AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
POLICY STATEMENT ON ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG ABUSE

This statement reflects general policy of the American Psychological Association (APA) and is intended to guide APA's activities in addressing the enormous societal problems of alcohol and other drug abuse. A previous APA policy statement addressed the issue of substance use by pregnant women; additional policy statements will be developed in the future to address other specific issues within this broad field.

WHEREAS:

1. The costs of alcohol and other drug abuse exact an enormous toll on individuals, families, communities, and society as a whole. The annual economic costs are estimated at $144 billion, but the human cost, measured in the pain, suffering, and social isolation of affected individuals and their family members, is incalculable;

2. The problems of alcohol and other drug abuse involve a complex interplay of biological, chemical, psychological, behavioral, and socioeconomic factors. Therefore, effective solutions to these problems require the coordinated efforts of healthcare professionals, research scientists, and policymakers in both the private and public sectors;

3. Much of the research devoted to understanding, preventing, and treating alcohol and other drug abuse is conducted by psychologists and is based on psychological principles and the results of psychology-related interdisciplinary studies. This research includes: (a) the identification of biological, psychological, neuropsychological, behavioral, and psychosocial factors that underlie such abuse; (b) the formulation of prevention strategies, treatment innovations, including the development of psychopharmacological agents, and the evaluation of existing treatment programs; (c) the development and improvement of methods to diagnose and assess co-existing mental and neurological disorders; and (d) the identification of the psychological, behavioral and, societal consequences of alcohol and other drug abuse;

4. Psychological and behavioral factors play a critical role in the prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of alcohol and other drug abuse problems, and nearly all-effective treatment modalities involve psychological therapeutic interventions. Psychological research has contributed to an understanding of which prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation interventions are the-most effective, both in terms of outcome and cost; and

5. Psychologists can, and do, play, an important role in finding solutions to the problems of alcohol and other drug abuse;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

That the American Psychological Association:

1. Affirms its commitment to address these problems, and to contribute to the multidiciplinary effort needed to reduce the number of individuals who are adversely affected by alcohol and other drug abuse;

2. Affirms its commitment to work with other science and health care disciplines and professions to further scientific understanding of alcohol and other drug abuse; to develop and provide effective prevention and treatment strategies; and to address the related health and psychosocial problems of alcohol and drug dependent persons;

3. Affirms its commitment to encourage Policy based on sound scientific research, and to encourage and support the participation of psychologists in the policy development process;

PREVENTION

4. Urges increased Federal funding of research to further understanding of the etiology of alcohol and other substance abuse, and to develop effective interventions to prevent such abuse, particularly in high risk populations;

5. Urges increased Federal, state and local funding for the provision of prevention services by psychologists in a wide range of settings, including schools, work places, homes, clinical settings, religious institutions, and other appropriate community settings;

ASSESSMENT, DIAGNOSTIC AND TREATMENT SERVICES

6. Affirms the commitment of psychologists to address the treatment needs of persons who are alcohol and drug dependent, and their affected families;

7. Recommends an increase in Federal , state and local support to expand assessment, treatment, and rehabilitation services to persons who are alcohol and drug dependent. These services should provide a continuum of care for affected persons and their families;

8. Recommends increased attention to the development and delivery of services for high risk populations and those with special needs, including ethnic minorities, adolescents, pregnant women, and persons in the criminal justice system;

9. Urges the inclusion of assessment, treatment, and rehabilitation services for alcohol and other drug abuse in public and private health benefit plans;

RESEARCH

10. Affirms the commitment of psychologists to conduct research aimed at increasing understanding of the underlying biological, psychological, behavioral, and psychosocial bases of alcohol and other drug abuse, and at developing effective interventions for the prevention of alcohol and other drug abuse, and the treatment and rehabilitation of affected individuals;

11. Recommends an increase in Federal support for research on alcohol and other drug abuse, including research on the broad range of biological, psychological, behavioral, and psychosocial factors involved in such abuse.

12. Recommends an increase in Federal support for research on the prevention of alcohol and other drug abuse, the assessment of alcohol and drug abuse problems, and the treatment and rehabilitation of affected persons. Particular attention should be given to high risk groups, such as adolescents and ethnic minorities, and to populations that are currently undeserved, such as pregnant women.

13. Affirms its commitment to promote funding for the expansion of educational training opportunities in the areas of alcohol and other drug abuse for psychologists at the pre-doctoral, post-doctoral, and continuing education levels;

14. Supports the provision of graduate and postdoctoral training for research on alcohol and other drug abuse, and for the application of scientifically-based treatment in clinical settings;

15. Supports the development of ongoing continuing education programs regarding alcohol and other drug abuse for practitioners, researchers, and educators; and

16. Recommends that public education activities include a discussion of substance abuse issues in high school and undergraduate psychology courses.