

APA Council approves more actions toward ethics reform

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APA Council Representative

At its meeting Aug 3-5 in Denver, the American Psychological Association council of representatives moved the association further along in the ethical reforms initiated a year ago after the release of the Hoffman Report. For example, the APA ethics code Standard 3.04 (Avoiding Harm) was expanded to explicitly forbid psychologists from having any involvement in torture. Council approved the revision submitted by the Ethics Committee with 73.8% in favor. Council also received an interim report from the newly formed Commission on Ethics Processes, which has been meeting and will provide its final report and recommendations at the February 2017 meeting of council.

Council members debated a proposed resolution that, if passed, would modify the action passed by an overwhelming majority last August that prohibited psychologists from working in “black site” detention centers. The new resolution called upon APA to “provide support and assistance” to military and national security psychologists working in detention sites in providing psychological services to both military personnel and detainees. The controversial resolution would have reversed certain aspects of two extant APA policies prohibiting certain activities in detention centers. The debate led to a consensus that the resolution needed further clarification and refinement and it never came to a final vote; instead, a motion passed by 90% to postpone action so that it could be further reviewed and refined.

A new business item calling for greater transparency of decisions was referred to a newly formed workgroup reviewing APA policies and procedures. The new business item proposed a requirement that all votes taken by council, board, and council leadership team be recorded by names of voting individuals, which would be published on the APA website for members. The action item never came to a vote because general counsel advised that such a change would require a bylaws change. Council voted 88.2% in favor of referring it to the new workgroup, which is already considering transparency issues as an important part of their work.

Although ethics reform issues dominated the agenda, actions were also passed in other areas. Here is a partial list:

- Council voted by 90.5% to seek a bylaws change (requiring a membership vote) establishing a new Friends of Psychology membership category. The new non-voting category of membership will be open to anyone interested in psychology who is not eligible under another category. Dues will be nominal, and a key benefit will be access to subscribe to APA journals at a reduced rate.
- A resolution supporting psychologists in integrated primary care and specialty health settings passed by 99.3%.

More details about these and other actions will be published in the *APA Monitor*.

Congratulations to Stewart Cooper, PhD, who has been recently elected by members of the 2015 Council to serve as a member-at-large on the APA Board of Directors. Dr. Cooper is the director of Counseling Services and Professor of Psychology at Valparaiso University and a member of IPA. He has represented Division 13 (Consulting Psychology) on the council for two terms.