

APA Presidential Advisory Group on the Implementation of the Petition Resolution

BACKGROUND: In the summer of 2008, a petition resolution was approved by a vote of the membership of the American Psychological Association (APA) that prohibits psychologists from working in settings “where persons are held outside of, or in violation of, either International Law (e.g., the UN Convention Against Torture and the Geneva Conventions) or the US Constitution (where appropriate), unless they are working directly for the persons being detained or for an independent third party working to protect human rights” or they are providing treatment for military personnel. (The full text of the resolution can be found at: <http://www.apa.org/governance/resolutions/work-settings.html>.)

Shortly after the resolution was approved, APA President Alan Kazdin, Ph.D., sent letters on behalf of the Association to President George Bush and prominent leaders in the administration, namely Defense Secretary Robert Gates, CIA Director Michael Hayden, and Attorney General Michael Mukasey, to inform them of the passage of this new resolution and its ongoing implementation. Similar letters were sent to the chairmen and ranking members of key congressional committees, specifically the House and Senate Armed Services, Intelligence, and Judiciary Committees. The letters also called upon the recipients to safeguard the welfare and human rights of individuals detained for national security reasons and to investigate their treatment to ensure that the highest ethical standards are being upheld.

PURPOSE: To review actions already taken related to the resolution and to address whether there are additional options that the APA Council of Representatives should consider as it determines how best to implement the petition resolution. For, according to the APA Bylaws, the “Council shall take such action as may be necessary to implement the result of any such vote.”

CHARGE: The advisory group is charged with the following two tasks:

- 1) To identify issues in need of clarification regarding the intent and scope of the resolution and to provide a brief explanatory statement for each issue. Also to list possible actions that would serve to clarify each of these issues for Council to review and consider at its February 2009 meeting; and
- 2) To propose possible options to implement the resolution, including any new business items, for Council’s review and consideration in February.

As noted above, the advisory group will be asked to identify options to implement the resolution for Council to consider. Should the advisory group reach consensus on certain specific options, that information may prove useful to Council in its determination of possible implementation actions. However, suggestions of options for implementing the resolution that do not achieve consensus, including those that are supported by less than a

majority of the advisory group, will still be included in the set of options forwarded to Council.

The advisory group is to prepare a brief (e.g., 5-10 page) report with a bulleted set of implementation options for Council to consider, which may be presented with some background or contextual information. The report ought to focus on addressing the clarity of the language used in the resolution and proposing specific implementation options. It is critical that the advisory group focus on its charge and not expand to address other matters. Council, as the governing body of the Association, will have the responsibility to take implementing action that it deems appropriate, including adoption of all, some, or none of the options provided by the advisory group or new ones prompted by the work of the advisory group.

SELECTION CRITERIA: The advisory group will be composed of six Council members, two members of the Board of Directors, and one or more of the three original petitioners who understand and represent the broad range of constituent groups interested in, or with questions about, the petition resolution and/or the implementation process. The selection criteria for advisory group membership are as follows:

- 1) Expertise in one or more of the following relevant areas: social justice, human rights, international affairs, community psychology, public service, military psychology, forensic psychology, independent practice, state psychological associations, and state licensing boards;
- 2) Recognition as a well respected representative of one or more of the constituency groups associated with the above areas; and
- 3) Someone with experience working on advisory groups and/or task forces.

SELECTION PROCEDURE: The responses to the APA President's Call for Nominations will be compiled and forwarded to the President. The President will consider all nominees (those nominated by self and/or others), and might also consider other eligible APA members who would well represent the selection criteria and respond to the stated charge of the advisory group. Not all interests can be represented by this advisory group due to the inherent limitations in the number of available positions.

Advisory group members will be encouraged to solicit input from their colleagues to more fully inform their work as part of the advisory group. The President will seek input from others at his discretion in making his selection of advisory group members and the individual to chair the group.

TIME AND WORK COMMITMENT: The plan is for the advisory group to have one face-to-face meeting in Washington, D.C., in November or early December. This meeting will likely take place over a weekend, beginning on Friday morning and ending at midday on Saturday. It is expected that some additional work time via conference calls and email will be involved following the meeting. Additionally, APA will cover all

travel expenses for advisory group members, and APA staff will assist with all the necessary meeting and travel arrangements.

The advisory group will send its report to the APA President no later than December 31, 2008. This timeframe will enable Council to review the advisory group's work at its February meeting. According to the Association Rules, action on the petition resolution is not complete until the next annual meeting. Council may decide to take action on the petition resolution prior to the annual meeting in August, but would need to suspend the Association Rules to do so.