



# AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

August 14, 2015

**We are resending the message to clarify that psychologists may not participate in any national security interrogations and to expand on the resolution's other provisions.**

Dear Colleagues,

We are writing to report on the results of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Council of Representatives' (Council) deliberations on policies to address the major findings of the **Independent Review** that was conducted by David Hoffman and his colleagues. The Hoffman **Report** was commissioned by APA's Board of Directors and found there was undisclosed coordination between some APA officials and Department of Defense psychologists that resulted in less restrictive ethical guidance for military psychologists in national security settings. The findings were extremely troubling and required action.

**During our annual convention in Toronto last week, the Council voted overwhelmingly to prohibit psychologists from participating in national security interrogations.** The measure passed by a vote of 157-1, with 6 abstentions and 1 recusal. The resolution:

- states that psychologists "shall not conduct, supervise, be in the presence of, or otherwise assist any national security interrogations for any military or intelligence entities, including private contractors working on their behalf, nor advise on conditions of confinement insofar as these might facilitate such an interrogation";
- redefines the term "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" (CIDTP) in the 2006 and 2013 Council resolutions in accordance with the UN Convention Against Torture (rather than with the 1994 U.S. Reservations to this treaty, which were co-opted by the Bush administration to justify harsh interrogation techniques) to ensure it provides protections to everyone, everywhere, including foreign detainees held outside of the United States;

- continues to offer APA as a supportive resource for the ethical practice of psychologists in organizational settings (including those in military and national security roles), while recognizing that they strive to achieve and are responsible to uphold the highest levels of competence and ethics in their professional work;
- urges the U.S. government to withdraw its understandings of and reservations to the UN Convention Against Torture in keeping with the recent recommendation of the UN Committee Against Torture;
- clarifies that the UN Committee Against Torture and the UN Special Rapporteur Against Torture would serve as the authorities for determining whether certain detention settings would fall under the purview of the 2008 petition resolution as operating in violation of international law; and
- ensures that federal officials will be informed of the expanded APA human rights policy, while stipulating prohibited detention settings and requesting that psychologists at these sites be offered deployment elsewhere.

The prohibition does not apply to domestic law enforcement interrogations or domestic detention settings where detainees are under the protection of the U.S. Constitution.

The policy adopted by the Council clarifies that psychologists can only provide mental health services to military personnel or work for an independent third party to protect human rights at national security detention facilities deemed by the United Nations to be in violation of international law, such as the U.N. Convention Against Torture and the Geneva Conventions.

While this new Council resolution invokes Ethical Principle A to “take care to do no harm,” it does not amend the Ethics Code and is not enforceable as a result. However, Council’s implementation plan for the new policy requests that the Ethics Committee consider a course of action to render the prohibition against national security interrogations enforceable under the Ethics Code.

The Council also voted to create a blue-ribbon panel of psychologists and non-psychologist experts to review APA’s Ethics Office and ethics policies and procedures and issue recommendations to ensure our policies are clear and aligned with the very best practices in the field. In addition, we will institute clearer conflict-of-interest policies going forward.

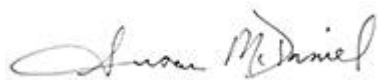
These positive and momentous actions by APA's Council and Board of Directors are significant and concrete steps toward rectifying past organizational shortcomings. While we are pleased with and humbled by the steps we have taken, we must be deeply reflective about the ways in which we must continue to put front and center protecting human rights and ethically serving the public through our science, practice, education and advocacy efforts.

We are moving forward in a spirit of reform and reconciliation. We have much work ahead to change the culture of APA to be more transparent and clearly focused on human rights and our core values as psychologists. The steps we are taking are aimed at resetting our moral compass and ensuring that APA regains the trust of its members and the public.

We hope you will be part of this change. We appreciated the opportunity to hear from the convention participants who were able to attend the town hall meeting about these matters. For those who could not attend or who were not able to speak, know that we greatly value your honest feedback and suggestions on next steps for APA as we move forward. Please send your ideas and recommendations to [IRfeedback@apa.org](mailto:IRfeedback@apa.org) or visit the Independent Review page on [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org), where there is a section to provide feedback.

Together, we can foster change and build a stronger association.

Sincerely,



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