



FROM KATHERINE B. MCGUIRE, APA CHIEF ADVOCACY OFFICER
For the Week of September 9, 2019

In this issue:

- **Setting the Record Straight on Mental Health Disorders and Gun Violence**
- **Advocating Face-to-Face for Geropsychology**
- **Demonstrating Virtual Reality Research to Lawmakers**
- **Informing Future Policies on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder**
- **Talking with Policymakers About Non-Opioid Pain Treatments**
- **Monitoring a Senate Probe into Funding of Psychedelic and Cannabis Research**

Setting the Record Straight on Mental Health Disorders and Gun Violence

APA reiterated its message to Congress that only a very small fraction of gun violence is caused by people with mental health disabilities. In a [letter](#) to Senate and House leadership, APA joined with its fellow members in the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities coalition to express concern about the wrongful scapegoating of people with mental health disabilities in the gun violence debate. The letter emphasized that any legislation that perpetuates such unfounded stereotypes will have harmful impacts on society and will not achieve the goal of significantly reducing violence.

For more information, contact Ben Vonachen at bvonachen@apa.org.

Advocating Face-to-Face for Geropsychology



Dr. Katherine King and her student, Michelle Jolson, with Rep. Joe Kennedy.

Members of APA's Div. 20 (Adult Development and Aging) took advantage of the summer recess to promote psychological science by visiting federal legislators in their district offices or by providing tours of their psychology research labs. Among the advocates were Dr. Katherine King of William James College and her student, Michelle Jolson, who met with Rep. Joe Kennedy (D-Mass.) in his district office for an in-depth discussion on mental health research and cost-effective interventions. In addition, Dr. Lisa Brown of Palo Alto University and her student, Tristan Hansell, met with Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.) in her district office to discuss how psychology can inform disaster response for older adults.

For more information, contact Pat Kobor at pkobor@apa.org.

Demonstrating Virtual Reality Research to Lawmakers

At the 2019 [Public Health Fair](#) on Capitol Hill, APA and the Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences (FABBS) showcased groundbreaking work by Dr. Jodie Plumert, which is enabling scientists to [observe](#) children and their decision-making skills in a risk-free way in virtual reality (VR) environments. Along with APA and FABBS staff, Dr. Plumert, a University of Iowa psychology professor, and her collaborator, computer scientist Dr. Joe Kearney, then met with Rep. Lucille Royal-Allard (D-Calif.)—who was among the many attendees who tried out the VR helmet and ran across a (virtual) road—and Rep. Dave Loebsack (D-Iowa) to discuss research funding.

For more information, contact Pat Kobor at pkobor@apa.org.

Informing Future Policies on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

On Sept. 12, APA staff and member [Dr. Claire Coles](#) of the Emory Neurodevelopment and Exposure Clinic discussed fetal alcohol spectrum disorder with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. The goal of the meeting was to discuss current research that can inform future policy aimed at reducing the lifelong disability and burden on children and families, particularly around prevention, identification and treatment of the disorder.

For more information, contact Geoff Mumford, PhD, at gmumford@apa.org.

Using the Best Research to Inform Telehealth Policy

As part of the [International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership](#) (IIMHL), APA and Kyle Hill, legislative director to Rep. Suzan DelBene (D-Wash.) [provided an in-depth learning experience](#) about how APA uses evidence to influence telehealth policy at the federal and state levels. Congress has relied on this evidence to write telehealth policy, such as the Mental Health Telemedicine Expansion Act (H.R. 1301), which is supported by APA. The IIMHL brings together international leaders to encourage the development of organizational and management best practices within mental health. This year, APA hosted 17 leaders on [Sept. 9–10](#) to exchange insights on ways to advance mental health.

For more information on federal telehealth advocacy, contact Laurel Stine, JD, at lstine@apa.org. For information on the IIMHL, contact Gabriel Twose, PhD, at gtowse@apa.org.

Talking with Policymakers About Non-Opioid Pain Treatments

As a member of [Voices for Non-Opioid Choices](#) (Voices), APA was invited to discuss psychologists' roles in pain management during a roundtable by Rep. Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio) and the Good Samaritan Hospital in Cincinnati. APA, along with Ohio Psychological Association Chief Executive Officer Michael O. Ranney, MPA, and pain management expert Dr. Dave Schwartz, engaged with Rep. Wenstrup on ways to combat the opioid epidemic. Ohio has the fifth-highest rate of drug overdose deaths in the United States. In addition, APA attended a dinner hosted by Third Way with support from the Voices coalition for a candid, off-the-record discussion on preventing opioid abuse and addiction. The event was attended by Reps. Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.), Dwight Evans (D-Pa.), Brad Schneider (D-Ill.), Stephanie Murphy (D-Fla.), Anthony Brindisi (D-N.Y.) and Josh Gottheimer (D-N.J.).

For more information, contact Laurel Stine, JD, at lstine@apa.org.

Monitoring a Senate Probe into Funding of Psychedelic and Cannabis Research

APA continues to monitor the policy-related activities surrounding the funding of psychedelic and cannabis research. Last spring, Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) began making inquiries to the National Institutes of Health and the FDA, requesting information about those agencies' research portfolios with Schedule I controlled substances—those substances with high abuse liability and no currently accepted medical use. The inquiries focused on two categories of drugs: [psychedelics](#) and [cannabinoids](#). The FDA/NIH responses indicated there was a very [modest portfolio of clinical research](#) on ketamine and MDMA and no clinical research on LSD or psilocybin. The latter is odd given a growing [body of evidence](#) that psilocybin may have robust and lasting effects as a therapeutic agent across a range of health conditions. Noteworthy, too, is that in the absence of federal funding, private donors have contributed \$17 million to help APA Div. 28 Fellow Roland Griffiths, PhD, fund the Johns Hopkins [Center for Psychedelic and Consciousness Research](#) to focus on how psychedelics affect behavior, mood, cognition, brain function and biological markers of health. The FDA/NIH [response on cannabis research](#) suggests that scientists who have Schedule I registrations should be allowed to purchase cannabis products from state dispensaries to use in their research.

For more information, contact Geoff Mumford, PhD, at gmumford@apa.org.