

# Advocacy in Psychology

*What it is and How to do it*



PresMES

DATE

# Policy & Advocacy Committee

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# *WHAT*: A 3-Tiered Approach

- **Advocacy for Your Patients**
  - This includes empowering your patients to advocate for themselves!
- **Advocacy for the Profession**
  - Raising the value of psychology for the public and other stakeholders
- **Institutional Advocacy**
  - Fighting for systems change
  - Being a champion / social justice advocate in your institution



# *Types of Advocacy*

## **Informal**

- Anywhere, anytime
- At work, for a client, on behalf of trainees, with an insurer



## **Formal**

- Officially support a cause on behalf of yourself, your community, or your institution

(Kaslow, Pickover & Kelly, 2018)

# The *WHY*



*If you are a clinician :*

- Reimbursement rates, scope of practice issues
- Status in healthcare settings (\$\$\$)

*If you are a researcher :*

- Psychological science is largely funded through federal grants (\$\$\$)
  - You must make a case for why behavioral science funding is important
  - You can have an impact on society and solving societal problems (laws, programs, creating change)
  - You can impact and improve public health and human welfare
- \* \* It is important to protect and fight for your profession!

# *Ethical Responsibility*

Advocacy is an ethical responsibility

- Important to advocate for psychological science, education and practice
- Help interpret scientific knowledge for the public and for policymakers
- Psychologists have an ethical commitment to social change and political advocacy
- Be trained in activism and train others through didactics, supervision, or experiential learning

(Kaslow, Pickover & Kelly, 2018)

# *WHO to Advocate to*

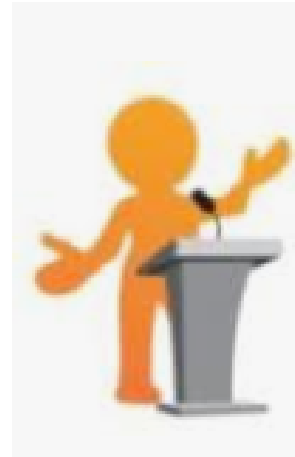
- **Within the Profession**
  - Coworkers and colleagues
  - Share concerns with your groups, state psychological association, and APA
  - Strength in numbers!
- **Public Advocacy**
  - Get involved in a public education campaign
  - Be a public voice in the media or on social media
  - Do scholarly work or writing on an area
- **Government Advocacy**
  - Influence policy/laws, support or oppose policy/laws



\* Build coalitions with other healthcare professions, with advocacy & consumer groups, and with legislators & regulators

# *HOW* to do it

- Stay informed
- Speak up
- Go grassroots
- Get political!
- Get involved
- Create a campaign in your institution or community
- Support advocacy groups & organizations





*“Everything you could ever want or be,  
you already have and are”* - I Heart Huckabees



The skills you already have as a psychologist are the skills you need to be a successful advocate:

- Effective communication
- Relationship building
- Collaboration and conflict negotiation
- Critical and scientific thinking
- Education about societal issues and problems
- Research and analytical skills
- Problem solving and solution generation

# Advocating for your Patients

- Adopt a multicultural and social justice orientation and apply this to your clinical work
- Insurance issues – advocating for continued care
- Advocating for reasonable caseloads in your clinics
- Provide a safe space for group treatment & enforce it

Recommended Reading: *Why Social Justice is a Counseling Concern* (Crethar & Ratts)

- Oppression exists and affects the mental health and well-being of our clients and research subjects
- Challenge the idea of political neutrality

# Advocating to your Patients

- Identifying and interrupting “isms” in treatment
- There are times when it is appropriate to reflect on and gently challenge racist, sexist, or heterosexist beliefs that emerge in your work with patients

*It is important to consider :*

- the function of the comments / beliefs and its relevance to the pathology or presenting problems
- Is your reaction therapeutic and an intervention or a personal response to alleviate your own anxiety?

# 5 Steps



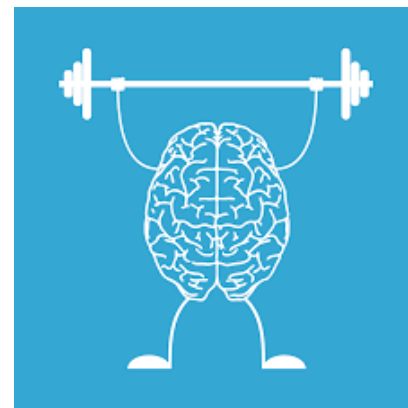
## Example: Challenging Racism

1. Conceptualize comments in context of cultural racism
2. Explore possibility of comments to presenting concern
3. Investigate meaning of comments, taking dyad into consideration
4. Clarify motivation for intervening so interventions have a therapeutic purpose (not self-serving to reduce therapist anxiety)
5. Assess best timing considering course of treatment and identity development of client

(Bartoli & Pyati, 2009)

# Empowering Patients to Advocate

- Help your patients navigate complex healthcare systems and advocate for the services they need
- Allow space in the therapy room for a discussion of “isms,” microaggressions, and other negative experiences
- Empower patients to challenge and confront these issues as appropriate (e.g. role play)
- VAMCs have Patient Advocacy Programs
- Most hospitals should have a patient advocate or some other sort of customer service center



# Advocacy in Research



- Adopt a multicultural and social justice orientation and apply this to your studies or research
- Work against the “WEIRD” problem in science
  - The American undergraduate phenomenon
  - Western (White), Educated, Industrialized, Rich & Democratic
  - Strive for representative, inclusive, and diverse samples
- Consider the role of minority identities when analyzing and interpreting data
- Ask socially justice oriented research questions

# Institutional Advocacy

*It is important to understand:*

- How your organization works and its politics
- When / where it is appropriate to take action

*How to Do It:*

- Raise awareness of critical issues
- Engage in difficult dialogues
- Lead trainings in diversity and social justice issues
- Create or spearhead a change campaign



# Practical Tips for Institutional Advocacy

- Cultivate good relationships with colleagues
- Be Prepared
  - Understand relevant policies, procedure, and history
- Make Them Care
  - Know the mission/vision, strategic plan & goals
  - Tie the issues you are raising to these factors!
- Be Solution-Focused
  - Don't just raise problems - offer solutions and ways you can help! (accompany “asks” with “offers”)
  - Say yes when possible (use the “Yes... *IF* ...” approach)

(Cohen, Lee & McIlwraith, 2015)



# Being a Social Justice Advocate

- Some individuals experience minority-based stress and oppression
  - Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 2003)
  - Race Based Traumatic Stress (Carter, 2007)
- National Veterans Health Equity Report (2016)
  - Disparities exist in the Veteran population
- Balancing counseling with advocacy in our work
- Challenge of political neutrality



# Advocacy in Primary Care

- Instill importance of psychology to team & organization
- Find interdisciplinary collaboration
- Emphasize psychological contribution to valued goals
- Health behaviors contribute to common PC concerns
- Is there a clinical or organizational or financial benefit?
  - Psychotherapy improves health outcomes
  - Psychotherapy reduces organization cost

(Cohen, Lee & McIlwraith, 2015; WHO 2009)



# Legislative Advocacy: Local

- Stay up-to-date on local psychology issues
- Increase public awareness of mental health issues and behavioral science findings
- Increase psychologists' awareness of the need to be involved in advocacy
- Attend local community and political events
- Participate in community activities and outreach



# Legislative Advocacy: State & Federal

- Monitor legislation pertaining to the field
- Collaborate on crafting new legislation
- Promote new legislation
- Share your professional opinions and expertise with house and congressional leaders
- Voice your support for, or concerns about, issues or bills throughout the legislative process
- Increase awareness of mental health issues and psychology broadly



## THE FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

### How a Bill Becomes a Law

#### INTRODUCTION & REFERRAL



##### SENATE

###### Introduction

A bill is introduced by a Senator and assigned to a committee. If necessary, the bill is referred to the appropriate subcommittee.

##### HOUSE

###### Introduction

A bill is introduced by a Representative and assigned to a committee. If necessary, the bill is referred to the appropriate subcommittee.

#### COMMITTEE REVIEW & ACTION



##### Subcommittee

If the bill is referred to a subcommittee, the subcommittee may hold hearings, and/or markup the bill by amending the language. A vote is held, and if the bill is approved it moves to the full committee.

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##### Committee

The full committee may hold additional hearings and/or markups before considering the bill. A vote is held, and if the bill is approved it is reported to the full Senate and placed on the calendar.

##### Committee

The full committee may hold additional hearings and/or markups before considering the bill. A vote is held, and if the bill is approved it is reported to the full House and placed on the calendar.

##### Leadership

Leaders of the majority and minority parties agree by a supermajority of at least sixty votes or by unanimous consent to schedule full Senate debate on a bill.

##### Rules Committee

Because of the House's large membership, the Rules Committee sets a rule governing the time limits for debate on a bill, and the way in which amendments may be added.

#### FLOOR DEBATE & PASSAGE



##### Full Senate

The full Senate debates the bill and may choose to amend it. A final vote is taken. If the bill is approved and has not been introduced in the House, it is sent to the other chamber. If the bill is approved in a form different from the House version, it is sent to a conference committee.

##### Full House

The full House debates the bill and may choose to amend it, according to the bill's rule. A final vote is taken. If the bill is approved and has not been introduced in the Senate, it is sent to the other chamber. If the bill is approved in a form different from the Senate version, it is sent to a conference committee.

#### PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL



##### Conference Committee

A conference committee of Senators and Representatives meet to reconcile differences between bills. Once an agreement is reached, a compromise bill is returned to the Senate and House for a vote. If approved, the bill is sent to the President.

##### President

The President signs or vetoes the bill. Congress can override a veto by a two-thirds majority vote in both the House and Senate.

Law

# Understanding Policy

## AT-A-GLANCE: THE U.S. SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

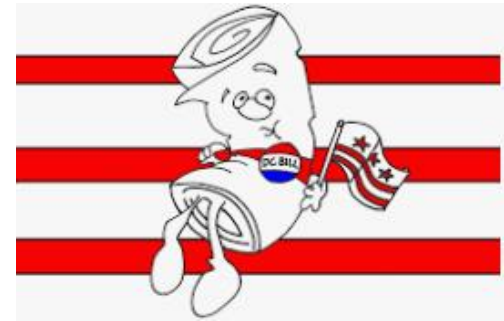
| SENATE  | HOUSE  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves six-year terms</li> <li>100 Members</li> <li>State-wide election</li> <li>More equal distribution of power</li> <li>Extended debate</li> <li>Amendments generally allowed</li> <li>60 votes needed to bring bill to vote (overcome filibuster)</li> <li>Simple majority vote needed to pass bill</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves two-year terms</li> <li>435 Members</li> <li>Elected in districts</li> <li>More powerful committee leaders and leadership</li> <li>Rules limit debate</li> <li>Amendments might not be allowed</li> <li>Majority leadership determines whether a bill is brought to the floor</li> <li>Simple majority vote needed to pass bill</li> </ul> |

# Legislative Advocacy: State & Federal

- Be a Voice
- Develop Relationships
  - Create an “alliance” !
- Lobbying
  - Meet with representatives to discuss current issues / bills
- Grassroots Lobbying
  - Send out action alerts, develop key contacts across voting districts, provide consultation or training to representatives
- PAC donations - money talks
- Attend political events and fundraisers



# Legislative Advocacy



- State legislation affects our scope of practice, restrictions on our license, licensure mobility, and our economic viability
- Federal legislation has a direct impact on practice nationally and funding for behavioral science
- In order to protect and grow our profession, we need pro-psychology legislation
- Psychological science has much to offer to solving critical public health and social justice issues

# Legislative Advocacy



- Write to Your Elected Officials
  - Keep it brief (less than one page, focused on one issue)
  - Use email
  - State who you are and what you want up front
  - Choose the 3 most important points
  - Personalize the letter - why does it matter in their community? Tell a compelling personal story
  - Personalize your relationship - include any personal connections (attended event, voted for them, volunteered, etc)
  - Trust your expertise - you are an expert on psychology!
- \* Use a sample letter and edit/personalize it

How to locate your House & Senate representatives:

<https://www.apa.org/advocacy/guide/who-to-contact>



# Legislative Advocacy

- Effective Telephone Calls
  - Use the same principles as for writing letters
  - Be prepared - have a short script to follow
  - Be persistent - leave a message if needed and follow up

Call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard to be connected to any legislator's office: **202.224.3121**

\*You will most commonly talk to or meet with legislative assistants - they are powerful and are your direct line to your representative. Get on their good side and treat them with respect!



# Legislative Advocacy

- Meet with Your Elected Officials
  - Request a meeting (written request, f/u phone call)
    - Note the specific bill or issue you want to discuss
    - State that you are a constituent
    - Bring a friend / fellow constituent(s) if you can
  - You can meet in their local office or in Washington D.C.
  - Prepare for your meeting & have a plan
    - Request materials from APA where applicable
    - Have a clear “ask”
- A “lobby visit” is a meeting where you can provide your opinion and expertise about a certain issue or bill and urge them to take action (e.g. support a bill)



Remember: your legislators work for YOU

# Lobby Visit Tips



- Be prompt and patient (you will wait!)
- Be concise and focused
- Bring up any personal or political connections
- Provide personal examples and discuss local need/impact
- Offer to provide follow up information (reconnect!)
- Have a clear ask and set a deadline for a response
- Be on the lookout for savvy political diversion and challenge them on it! Try to get a commitment.
- Bring concise materials with background on the issue
- Send a thank you email where you reinforce your ask
- Take notes on important points / issues

(APA Division 42 Advocacy Training Manual)

# 10 Commandments of Advocacy

1. Thou shalt be brief
2. Thou shalt not bear false information
3. Thou shalt be courteous
4. Thou shalt be prepared
5. Thou shalt be politically aware
6. Thou shalt be clear in thy communication
7. Thou shalt personalize thy messages
8. Thou shalt be available to thy legislator
9. Thou shalt be patient and persistent
10. Thou shalt give thanks and follow up



(APA Division 42 Advocacy Training Manual)

# *WHEN* to do it

- **Bill Introduction**
  - Influence the actual bill
  - Propose a solution
  - Collaborate on crafting legislation
- **Committee Review & Action**
  - Time to support or express concerns about legislation
  - Important during annual appropriations
  - Constituents can submit testimony during public hearings
- **Floor Debate & Passage**
  - Can provide information to your representative to use when the issue / bill is being debated (stories, statistics, etc)
  - Urge your representative to support (or oppose) a bill



(APA PsycADVOCATES Training Manual, 2014)

# 5-Minute Advocacy

*Advocacy can be quick, simple, and manageable in your busy day-to-day life!*

- Respond to an Action Alert
- Forward an Action Alert
- Post an Action Alert on Social Media
- Call your Representative - convey support / opposition
- Email your Representative - convey support / opposition
- Ask fellow constituents / colleagues to call or email as well



# Key Contacts and Resources

## APA Government Relations Staff

- 800.374.2723
- 202.336.5889



## Know the FAC-ts

- Connect with your Federal Advocacy Coordinator

## Legislative Action Center

<http://capwiz.com/apapractice/home/>

## Locating Congressional Districts

<http://govtrack.us/>

# Education & Training

- Convey the value of advocacy to students & trainees
- Teach relevant knowledge and skills (effective communication, skillful messaging)
- Address advocacy issues and opportunities in clinical supervision and departmental meetings
- Support involvement in leadership roles
- Provide opportunities to engage in advocacy efforts

(Kaslow, Pickover & Kelly, 2018)





# Advocacy as a Competency



- **Scientist-Practitioner-Advocate Model of Training**
  - Addresses the sociocultural context in which oppression, discrimination, and privilege are dominant
  - Facilitates more equitable distribution of opportunities and resources, and greater inclusion
- **Scientist-Practitioner-Advocate-Leader Model**
  - Psychologists need to be viewed as leaders by themselves and others
  - Responsibility to collaboratively promote social change

(Kaslow, Pickover & Kelly, 2018)

# Advocacy as a Student

- Join APAGS! <https://www.apa.org/apags>
- Apply for a leadership position
  - APAGS has an Advocacy Coordinating Team (ACT)
- Contact your Regional or State Advocacy Coordinator
- Get involved in local, state, or national organizations (APA, APS, state psychological associations)
- Stay informed about current advocacy issues
- Contact your legislators!



# Advocacy as an ECP



- Join APA
- Apply for a leadership position
- Connect with early psychologist listservs
- Get involved in local, state, or national organizations (APA, APS, state psychological associations)
- Stay informed about current advocacy issues
- Contact your legislators!
- Apply for an APA Policy Fellowship – work in Congress! <https://www.apa.org/advocacy/index>

# Advocacy Anytime, Anywhere

- Spread awareness of mental health and behavioral science issues and contributions to society
- Talk about important issues and your positions on them
- Call out social justice inequities or microaggressions; provide education where necessary
- Provide financial support to organizations fighting for YOU
- If you see something, say something
- Call, email, or write to your representatives!
- Set up a meeting with your representatives



# Next Steps

- Adopt an identity as an expert and advocate
- Connect with your local, house and congressional representatives on social media platforms
- Contact your representatives when bills you support or oppose are moving through the legislative progress
- Sign up for APA Action Alerts
  - <http://cqrcengage.com/apapolicy/home>
  - Webpage has monthly legislative updates!
- Respond to APA Action Alerts and distribute them to others



# Get Involved & Show Your Support!

- The easiest thing you can (and should!) do is support organizations that advocate for psychology every day
  - American Psychological Association
    - Science, Practice, Education & Public Interest
  - State Psychological Organization (SPTA)
  - Other Groups that Fight for Causes you Care About

## *Levels of Participation:*

1. Be a Member
2. Be an Active Member  
(join a committee!)
3. Donate



# Take (Political) Action!

- Call, Email or Write to your Representatives!!
- Use social media platforms to make your voice heard
- Go grassroots - organize your efforts
- Attend local government meetings or “listening sessions”
- Schedule a meeting with your representatives
- Work with your leaders and legislators; collaborate!
- Participate in a March or other organized event
- Volunteer for a political campaign
- Run for Office!



# Disclaimer (HATCH Act)



- Federal / VA employees can not engage in advocacy or lobbying activities during work time
- Federal / VA employees can not use work resources to engage in or support political advocacy activities
- Federal / VA employees may not use their VA title or role in any organized political activity or publicly endorse a political candidate
- Federal / VA employees may not run for office during their federal employment



# Advocacy Matters

Advocacy is a tough and sometimes painfully slow process



**BUT** it is **critical** for the future of your own **career**, the viability of your **profession**, and for your **clients!**

*“If you don’t have a seat at the table, you are probably on the menu.”*

– Katherine Nordal



# Resources

## Legislative Issues and Advocacy Training Tools (APA)

- <https://www.apa.org/apags/resources/advocacy/toolkit>
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## APA's PsycAdvocate Training Modules

- <https://www.apa.org/ed/ce/resources/psycadvocate>

## How to Advocate for Psychological Science

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NI2KxaKY7M0>

# Resources

APA's Legislative Action Center

<http://capwiz.com/apapractice/home/>

A Psychologists Guide to Federal Advocacy (direct download)

The PsycADVOCATES training manual

*\*includes sample letters, emails, phone call tips, and thank you templates*

<https://www.apa.org/advocacy/guide/federal-guide.pdf>

APA Division 42 Advocacy Training Manual

<https://division42.org/resources/advocacy/> *\*requires D42 membership*

Cohen, K.R., Lee, C.M. & McIlwraith, R. (2012). The psychology of advocacy and the advocacy of psychology. *Canadian Psychology*, 53(13), 151-158.

# Questions?



*Thank You!*