



**FROM KATHERINE B. MCGUIRE, APA CHIEF ADVOCACY OFFICER**

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**Building Collaborations with the U.S. Surgeon General**

APA CEO Arthur C. Evans Jr., PhD, and APA staff met with U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams, MD, and his senior staff to discuss APA's priorities and areas where APA and the Office of the Surgeon General could collaborate. The meeting covered many relevant topics including opioid use and addiction and the need for psychosocial supports for recovery, workforce development and reimbursement rates.

Dr. Adams has made fighting the opioid epidemic a priority and has been vocal about the need for stronger prevention, treatment and recovery services. In their meeting, Dr. Evans described multiple ways in which psychology can help inform and address the crisis. In particular, he discussed the importance of psychological pain management interventions and assessments, as well as the need for a "whole person" approach to treating opioid and other substance use disorders. The surgeon general expressed strong interest in using psychological assessments and interventions to provide alternatives to the use of opioids for pain management. They also discussed the use of applied psychology in the workplace.

Dr. Evans and the surgeon general will continue to discuss these and other topics and explore ways to collaborate.

*For more information, contact Scott Barstow, MS, at [sbarstow@apa.org](mailto:sbarstow@apa.org).*

**Applauding a Resolution That Raises Awareness of Mental Health Disparities**

APA CEO Arthur C. Evans Jr, PhD, praised Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-N.J.) and the Congressional Black Caucus for introducing [H.R. 480](#), which seeks to raise awareness of the racial disparity in diagnosing and treating mental health disorders among youth in communities of color. The resolution acknowledges the "lower rates of treatment for anxiety disorders and mood disorders over their lifetimes as well as the significantly smaller likelihood that black and Hispanic youth will get mental health care when compared with their white peers."

“Research has documented an alarming increase in suicide rates for our youngest black youth, those ages 5 to 12,” says Dr. Evans, “We must respond as a nation by prioritizing research into the risk and protective factors, and ensuring that these youngsters have access to culturally competent mental and behavioral services and mental health providers.”

*For more information, contact Karen Studwell, JD, at [kstudwell@apa.org](mailto:kstudwell@apa.org) or Angela Sharpe, MG, at [asharpe@apa.org](mailto:asharpe@apa.org).*

### **Joining Allies in a Rally for Gun Violence Research**

At a rally hosted by former Rep. Gabby Giffords (D-Ariz.) and Rep. Stephanie Murphy (D-Fla.) in Orlando, APA member Dr. Dorothy Espelage called for Congress to appropriate funding at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health to research gun violence. Dr. Espelage emphasized that the funding would enable researchers to collect data on gun safety and the psychological impacts of gun violence. Organizations participating in the rally included the Florida Psychological Association, This Is Our Lane, Doctors for America, Equality Florida, League of Women Voters, Florida Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence and many others. The rally had over 250 attendees and received local [press coverage](#).

*For more information, contact Ben Vonachen, at [bvonachen@apa.org](mailto:bvonachen@apa.org), or Craig Fisher, PsyD, at [atcfisher@apa.org](mailto:atcfisher@apa.org).*

### **Registering Concern about Legislation that Could Curb Research**

While APA is deeply concerned about opioid overdoses related to fentanyl, a bill designed to stop fentanyl overdoses by reclassifying the drug in the most restrictive category of illegal drugs may have the unintended consequence of stopping critical research in the area. APA expressed its concerns in a [letter](#) to the Senate Judiciary Committee, recommending a less restrictive approach so that researchers can still study fentanyl as part of their efforts to address the opioid crisis.

*For more information, contact Geoff Mumford, PhD, at [gmumford@apa.org](mailto:gmumford@apa.org)*

### **Celebrating More Support for the Medicare Mental Health Access Act**

Reps. Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-Mo.) and Susan Wild (D-Pa.) joined several of their colleagues in co-sponsoring the bipartisan [Medicare Mental Health Access Act \(H.R. 884\)](#). If enacted, this bill would remove unnecessary physician oversight of psychologists in Medicare by including them in the program’s “physician” definition—a key APA priority.

*For more information, contact Laurel Stine, JD, at [lstine@apa.org](mailto:lstine@apa.org).*

### **Requiring Federal Agencies to Collect Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Data**

APA sent letters of support to Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc.) on the LGBTQ Data Collection Act, which was re-introduced in both chambers. The bill seeks to improve federal population surveys by requiring agencies to collect voluntary, self-disclosed information on sexual orientation and gender identity. The legislation has been endorsed by 94 House members and eight senators, along with 19 national organizations that advocate for LGBT civil rights and health.

*For more information, contact Leo Rennie, MPA, at [lrennie@apa.org](mailto:lrennie@apa.org).*

### **Advocating for a Pathway to Citizenship for Undocumented Trainees**

APA joined more than 60 health profession organizations in signing a [letter](#) that urges the Senate Judiciary Committee and leadership to pass legislation that would provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented young people and those approved for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Legislation under consideration would ensure that health-care workers approved for DACA, as well as other undocumented young people, are able to continue their employment, education, training and research. By providing a legal pathway to citizenship for undocumented Americans who came to the United States as children, Congress can help our country produce a diverse and

culturally responsive health-care workforce to meet the needs of underserved populations and promote health equity.

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