

**FROM KATHERINE B. MCGUIRE, APA CHIEF ADVOCACY OFFICER**

For the Week of January 20–24, 2020

- **Advancing the Role of Psychological Pain Management**
- **Focusing Attention on Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health**
- **Increasing Americans' Access to Whole-Person Care**
- **Improving Care for Veterans with Serious Mental Illnesses**

**Advancing the Role of Psychological Pain Management**

To promote dialogue and increase the visibility of psychological pain management in addressing the opioid epidemic, APA and the Ohio Psychological Association hosted a leadership forum for policymakers on Thursday, Jan. 23, followed by a daylong continuing-education training on pain management for practicing psychologists on Friday, Jan. 24, in Columbus, Ohio. Promoting broader use of psychological pain management is a key component of APA's response to the opioid epidemic.

Thursday's event featured opening statements by APA President Dr. Sandra Shullman, and APA CEO Dr. Arthur C. Evans Jr., followed by keynote speaker Lori Criss, MSW, LSW, director of Ohio's Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. During her speech, Criss spoke about the efforts underway in Ohio to address the opioid epidemic, including increasing early identification and intervention for serious mental illness and addiction. Following Criss' remarks, the forum featured a presentation of evidence-based psychological pain management interventions and an expert panel discussion of policies impacting patient access to care. The forum was widely attended by several state policymakers and their aides, congressional staff, as well as former governor of Ohio and psychologist Dr. Ted Strickland. APA's Chief of Professional Practice Dr. Jared Skillings participated in the panel discussion and gave remarks at the forum.

Friday's training on psychological pain management concepts and services was provided by nationally recognized experts Dr. Dan Bruns, Dr. Ravi Prasad and APA President-elect Dr. Jennifer Kelly. The goal of the training is to expand the workforce equipped to provide non-pharmacological pain care and it will be provided to attendees at APA's upcoming Practice Leadership Conference. APA plans to partner with other state psychological associations to hold similar events aimed at increasing awareness and use of psychological pain management services.

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At the Ohio Forum, from left to right: Katherine B. McGuire, Dr. Arthur C. Evans Jr., Dr. Jennifer Kelly, Dr. Sandra Shullman, Dr. Jared Skillings, Lori Criss and Dr. Jim Diaz-Granados.

### **Focusing Attention on Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health**

APA has endorsed the Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act of 2019 ([H.R. 5469](#)), the first comprehensive federal legislation to address increasing suicide rates and mental health disorders among black youth. Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-N.J.) introduced the bill in December 2019 alongside a comprehensive Congressional Black Caucus [report](#). If enacted, the bill would:

- Provide grants for culturally competent mental health services in schools and community settings.
- Increase funding for research into mental health disparities in youth of color.
- Increase support for efforts to diversify the behavioral health and clinical research workforce, including the APA Minority Fellowship Program. APA's Advocacy Office will focus its efforts on garnering bipartisan support in Congress for the bill throughout 2020.

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## **Increasing Americans' Access to Whole-Person Care**

Rep. Lauren Underwood (D-Ill.) sought APA's expertise before introducing the Primary and Behavioral Health Care Access Act of 2020 ([H.R. 5575](#)). APA successfully ensured that the legislation would benefit individuals in need of substance use services in addition to mental health care. The bill calls for private health insurance plans to provide three free primary-care visits and three annual outpatient behavioral health care visits each year. APA is among several national groups supporting the bill and [applauding](#) Underwood's leadership in reducing financial barriers for whole-person care.

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## **Improving Care for Veterans with Serious Mental Illnesses**

APA was invited to review and recommend language for the Improving Mental Health Care for Veterans Act of 2020 (S. 3210), introduced by Sens. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.). The bill directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop clinical practice guidelines for treating veterans diagnosed with serious mental illness, including schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder and persistent mood disorder (bipolar disorder I and II).

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