AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

July 31, 2009

Stephen T. DeMers, Ed.D.
Executive Officer
Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards
P.O. Box 241245
Montgomery, AL 36124-1245

Dear Steve:

I am writing on behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA) to inform you of a petition resolution approved by our membership last September and rendered fully in effect by our Council of Representatives this past February. This new policy entitled, "Psychologists and Unlawful Detention Settings with a Focus on National Security," prohibits psychologists from working in detention settings that are in violation of the U.S. Constitution or international law (e.g., the Geneva Conventions and the U.N. Convention Against Torture), unless they are working directly for the persons being detained or for an independent third party to protect human rights, or providing treatment to military personnel.

As you are aware, for over 20 years, APA policy has unequivocally condemned torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. In addition to these clear prohibitions, it is now counter to APA policy for psychologists to work in unlawful detention settings, with the few exceptions noted above.

For your information, I have enclosed a copy of the petition resolution policy, along with the pro, con, and rebuttal statements that were presented to the APA membership as part of the official ballot. These materials help to clarify that the petition resolution was not intended to apply to facilities, such as domestic prisons or psychiatric hospitals, where detained persons are granted basic legal rights, such as the right to know the charges against them and to contest their confinement in a court of law. Furthermore, like other Council resolutions, the petition resolution, in accordance with the Bylaws and Association Rules, is not a binding document in that it does not amend the Ethics Code.

I hope this information is helpful to you and your member psychology state and provincial licensing boards. Please do not hesitate to contact me, if you have any questions or would like any additional information.

Sincerely,

Ellen Garrison

Ellen G. Garrison, Ph.D.
Senior Policy Advisor

Enclosure

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