A Message from Arthur C. Evans, PhD,
New CEO of APA and the Practice Organization

It is with great excitement that I welcome this opportunity to serve as the Chief Executive Officer of the APA Practice Organization and the American Psychological Association. I love being a psychologist. The practice community is very important to me, having spent the early part of my career treating patients in the public and private sectors. Like many of you, I entered the profession to make a positive difference in people’s lives.

Over time, I recognized that improvements for my patients also required system and policy changes. So, I forged a unique career at the intersection of policy, research, and practice. I spent the past 20 years working in public health, first at the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services in Hartford, Connecticut, and most recently as Commissioner of Philadelphia’s Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS). I was also honored to serve recently on the Committee for the Advancement of Professional Practice of the APA Practice Organization.

Because many stakeholders do not fully understand the distinct skills that psychologists bring to behavioral health treatment and services, an important part of my work has been and will continue to be educating audiences – from payers to the public – about the breadth of skills psychologists contribute to our health system and communities. An example of my ongoing support for our profession, during my tenure at DBHIDS, I ensured that requests-for-proposals issued by my agency required new service programs to include licensed psychologists as a part of their staffing complement, specifying that psychologists implement evidence-based practices and conduct data collection.

My time at DBHIDS helped me realize that we need to expand options to promote mental health for more people. Ninety percent of people with addictions and 40 percent to 50 percent of those with mental health diagnoses in Philadelphia never sought treatment. This data called for urgent action. So I developed city-wide behavioral health initiatives that involved psychologists’ expertise, including an online tool at www.healthymindsphtly.org that screens people for behavioral health problems in the same way that communities screen for diabetes or cardiovascular disease. Additionally, my agency addressed stigma through community participatory art projects, creating murals on a variety of behavioral health topics. These creative projects offered social support and a collective purpose that were beneficial to participants. On one such project, a psychologist conducted workshops and other activities to educate community members about suicide.

I also recognize that practitioners face legal, financial and business challenges. We need to better understand where the system is heading, build practices in ways that are compatible with emerging trends, and add insight and expertise to new models that are evolving. Most importantly, we need to be able to demonstrate how mental health care saves money by addressing problematic and unhealthy behaviors before they become medical problems, adding value and quality to the health care system.

Psychologists have a major role to play in shaping new health care systems. It is up to us to identify and seize those opportunities to influence change to promote the mental and behavioral health of those we serve.

Sincerely,

Arthur C. Evans, Jr., PhD
Chief Executive Officer and Executive Vice President
APA Practice Organization and American Psychological Association