



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

For the Week of January 27–31, 2020

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**Working with Influential Leaders to Stop America’s Addiction Crisis**

APA hosted a meeting of the [Mental Health Liaison Group](#) (MHLG) and the [Coalition to Stop Opioid Overdose](#) (CSOO) with Rep. David Trone (D-Md.) to discuss ways to improve the lives of people with mental health and substance use issues. MHLG and CSOO—which represent more than 100 leading national groups focused on mental health and addiction—work together to advance federal policies that support prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery services. Rep. Trone, now serving his first term in Congress, created the Freshman Working Group on Addiction (FWGA), a bipartisan task force working to end the addiction crisis in America. Mental health and addiction are the congressman’s two top priorities.

During the meeting, Rep. Trone shared his family experience with addiction and spoke about several pieces of legislation supported by FWGA members. APA supports many of these bills, including bills that would provide loan repayment for mental health professionals, expand access to telemedicine mental health services, support suicide prevention research, and increase evidence-based substance use disorder prevention and treatment programs on college campuses.

*For more information contact Laurel Stine, JD, at [lstine@apa.org](mailto:lstine@apa.org).*

**Raising Awareness about Traumatic Brain Injuries in Military and Veterans**

In an [op-ed](#) published in “Military Times,” APA President Sandra L. Shullman, PhD, raised awareness of the seriousness that traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) pose to service members and veterans following reports that 64 soldiers received treatment for TBIs after the Jan. 8 attack on a U.S. military base in Iraq. “These injuries, which can be caused by an explosion, or a bump, jolt or blow to the head, can result in a range of problems, including vision disturbances, balance problems, concentration and memory problems, and headaches,” Shullman said. “There has also been considerable research on the effects of TBI on mental health, such as post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide.” APA continues its efforts to advocate for federal support for research on this issue through the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs, and to advocate for support for the psychologists who conduct neuropsychological evaluations and provide direct services to military personnel and veterans.

*For more information contact Doug Walter, JD, at [dwalter@apa.org](mailto:dwalter@apa.org).*

**Seeking to Reduce Barriers That Prevent Much-Needed Research on Fentanyl**

On Jan. 28, the House Committee on the Judiciary’s Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security held a hearing entitled “[Fentanyl Analogues: Perspectives on Classwide Scheduling](#)” to examine concerns about the Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA) temporary emergency scheduling of all drugs structurally similar to fentanyl—the drug most closely linked to the rampant increase in fatal opioid overdose deaths. While many in the law enforcement community view the scheduling action as a way to help keep fentanyl-like compounds off the opioid black market, the research community sees the action as an overreach that will severely limit scientific investigation of a valuable class of potentially therapeutic drugs. Representing the latter point of view, APA Fellow [Sandra Comer, PhD](#), [testified](#) in her role as Public Policy Officer for the College on Problems of Drug Dependence. APA also submitted a complementary [statement](#), emphasizing that while the association supports robust, science-based efforts

to curb the illicit sale and use of synthetic fentanyl, it also believes that any legislation to address this issue should include language reducing some of the barriers to research. However, on Jan. 29 the House voted to approve a Senate bill ([S. 3201](#)) to extend the temporary scheduling action through May 2021.

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### **Speaking Out on a U.S. Supreme Court Ruling That Threatens To Limit Services to Immigrants**

In a [statement](#) by APA President Sandra L. Shullman, PhD, the association voiced its concern about the Supreme Court's decision to allow the administration to implement a "public charge" rule that could limit the eligibility of low-income immigrants to access federal programs including health, housing and nutrition programs. In the best case scenario, the rule will only be in place for several months while it goes back to the lower courts for further litigation. APA notes that while many immigrants will not be directly affected by the new rule, it is expected to create fear among the immigrant community.

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### **Advancing Research to Prevent Suicide**

On Jan. 28, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the [Advancing Research to Prevent Suicide Act](#) (H.R. 4704), a bill co-led by Reps. Ben McAdams (D-Utah) and Anthony Gonzalez (R-Ohio) that directs the National Science Foundation to support fundamental, multidisciplinary research to further our understanding of suicide. APA and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) were [recognized on the floor of the House](#) and in articles from the offices of [Rep. McAdams](#) and [Rep. Gonzalez](#) for their input on and endorsement of this legislation. Late last year, APA and AFSP co-sponsored a congressional briefing with the congressmen to highlight the many ways basic research informs evidence-based practice on suicide prevention and treatment.

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### **Advising the White House about the Current Environment for Research**

Responding to a [request for information](#) from the Joint Committee on the Research Environment (JCORE) at the White House, APA [shared information](#) on several issues: progress concerning open science; research with non-human animals; guidelines for research with human participants and with non-human animals for high school students and for established researchers; and regulatory burdens for scientists who conduct research on cannabis. JCORE was set up in May 2019 to gather information for the administration about ways to improve the environment for research in the United States.

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