

April 2018

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President Signs FY 2018 Omnibus Appropriations Bill

After years of austerity and flat funding, Congress approved a budget that provides significant funding increases across defense and non-defense programs. The House passed the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018* ([Public Law 115-141](#)) on March 22. In the wee early hours of March 23, the Senate approved it. The President signed the measure late afternoon of March 23 after injecting uncertainty as to whether he would sign the bill by threatening to veto it with only hours left before the then-current Continuing Resolution expired. The omnibus appropriations bill provides funding for federal programs until September 2018.



The long-anticipated 2,232-page bill was worth the wait for many of the programs noteworthy to APA. The bill included the most significant increases in funding for education and science programs in recent years. These increases are the consequence of the [bipartisan budget agreement](#) reached in February where Congress raised the spending caps on defense and non-discretionary (NDD) programs for the next two years, including an additional \$300 billion for NDD programs. More

importantly, the bill repudiates many of the cuts to programs promoted in the Trump Administration's fiscal year (FY) 2018 and [FY 2019](#) proposed budgets.

With regards to the funding increases included in the bill, the omnibus provides \$350 million to support the **Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)** program, a \$52 million increase for **behavioral workforce education and training** at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), a \$1 million increase for the **Minority Fellowship Program (MFP)** within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to create new fellowships for psychologists and addiction medicine specialists, and \$1.1 billion for states – a \$700 million increase – to support a grant program to provide mental health counseling in schools, as well as expand technology and STEM education.

FY 2018 Omnibus Provides Significant Increases in Science Funding

The FY 2018 omnibus raised budgets for all the major science-funding agencies that support psychological research. Despite [calls for flat funding in the President's budget](#), NIH and NSF received substantial increases in funding, totaling 8.8 percent and 3.9 percent, respectively.

NIH received an additional \$3 billion to support major NIH initiatives including Alzheimer's disease research (\$414 million); the BRAIN Initiative (\$140 million); research on opioid addiction (\$500 million); and the National Children's Study Follow-on program (\$165 million).

NSF received an additional \$295 million in the funding bill. Notably, the funding bill makes no mention of Directorate-leveling funding and does not single out the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate for lessened funding in the same way as the recent Presidential Budgets.



Credit: Lydia Polimeni, NIH

The omnibus bill also increased support for:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (\$1.1 billion)
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (\$10 million)
- Institute of Education Sciences (\$8 million)
- National Institute of Justice (\$3 million)

APA's CEO Arthur Evans, Jr., PhD, [lauded the bill](#), stating the provisions "made strides to restore and enhance the budgets for critical science, education and public health programs

PSLF Supported in FY 2018 Omnibus; Title IVA Gets Significant Increase

The FY 2018 omnibus bill included funding and legislative language to support and strengthen the **Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)** program. The additional funds and accompanying legislative directives are intended to "address issues in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, including for teachers and first responders -- to cover borrowers who would

otherwise be eligible except they were enrolled in an ineligible repayment plan."

The bill also extends the benefits of the program to borrowers enrolled in the wrong repayment plan. Specific criteria must be met for a borrower to benefit. Loan cancellations will transpire on a first-come, first-served basis until the \$350 million allotted is expended. The omnibus also includes

\$2.3 million for the Department of Education to improve the outreach and the certification process associated with the program.

The **Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program (Title IVA)** is a formula grant to local education agencies that supports well-rounded programs, safe and healthy schools, and the effective use of technology. Authorized at \$1.6 billion in the recently reauthorized, *Every Student Succeeds Act* ([Public Law 114-95](#)), this program received only \$400 million in FY 2017, significantly

altering the underlying structure of this newly conceived program.

In response to the mass school shooting in Parkland, Florida and a strong, coordinated advocacy effort, the FY 2018 omnibus includes a \$700 million increase for Title IVA, a total sum of \$1.1 billion. These funds, administered at the local level, may be used to support school climate, school safety, trauma-informed practices, evidence-based programming to support student health and safety, as well as increase access to school-based mental health services.

APA to Congress: Adopt Evidence-Based Gun Violence Prevention Policies and Programs

APA Leadership Writes to Congress

On March 15, APA President Jessica Henderson Daniel and CEO Arthur C. Evans, Jr. sent a [letter](#) to Congressional leaders recommending that policymakers take a public health approach to gun violence prevention. The APA letter emphasized the need for legislation that also “addresses the causes of violence in our society” in addition to measures strengthening restrictions on access to firearms.

Specifically, APA called on Congress to:

1. Adopt common sense restrictions on access to guns.
2. Invest in greater support for individuals in crisis.
3. Increase funding for gun violence research.
4. Support school, family, and community-based prevention efforts.

APA stressed the recommended policy proposals represent approaches supported by the strongest body of evidence. APA shared specific recommendations for legislation in an [attachment](#).

APA Collaborates with *March for Science on Gun Violence Research Letter to Congress*

In addition, APA has also collaborated with the March for Science to craft the 2018 [open letter to Congress](#) highlighting the need for more federally-funded gun violence research. The letter also urges policymakers to approve the funding and support needed for gun violence prevention research and to employ evidence-based approaches in policy proposals to address the public health crisis of gun violence.

APA Responds to Proposed HHS Rule to Expand Conscience Rights

APA submitted [comments](#) to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in response to a [proposed rule](#) that would broaden conscience protections in healthcare, expanding the ability of providers to refuse to provide healthcare if they have a religious or moral objection to doing so. APA argued that such an expansion – which would even allow health care professionals to refuse to

provide referrals - would threaten psychology training programs and the provision of care to various populations in need.

Specifically, APA acknowledged the importance of religious freedom but maintained that the proposed rule could increase discrimination against women seeking reproductive healthcare, sexual

and gender minorities, and a variety of other groups, making it difficult or impossible for them to receive necessary care. The comment pointed out that APA's ethics code prohibits discrimination and that its guidelines for serving a diverse public assert that "psychologists need to interact beneficially and non-injuringly with all

clients/patients who seek care. When such conflicts occur, the overriding consideration must always be the welfare the client/patient." While APA recognizes the vital role of faith-based healthcare providers, our ethical standards and principles are clear: the welfare of the patient must come first.

APA Members and Staff *March for Our Lives*

The tragic events of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas school shooting in Parkland, FL, brought renewed public attention to the gun violence epidemic in America. APA members and staff ([photos](#)) volunteered their time to participate in *March for Our Lives*, Saturday, March 24th in Washington. APA supports evidence-based programs and policies that can reduce the incidence and impact firearm-related violence. As a scientific organization, APA recognizes that psychologists have a unique and much-needed perspective to contribute to the gun violence discussion. More information about APA's efforts in this area is available [here](#).



APA Supports *March for Science* - April 14, 2018



APA is an official partner of the first [March for Science](#) in Washington, DC. On Saturday, April 14, 2018, APA will once again proudly stand together with fellow scientists and supporters to share its passion for scientific research, celebrate scientific discovery, and speak to the importance of evidence-based policymaking at the second annual March for Science. In addition, APA arranged to have psychologist [Dr. Susan Sorenson](#) of the University of Pennsylvania speak about gun violence prevention research on the main stage of the rally in Washington, DC.

APA encourages all psychologists, psychology students, and their allies to join this broad, non-partisan effort to support scientific research and the use of scientific evidence for the public good. Moreover, APA further encourages those interested in APA's March for Science activities or planning to march with us, in DC or via a satellite march, to visit the [APA March for Science](#) information page.

HRSA Seeks Community Input on GPE Program and Opioid Use Disorder

HRSA seeks input from the community. On March 14, HRSA issued a "Request for Comment on the Graduate Psychology Education Program (GPE)" in the [Federal Register](#). The agency specifically seeks input on how to "maximize the reach, capacity, and success of the GPE Program in addressing Opioid

Use Disorder and other behavioral health concerns." **The deadline to submit comments is April 13, 2018.** The comments received by HRSA may be used to inform future funding opportunities.

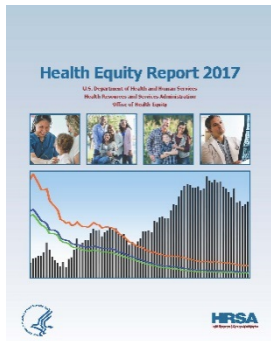
HRSA Holds Behavioral Health Equity Town Hall

HRSA's two-part series, *Achieving Health Equity and Improving Health Behaviors by Addressing the Social Determinants of Health*, is designed to "increased awareness of health equity and provided behavioral health practitioners with strategies and resources for improving health behaviors and reducing disparities in access to behavioral health care." [Part One](#) of the series focused on the concepts defining health equity and social disparities in health. Contact [Cynthia Harne](#) for more information. [Part Two](#) provided strategies and resources for behavioral practitioners. Contact [Michael L. Jenkins](#) to learn more about Part Two.

NIMHD to Host July 2018 Health Disparities Research Institute

The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) will host its *Health Disparities Research Institute* (HDRI) from July 23 - 27, 2018. The program is designed to support early career investigators' research career development and stimulate research in the disciplines supported by health disparities science. The program's syllabus includes lectures, seminars, mock grant review sessions, and small group discussion on research relevant to minority health and health disparities. Eligible applicants include post-doctoral fellows, assistant professors, or individuals in similar early-stage research career positions engaged in minority health and health disparities research. For more information and/or to apply, see the [online application](#). **Applications are due April 27th.**

HRSA Releases 2017 Health Equity Report



HRSA's [Office of Health Equity](#) recently released its [Health Equity Report 2017](#). The new Report updates HRSA's "program activities and successes in the field of health equity since the publication of the November 2000 HRSA Report *Eliminating Health Disparities in the United States*." *Health Equity Report 2017* addresses disparities in three agency priority areas: (1) mental health, (2) opioid use, and (3) childhood obesity. The new Report contains empirical data on trends in health equity and health disparities in the U.S. on multiple program areas. These include: "maternal and child health, primary care, access, quality, HIV/AIDS, mental and behavioral health, chronic disease, health promotion, health workforce, rural versus urban, and geographic disparities."

Federal Funding Opportunities

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#)

Health Resources & Services Administration

- [Grants and Cooperative Agreements](#)

National Institutes of Health

- [Research Training and Career Development Programs](#)
- [Grants and Funding](#)

National Science Foundation

- [Funding Opportunities](#)
- [NSF Research Traineeship \(NRT\) program](#)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

- [Grant Announcements and Awards](#)

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