



# APA ADVOCACY *Washington Update*

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

For the Week of August 19–23, 2019

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**Providing Senate Leaders with Recommendations on School Safety and Mental Health**

Following the recent mass shootings in Texas and Ohio, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) [wrote](#) to members of the committee asking for guidance on bipartisan approaches to improving school safety and mental health, including as they relate to gun violence. APA responded this week with a [letter](#) to Sen. Alexander outlining the critical need to support comprehensive and community-based approaches to promote safe school environments. The evidence-based recommendations and funding requests highlight an expansive range of issues, all of which APA view as critical to ensuring that safety is paramount across our schools, campuses and communities.

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

**Seeking Stories for Grassroots Campaign on the Medicare Mental Health Access Act**

APA is collecting stories from Medicare-participating psychologists on the requirement that physicians must authorize psychologists’ services in facility-based settings. How does this mandate affect you, your patients and your practice? Examples of such testimonials can be found [here](#). If you or your colleagues have had similar experiences, send them to [pracgovt@apa.org](mailto:pracgovt@apa.org). On a related note, APA is launching a “100 Co-sponsors in 100 Days” campaign to increase grassroots activity in support of H.R. 884, the Medicare Mental Health Access Act, which would remove the physician signoff requirement by including clinical psychologists in the program’s “physician” definition. Psychologists are the only doctoral-level health-care provider not allowed to practice autonomously in all settings. APA is working with its Federal Advocacy Coordinators to hold in-district meetings with U.S. representatives and to increase contacts to members of Congress from state psychological associations.

*For more information, contact Bryant Robinson at [Brobinson@apa.org](mailto:Brobinson@apa.org).*

**Joining Allies in Supporting Gun Violence Research**

Psychologist Joseph Constans, PhD, representing APA and the Louisiana Psychological Association, joined New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell at a gun violence prevention rally on August 17 in New Orleans hosted by the advocacy organization Giffords: Courage to Fight Gun Violence. Constans joined Mayor Cantrell in calling on Congress to appropriately fund gun violence prevention research at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Constans spoke about the critical need to better understand gun violence and suicide through increased research opportunities. Congress is considering appropriating \$50 million to CDC and NIH for gun violence prevention research. More than 150 community activists and medical and health professionals attended the rally.

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

### **Condemning the Mistreatment of Migrant Children at the U.S. Border**

APA joined more than 200 organizations with expertise in child welfare on a [Aug. 21 letter](#) condemning the mistreatment of migrant children in Customs and Border Control (CBP) custody. In addition to the harmful effects of family separation and detention, children have reported experiencing severely crowded conditions, poor nutrition, limited access to basic hygiene needs, and bullying and intimidation from staff in CBP facilities, all of which pose serious risks to children's lifelong mental and physical health. The National Child Abuse Coalition letter draws a powerful comparison between federal standards of child abuse and the detention conditions sanctioned by the federal government. The letter also calls on both Congress and the Trump administration to ensure that all CBP facilities that temporarily house children provide them with safe conditions and limit detention to no longer than 72 hours.

*For more information, contact Cynthia Whitney at [cwhitney@apa.org](mailto:cwhitney@apa.org) or Serena D'Avila, JD, at [sdavila@apa.org](mailto:sdavila@apa.org).*

### **Kicking Off APA's Stand for Science District Campaign**

The APA Stand for Science District Campaign is under way! The campaign, which connects psychological scientists with their members of Congress, launched earlier this month when Walter Boot, PhD, invited staff from Sen. Marco Rubio's (R-Fla.) office to visit his research lab at Florida State University. APA organized the visit, which gave congressional staff an opportunity to participate in a demonstration of the software that Boot's team has developed for older adults at risk for social isolation, as well as FSU's driving simulator and virtual reality equipment. Rubio's staff learned more about the software, technologies and other interventions that can benefit the aging population, as well as the need for increased funding for psychological research on aging. Boot also highlighted to Rubio's staff the need to make greater efforts to prepare the workforce, particularly psychologists, to serve the aging population. Learn more about the importance of the Stand for Science District Campaign at <https://on.apa.org/StandforScienceCampaign>.

*For more information, contact Shannon Wood at [swood@apa.org](mailto:swood@apa.org).*

### **White House Invites APA Expertise on Veteran Suicide Prevention Initiative**

Representatives from APA attended a conversation at the White House today at the invitation of psychologist Barbara Van Dahlen, PhD, executive director of the new intergovernmental PREVENTS Task Force mandated by executive order to decrease veteran suicide. Van Dahlen was joined by U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams, MD, MPH, and Department of Veterans Affairs Executive in Charge of Health Richard Stone, MD, to discuss ways that stakeholders can partner with the task force to change the culture around mental health, substance misuse, and suicide among veterans and all Americans. APA Deputy CEO Jaime "Jim" Diaz-Granados, PhD, and Antonio E. Puentes, PhD, co-chair of APA's Advocacy Coordinating Committee, shared APA's ongoing work in these areas and provided recommendations on ways to decrease suicides, particularly in the veteran population. They also committed to collaborating

further with federal agencies and the PREVENTS Task Force to address drug overdoses and the stigma associated with mental and substance use disorders and their treatment.

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