

APA ADVOCACY

Washington Update

APA Advocacy Washington Update is a weekly newsletter that highlights how APA is working to advance the discipline and practice of psychology on Capitol Hill and beyond. Learn more about APA's [advocacy priorities](#) for 2020.

Working with Capitol Hill to Expand Access to Psychological Services and Training



On Tuesday, after a weekend of preparation by APA's advocacy office, 300 psychologists headed to Capitol Hill to request congressional support for three initiatives that would expand access to psychological services. Specifically, the advocates asked legislators to:

- Reduce barriers to care and create consistency across health-care delivery systems by enacting the Medicare Mental Health Access Act (H.R. 884/S. 2772).
- Call on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to request that the administration reverse its proposed 7% reduction in reimbursement for Medicare services provided by psychologists and other health-care providers starting in 2021.
- Increase federal investments in the Graduate Psychology Education and Minority Fellowship programs that provide stipends for students, interns and postdoctoral fellows to train in integrated care and to diversify the workforce to serve high need communities.

For more information, contact Bryant Robinson at brobinson@apa.org.

Supporting Immigrants' Mental Health with New Legislation

On March 4, Rep. Grace Napolitano (D-Calif.) and Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) introduced legislation that would expand access to trauma-informed mental health interventions for new immigrants and help alleviate the stress experienced by border agents. APA staff worked closely with Rep. Napolitano's staff to draft the bill, known as the Immigrants' Mental Health Act of 2020 (H.R. 6075/S. 3392). In particular, APA called for including a

provision to prohibit the sharing of information obtained from confidential psychotherapy sessions involving child immigrants who are seeking asylum. APA will continue to work on the legislation by helping to gain broad support for the bill.

For more information, contact Serena Dávila, JD, at sdavila@apa.org.

Expanding Access to Intensive Behavioral Therapy for Obesity Care

In partnership with consumers, dieticians and other health-care providers, APA is advocating for passage of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (S. 595/H.R. 1530), sponsored by Sens. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) and Tom Carper (D-Del.), and Reps. Ron Kind (D-Wis.) and Brett Guthrie (R-Ky.) and participated in a day of advocacy on Capitol Hill during Obesity Care Week. The legislation seeks to treat and reduce obesity in older adults by enhancing Medicare patients' access to health-care providers—including clinical psychologists—who are best suited to provide intensive behavioral therapy (IBT) and by allowing Medicare Part D to cover FDA-approved obesity drugs. Currently, Medicare covers IBT only when provided by a primary-care provider in a primary-care setting. APA has joined the [Obesity Care Advocacy Network](#) to help elevate awareness and advocacy efforts. Obesity increases the risk for chronic diseases and conditions, and increases people's risk of depression, anxiety and eating disorders.

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

Supporting NIH's Ability to Fund More Science

More than 330 members of the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research signed a [statement](#) encouraging Congress to increase funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to \$44.7 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2021—a \$3 billion increase over FY 2020. The statement recognizes the “strong, bipartisan vision” of House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee leaders Sens. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.), and Reps. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) and Tom Cole (R-Okla.) over the past five years. This proposed funding level would allow “for meaningful growth above inflation ... and expand NIH's capacity to support promising science in all disciplines across the agency,” the statement says.

For more information, contact Angela L. Sharpe, MG, at asharpe@apa.org.

Working with Veterans on Safe Firearms Storage

Research demonstrates that safe storage of firearms is an important approach to reducing suicide. APA member Russell B. Lemle, PhD, in partnership with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, spearheaded a conference on Feb. 28 in San Francisco to bring together leading experts on suicide prevention and veteran issues. The symposium informed clinicians, policymakers and other stakeholders in the veteran community about cutting-edge research and community involvement in promoting lethal means safety and safe firearm storage. The conference spurred thoughtful conversations and served as a call to action for these various stakeholders to advocate for safe storage policies and practices that prevent suicides.

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

Join APA's Psychology Advocacy Network

Stay updated on legislative issues impacting psychology and receive action alerts directly to your inbox. [Sign up](#).



© APA Services, Inc.

750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002

APA Services, Inc. is a legally separate companion organization to the American Psychological Association (APA). APA Services, Inc. supports advocacy and psychologists' economic and marketplace interests in ways that APA cannot. For more information, visit apaservices.org.