

FROM KATHERINE B. MCGUIRE, APA CHIEF ADVOCACY OFFICER

For the Week of September 3–6, 2019

In this issue:

- **Offering the Trump Administration Resources and Guidance on Migrant Children**
- **Working to Enhance Health-Care Providers' Education on Pain**
- **Improving the Implementation of Public Service Loan Forgiveness**
- **Meeting with the White House to Advance Funding Priorities**
- **Lobbying Congress to Address Social Isolation and Loneliness**
- **Call for Action: Psychologists' Stories Sought on Medicare Authorization Requirements in Rehab Facilities, Other Inpatient Settings**

Offering the Trump Administration Resources and Guidance on Migrant Children

Two new reports from the Department of Health and Human Services' Inspector General confirm what APA has been asserting about the administration's border policies: Migrant children who were separated from their families or arrived here unaccompanied are continuing to struggle in government shelters and detention centers. "Many are not receiving the mental health care they need due to the high caseloads being carried by mental health providers and the inability of shelter directors to attract and retain clinicians. This is unconscionable," APA President Dr. Rosie Phillips Davis said in a [statement](#).

APA staff are following up with the administration to offer resources and guidance about the mental health aspects of the report. An [interview](#) with Dr. Davis on the topic on KPBS, the NPR affiliate in San Diego, aired Sept. 5.

For more information, contact Serena Dávila, JD, at sdavila@apa.org.

Working to Enhance Health-Care Providers' Education on Pain

APA submitted [comments](#) in response to the National Institutes of Health [Request For Information](#) on how health professions school and training programs are preparing clinicians to treat pain. In addition, APA identified gaps in education in such areas as pain assessment, integrated health-care teams, non-pharmacological treatments, treating co-morbid mental health conditions and preventing the progression of pain. APA also used the opportunity to highlight the *American Psychologist* article "[Core Competencies for the Emerging Specialty of Pain Psychology](#)."

For more information, contact Geoff Mumford, PhD, at gmumford@apa.org.

Improving the Implementation of Public Service Loan Forgiveness

Only 1% of applicants for the Temporary Expanded Public Service Loan Forgiveness (TEPSLF) program are actually receiving forgiveness for their loans. A new [report](#) from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) calls on the Department of Education to improve its administration of the program, specifically citing a need to enhance communications to both loan servicers and borrowers. Congress provided additional funds to the Department to improve its administration of the PSLF program, which forgives borrowers' federal student loans after they make at least 10 years of qualifying payments while working in qualified public service employment settings, including public schools, prisons, VA medical centers and community health centers. The GAO recommends that the department integrate the TEPSLF request into the PSLF application, require all loan servicers to include TEPSLF information on their websites, and include TEPSLF information in its PSLF Online Help Tool. The Department of Education agreed with many of the recommendations and the House Education and Labor Committee Chair Rep. Bobby Scott, (D-Va.) will hold a hearing explore the

issues raised in the report. APA continues to support the strengthening of the PSLF/TEPSLF program, which reduces financial barriers for psychologists and increases access to critical mental and behavioral health services for at-risk populations.

For more information, contact Karen Studwell, JD, at kstudwell@apa.org.

Meeting with the White House to Advance Funding Priorities

In meetings alongside its coalition partners from across the research and health workforce communities, APA urged White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) officials to increase funding for federal behavioral research. APA also met with OMB to discuss priorities for health workforce training programs, emphasizing that more behavioral health providers are needed to meet mental health, substance use disorders and rural mental health needs.

For more information, contact Karen Studwell, JD, at kstudwell@apa.org or Heather O'Beirne Kelly, PhD, at hkelly@apa.org.

Lobbying Congress to Address Social Isolation and Loneliness

[Research](#) suggests that loneliness and social isolation are twice as harmful to physical and mental health as obesity and entail health risks comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. To raise awareness of these health risks, APA has joined the newly formed Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness, which is meeting with congressional offices to discuss policy responses to address the looming public health threat of social isolation and loneliness. The coalition—whose members also include the National Council on Aging, Meals on Wheels America, the National Partnership for Women and Families, and others—seeks to enhance social services to address social isolation and loneliness, improve the assessment and treatment of social isolation and loneliness within the health-care system, and invest in research targeting the issue. The coalition is bringing together a diverse set of consumer groups, health plans, health-care providers, technology innovators and others to advocate for policy solutions.

For more information, contact Scott Barstow at sbarstow@apa.org.

Call for Action: Psychologists' Stories Sought on Medicare Authorization Requirements in Rehab Facilities and Other Inpatient Settings

Do you see Medicare patients in hospital outpatient departments, partial hospitalization programs, outpatient rehabilitation facilities, inpatient hospitals and home health programs? Medicare is the only insurance program that requires physician approval before you can see patients in these settings. Psychologists have been telling us how this outdated requirement impacts their Medicare patients, and some of the examples they've shared are posted [here](#).

If you are a Medicare-participating psychologist practicing in one of these types of facilities, we want to know how the physician approval requirement affects you and your practice. If you or one of your colleagues have had similar experiences, please share them via email to pracgovt@apa.org, with "Medicare story" as the subject line.

For more information, contact Bryant Robinson at brobinson@apa.org.