young as 3 years of age—who lack legal counsel.

HEALTH DISPARITIES

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/health-disparities/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Leo Rennie

Reducing health disparities in key populations, increasing access to mental and behavioral health services for these populations, and addressing the social determinants of health and federal health equity efforts

- In June, APA wrote a letter of support for **H.R. 5475**, the Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2016. The bill would guide federal efforts to eliminate health disparities stemming from race, ethnicity, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, English proficiency, and the environment.
- APA member Judith Glassgold, PsyD, presented at the 33rd Teacher's College Winter Roundtable, "Cultural Competence in the Digital World." The presentation focused on existing and future public mobile- and telehealth policies and technologies that could reduce existing health disparities and improve the behavioral and physical health of vulnerable populations.

HIV/AIDS

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/hiv/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Leo Rennie

Substance use, mental and behavioral health, stigma, and the effective application of psychology to the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS

- In March, APA joined 34 other organizations in asking the House and Senate to set robust funding levels in 2017 for global HIV/AIDS programs, including the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Global Fund, and activities at USAID.
- Also in March, APA sent a letter to President Obama, calling for sustained investments at NIH for HIV research, as well as a renewed commitment to HIV behavioral and social science research.

HUMAN RIGHTS

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/human-rights/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Gabe Twose

International violence, global human rights accountability, domestic issues such as solitary confinement, and supporting ratification of UN Conventions

- As part of APA's response to the Orlando shootings, PI-GRO contacted district offices of the Florida congressional delegation to provide APA resources to assist staff in addressing constituents' concerns. Resources included contact information for the Disaster Resource Network and the Florida Psychological Association, blog posts, and tip sheets on how to recover from traumatic events in the community.
- PI-GRO submitted a letter in support of the Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act (**S. 2551**), which would enhance U.S. capacity to prevent and mitigate mass atrocities. APA particularly praised a



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provision mandating the training of foreign service officers with the skills to recognize and prevent genocide and emphasized the social science research on early warning signs.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/disability/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Ben Vonachen

Access to health care, employment protections, stigma, international issues, parents with disabilities, elementary and secondary education

- In March, APA responded to a proposed nondiscrimination rule for a federal job training program, the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. The comments emphasized strengthening protections and accessibility requirements for individuals with disabilities, recognition of sexual orientation discrimination, and protections related to gender identity, transgender status, and pregnancy.
- Also in March, APA co-signed a letter advocating for the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which protects students with disabilities by ensuring access to a free and appropriate public education. The letter urged Congress to provide increased funding for IDEA within the FY2017 Labor–Health and Human Services–Education appropriations.

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) PERSONS

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/lgbt/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Leo Rennie, Gabe Twose

Stigma, discrimination and prejudice, hate crimes, health disparities, health data collection and research, violence, bullying prevention, and workplace rights

- In July, APA endorsed the LGBT Inclusion Act (**H.R. 5373/S. 3134**), a bill that would require uniform collection of sexual orientation and gender-identity data across federal agencies.
- In March, APA sent letters of support for the Equality Act (**H.R. 3185/S. 1858**), which seeks to amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination based on sex, sexual identity, and gender identity.

MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/health-care/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Amalia Corby-Edwards

Health care reform policy, increasing access to mental and behavioral health services, reducing stigma, and mental health parity

- APA and APAPO sent a letter to the House Energy and Commerce Committee in support of the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2015 (**H.R. 2646**). The bill aims to ease the burden on individuals with mental illness and their families and has since been passed by the House with strong bipartisan support.
- In support of the Senate mental health reform bill, the Mental Health Reform Act of 2016 (**S. 2680**), APAPO and APA held a grassroots action day, activating the **Federal Action Network** to encourage the Senate to move forward on mental health reform.

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POVERTY AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/socioeconomic/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Gabe Twose

Access to health care, education, safe and affordable housing, adequate wages, safety net programs, and employment laws

- PI-GRO argued against the Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016 (**H.R. 5003**), which would reduce children's access to nutrition programs, increase food insecurity, and harm child nutrition. APA **signed a letter** opposing the legislation and activated the **Federal Action Network**, asking APA members with representatives on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce to contact their legislators.
- In conjunction with coalition partners, APA continued its support of family-friendly workplace policies by advocating for the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act (**S. 786/H.R. 1439**). This legislation would ensure that people maintain some income following the birth of a child or during a serious health condition. The Healthy Families Act (**H.R. 932/S. 497**) would set a national standard for paid sick days.

TRAUMA, VIOLENCE, AND ABUSE

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/violence/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Amalia Corby-Edwards

Victim support, expanding the research base on violence prevention, strengthening the capacity of mental health systems to respond to violence and abuse, and supporting related federal funding

- In response to the Orlando shooting and other incidents of gun violence in the United States, in June PI-GRO activated **APA's Federal Action**

Network, calling on Congress to pass common sense measures on gun violence. Psychologists and graduate students sent over 5,000 messages to Congress asking them to require criminal background checks for all gun sales, expand data collection on gun-related deaths, and increase funding for violence prevention research.

- In May, PI-GRO spoke to SAMHSA's Safe Schools Healthy Students grantees about trauma-informed policies and programs in the recently passed **Every Student Succeeds Act (PL 114-95)** and in mental health reform. The office also represented APA at the National Summit on Youth Violence Prevention held by the Department of Justice

WOMEN'S ISSUES

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/women/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Amalia Corby-Edwards

Postpartum depression, reproductive health, prevention of violence and abuse, and equality in employment and education

- In May, PI-GRO staff moderated panels on the use of restraints on incarcerated pregnant women and the needs of justice-involved women at a "Day of Discussion" for the Healthy Beginnings Project in Richmond, VA.
- In April, APA continued to work with other organizations to ensure protections for the provider-patient relationship in decision making related to reproductive health.

Membership Opportunities

APA/APF CONGRESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM (CFP)

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/fellows>

Lead Staff: Gabe Twose

This acclaimed program, offered under the auspices of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Science and Technology Policy fellowships, offers APA members the opportunity to spend one year as a special assistant to a member of Congress or congressional committee on Capitol Hill. In addition to the general fellowship, the American Psychological Foundation-funded Jacquelin Goldman Fellowship supports developmental and child clinical psychologists in public policy. See the **CFP webpage** to learn more about this unique experience.

- At the 2016 APA convention in Denver, APA recognized CFP's 42 successful years on Capitol Hill. Events included a symposium featuring both of the 2015–2016 CFP fellows, Lindsay Gerolimos, PhD, and Manisha Gupta, PhD, as well as Matthew Johnson, PhD, fellow of the Executive Branch Science Fellowship Program.

Minority Fellowship Program's Psychology Summer Institute participants Roberto Abreau (left) and Kristin Scott in the Russell Senate Office Building.



FEDERAL ACTION NETWORK

<http://advocate.apa.org>

Lead Staff: Sarah Gioia

This grassroots advocacy network allows psychologists and students to stay up-to-date on APA's federal policy initiatives, influence federal policymakers with a unified voice on issues of importance to psychologists, and make use of simple tools to connect with and influence members of Congress. Through the Federal Action Network, users receive periodic emails alerting them to take action on the most important federal issues of the day. Recent action alerts addressed reproductive health care, criminal justice reform, federal gun violence research, mental health reform, child care, unemployment insurance, and other pressing issues.

Membership Opportunities

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- This year, members of the network sent nearly 12,000 messages to Congress! Strengthen these efforts by joining the **Federal Action Network**.

FEDERAL ADVOCACY TRAININGS AND CAPITOL HILL VISITS

Lead Staff: Ben Vonachen

PI-GRO hosts federal advocacy trainings to prepare APA members to share their expertise effectively with policymakers. These trainings include an overview of the federal legislative process, key strategies for informing and influencing policymakers, current legislative issues, and interactive exercises/role playing. Trainings often include an opportunity for members to advocate on important issues by visiting with members of Congress and their staff on Capitol Hill. For more information about specific activities, see **page 3** of this report.

PUBLIC INTEREST POLICY SCHOLARS

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/fellows/index.aspx>

Lead Staff: Ben Vonachen

This program offers doctoral students in psychology the opportunity to spend one year working on public interest issues alongside PI-GRO staff. Participants gain first-hand knowledge of the ways in which psychological science and practice can inform public policy and the roles psychologists can play in its formulation and implementation.

SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

<http://www.twitter.com/APAPublicInt>

Lead Staff: Sarah Gioia

The PI-GRO team is active and engaged on Twitter, regularly tweeting about key issues and events. Follow us at **@APAPublicInt** for updates on policy, psychology, and more.



At the Minority Fellowship Program's Psychology Summer Institute, APA PI-GRO staff member Serena Dávila, JD, describes how psychologists can use their expertise through lobbying.



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