

**January NewsBlast from the Washington Fellow of the  
American Orthopsychiatric Association**

**News from the Hill**

**Rethinking Children’s Mental Health: Perceptual Barriers to Policy in Media and Mind.** At the quarterly meeting of the National Consortium for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services January 20, anthropologists Nat Kendall-Taylor and Eric Linland presented findings from a three-year study carried out by the Frameworks Institute with support from the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard. The Frameworks Institute advances the nonprofit sector’s communications capacity by identifying, translating, and modeling relevant scholarly research for framing public discourse about social problems. The study aimed to compare expert understanding of children’s mental health with public perceptions, in order to use strategic framing methods to more closely align these disparate ways of thinking.

There are several important gaps between expert knowledge and public understandings of children’s mental health: existence of the issue (e.g., assumption that mental health is the absence of illness), the role of genes (e.g., assumption that mental illness is completely genetic), and appropriate treatment (e.g., assumption that only medication can solve problems). To close these gaps, Kendall-Taylor and Linland stressed the importance of translating research findings into understandable forms, by starting communications with references to values and explaining concepts using simplifying models, which create specific ways of thinking. Only then can the implications of mental health research reach the public (including policymakers) and make a difference in our culture and legislation.

Studies of public discourse have shown that certain cues within messages can activate specific cultural models already present in people’s minds. For example, values experiments indicated that priming communications with values such as prosperity (e.g., the nation’s future prosperity is at stake) and ingenuity (e.g., innovative solutions have improved children’s mental health long-term) exerted a significant influence on people’s policy support for child mental health. Values that did not affect public opinion included disparity (e.g., vulnerable children deserve more) and crisis themes. Mass communication may be reframed so that it cues different models and changes people’s default opinions.

Furthermore, a simplifying model may help people overcome their dominant assumptions about child mental health. For example, a highly effective metaphor was the levelness of a table, which depends on both imbalances in the table and

slants of the floor, and is crucial to the table's functionality, just as children's mental health depends on personal characteristics and environmental experiences, and allows them to learn, socialize, and reach their potential. Read more about using strategic framing to change the conversation about social problems at <http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/cmh.html>

**AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition Meeting.** At the seventh meeting of the Science and Human Rights Coalition January 23, scientists, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers came together to learn about human rights issues relevant to indigenous populations and to build stronger working relationships for the Coalition. The opening plenary session was led by Rebecca Tsosie, Executive Director of the Indian Legal Program at Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University. She spoke about the injustice faced by indigenous peoples and the need to protect tribal sovereignty and rights to environmental and cultural resources. Workshops included:

- Research Collaborations with Indigenous Scientists and Communities, which focused on challenges and unique considerations for conducting social science and biomedical research within indigenous communities (e.g., maintaining respect for local culture and traditions, empowerment). Panelists discussed how the goals of researchers and indigenous communities can support one another.
- Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights, Science and Technology, which explored human rights issues facing indigenous communities, including energy resources, agriculture, clean water, and land management. Panelists discussed strategies for collaboration and potential barriers to the implementation of human rights, as well as the role of education in advancing solutions.
- Benefit Sharing: A Human Rights Approach to Indigenous Knowledge, which was centered on Article 31 of the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples—"Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies, and cultures." Panelists discussed the responsibilities involved in a culturally sensitive approach to human rights, the protection of indigenous knowledge and intellectual property, and the role of indigenous knowledge in scientific understanding.

Coalition members and affiliates also split up into working groups to take stock of progress, update plans of action, and continue to work toward measurable outcomes. Ortho is a part of the Service to the Human Rights Community working group, devoted to bridging scientific and human rights communities in order to facilitate scientists' efforts to advance human rights. There are several projects ongoing, including developing guidelines for scientists working with human rights organizations, connecting human rights organizations with on-call scientists, and promoting the right to the benefits of scientific progress and its applications (Article 15, ICESCR). To learn more or become more involved in a working group, please email Liepa Gust at [lgust@aoatoday.com](mailto:lgust@aoatoday.com)

**Stress in America.** The American Psychological Association (APA) held a press conference January 11 about "Stress in America: Our Health at Risk." The Stress in America Survey, which began in 2007, has been conducted annually. This year's survey indicated that many Americans consistently report high levels of stress, with 22% reporting extreme stress (8, 9, or 10 on a 10-point scale). Nearly 4 in 10 respondents reported that their stress has increased over the past year. The great majority (90%) believe that stress can contribute to the development of major illnesses, and yet over a third (36%) believe that it has only a slight or no impact on their own physical health. Norman Anderson, CEO and Executive Vice President of APA, spoke about the importance of bridging this disconnect. Research has shown that chronic stress can contribute to chronic illness, and policymakers must recognize these links and support interventions that help people reduce stress.

This year's Stress in America survey also explored other risk factors for stress, including caregiving. The average stress level reported by caregivers is 6.5, higher than the general population's 5.2. Caregivers are also more likely than the general public to have chronic illness (82% vs 61%). People living with depression report an average stress level of 6.3, and those living with obesity report a level of 6.0. The APA and the YMCA are partnering in a campaign to Advocate for America's Well-Being. The organizations plan to provide strategies to help families improve their physical health through healthy eating and regular physical activity. For more information about the new report, go to [www.stressinamerica.org](http://www.stressinamerica.org)

**Changing the Frame: Child Well-Being as a Guide for Budgets and Policy.**

First Focus partnered with Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and the Foundation for Child Development to host a congressional briefing January 26 on the policy measures that are most closely linked to child well-being. Panelist William O'Hare of the Annie E. Casey Foundation co-authored *Investing in Public Programs Matters: How State Policies Impact Children's Lives*, which focuses on the results of the 2012 STATE Child Well-Being Index (CWI). Dr. O'Hare began by presenting 25 well-being indicators that were compared with micro and macro demographic and economic conditions in each state. Analyses indicated correlations between resources and CWI, which varied tremendously: from .85 index value for New Jersey, the highest ranked state, to negative .96 index value for New Mexico, the lowest-ranked state. Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Utah, Connecticut, and Minnesota were also among the highest-ranking states. O'Hare emphasized links between policies at the state level, such as higher tax rates, and child well-being. Download the full report, graphs, or press release at <http://fcd-us.org/resources/investing-public-programs-matters-how-state-policies-impact-childrens-lives>

First Focus supports the Children's Budget Act (S. 1369, H.R. 1602), which would require a separate analysis of federal funding that supports children. Because government spending on children is currently spread out over dozens of agencies, there is no easy way to analyze the different levels of investment. Find out more at <http://www.ffcampaignforchildren.org/resources/documents-and-publications/fact-sheets/childrens-budget-act>

**National School Choice Week.** January 22-28 marked the second annual National School Choice Week, featuring town halls, legislative briefings, rallies, and movie screenings across the country celebrating effective education options for all children. Last year, these events encouraged policymakers to pass legislation related to expanding education options, including policies that promote charter schools, education scholarships, and tax credits. For example, the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, first authorized in 2004, was granted funding for the next five years. As a result of the program, over 2000 low-income students were able to attend private schools, and were significantly more likely to graduate than their counterparts in public schools. Such school choice programs empower families to make decisions about which schools best meet their goals and needs. In some cases, it allows parents to save their children from schools that are not working well for them. Therefore, as advocates argue, school choice is a crucial part of the redevelopment of low-income communities and long-term economic growth. During National School Choice Week, over 30 governors, mayors, and legislators issued proclamations to highlight the need for options in education. Find out more about the events and the proclamations at <http://www.schoolchoiceweek.com/home>

**Medicaid and CHIP Eligibility, Enrollment, and Renewal Policies.** The Kaiser Family Foundation held a briefing on January 18 to release its new survey findings on Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) policies. Samantha Artiga, Associate Director of the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, began the discussion by noting that despite continued economic pressure on state budgets, 29 states made program improvements in Medicaid and CHIP in 2011, and several increased cost-sharing requirements. Tricia Brooks, Senior Fellow at the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families, reported that the availability of Medicaid enrollment bonuses has encouraged states to simplify application processes and increase enrollment. Many have used new technologies to increase program efficiency and streamline enrollment. John Supra, the Chief Information Officer at the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, talked about the success of "express lane redetermination," using data from other programs or databases to re-enroll people who had left Medicaid or CHIP. Finally, Dayanne Leal, Outreach Manager for Children's Health Policy at Health Care for All, called for more outreach to poor and minority communities to increase access to health care. Download the full report at <http://www.kff.org/medicaid/8272.cfm>

**Grant Reform and New Transparency Act.** Since its approval by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee in November, the Grant Reform and Transparency Act (GRANT), H.R. 3433, has generated debate in scientific and academic communities. The goal of the Act is to encourage transparency and accountability in federal grant programs, by requiring agencies to use merit-based procedures in awarding grants and to conduct evaluations of prospective grantees' abilities to successfully carry out proposals. It also asks the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to (a) upgrade public websites for federal grant opportunities, (b) issue guidance to help agencies establish merit-based selection procedures, and (c) submit a plan to improve the audit process for federal awards.

The controversy lies in the provision regarding information required for the public grant website, including grant funding availability and award information, and explanations for the basis of award decisions involving grants exceeding \$100,000. The bill would require agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, to post all proposals submitted to them online. Representatives Ralph Hall (D-TX), Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), Elijah Cummings (D-MD) and Gerald Connolly (D-VA) argued that this requirement could jeopardize intellectual property. In addition, they argued it may create mountains of paperwork for agencies and universities. The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy has asked scientists and organizations to comment on the issue of posting research for government grants. Read more of the debate at <http://www.opencongress.org/bill/112-h3433/show>

## Research & Resources

**Reducing Prejudice & Promoting Equity in Childhood.** The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) recently published a social policy report brief on reducing prejudice and promoting equity in childhood, summarizing a longer report by psychologists Melanie Killen, Adam Rutland, and Martin Ruck. The brief explains that to be effective in promoting tolerance and reducing prejudice, intervention programs must be informed by developmental science research, as attitudes and assumptions begin to develop in childhood. In contrast to popular belief, children can understand what it means to experience discrimination, even before adolescence. Evidence suggests that three types of interventions are effective: peer interventions that facilitate cooperative intergroup contact among children, adult-child interventions that convey messages that promote mutual respect and tolerance, and interventions that address children's understanding of social relations and group identity. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides a framework for interventions and school-based programs that may challenge attitudes that perpetuate prejudice. To download the full social policy report or the brief, visit [http://www.srcd.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=229&Itemid=524](http://www.srcd.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=229&Itemid=524)

**Mental Health Linked with Parent Educational Attainment.** A study by medical sociologist Amelie Quesnel-Vallee of McGill University and colleagues, published in *Social Science & Medicine*, found strong links between depression in adulthood and an individual's parent's level of education. The researchers reviewed 29 years of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979, which included data of parents' education level, their children's education level, household income, and depressive symptoms. Analyses indicated that parents with higher levels of education tended to have children with more education, better paying jobs, and fewer mental health issues. The researchers concluded that social mobility is rooted in educational attainment as a pathway for mental health, so that improving educational opportunities for everyone could prevent some of the poor mental health outcomes associated with low socio-economic status. Find out more at <http://psychcentral.com/news/2012/01/27/adult-depression-influenced-by-parents-education-level/34172.html>

**Stress Decreases Brain Matter and Limits Ability to Cope.** A new study published in the *Journal of Biological Psychiatry* indicates that experiencing stressful life events can reduce matter in critical regions of the brain that regulate emotion, impulse control, and physiological functions, making people vulnerable to mental disorders. Psychiatrist and neurobiologist Rajita Sinha, director of the Yale Stress Center, led a brain imaging study of more than 100 healthy subjects. Results showed that even among healthy individuals, adverse events can lead to shrinking in the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for regulating self-control, emotions, and metabolism. These differences are apparent soon after stressful events occur, and may serve as warning signs for psychiatric disorders and chronic diseases. People who experience a life trauma or chronic stress may become more susceptible to impulsive and dangerous behaviors, such as using addictive substances. Sinha points to the importance of exercise or meditation in stress relief, and strong social and emotional relationships in reversing some of the negative effects of stress. To read more, visit <http://healthland.time.com/2012/01/09/study-stress-shrinks-the-brain-and-lowers-our-ability-to-cope-with-adversity/>

**Psychosis & Immigration at a Young Age.** New research published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* suggests that psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia have higher incidence among immigrant populations, especially among those who immigrated at young ages. In a study of the four largest immigrant groups in the Dutch city of The Hague, children who immigrated when younger than five have twice the risk of such disorders than those who immigrated at age 10-14, and triple the risk of those who immigrated as adults. Compared to the risk of psychosis among second-generation citizens (with at least one foreign-born parent) and native-born Dutch citizens, non-Western immigrants who migrated between ages 0 and 4 had the highest risk of psychosis. The risk gradually decreased for those who migrated at older ages, among all groups. The Columbia University and Parnassia Psychiatric Institute (The Hague) researchers believe that the trauma experienced by immigrants and the stress of minority ethnic status adversely affect the mental health of young children. Read more about the study at <http://psychcentral.com/news/2012/01/09/immigration-at-young-age-ups-risk-of-psychosis/33454.html>

**Latinos' Perceptions of the Economic Recession.** The 2011 National Survey of Latinos, conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center, indicates that a majority of Latinos (54%) believe that the recession has been harder on them than on other groups. Large proportions of the Hispanic sample reported that they or someone in their household has been unemployed in the past year (59%) and that their personal finances are "only fair" or "poor" (75%). Between 2006 and 2010, the poverty rate among Hispanics increased by six percentage points, from 20.6% to 26.6%, while poverty among whites increased from 8.2% to 9.9%, and poverty among blacks increased from 24.3% to 27.4%. Still, Latinos are more optimistic about the future than other groups. The new study indicated that two-thirds (67%) of Latinos said that they expect their financial situation to improve over the next year, compared to 58% of the general population. In addition, 66% of Latinos said they expect their children will enjoy a higher standard of living than they have now, while only 48%

of the general public responded likewise. Find out more details (e.g., comparing native-born and foreign-born Latinos) at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/01/26/hispanics-say-they-have-the-worst-of-a-bad-economy/?src=prc-headline>

**“Response to Intervention” & Schoolwide Learning Supports.** The Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA has published a guide for teachers and learning supports staff to broaden perspectives on response to intervention (RTI) to include frameworks for enabling learning schoolwide. According to the report, RTI must be built on a solid school foundation that focuses on prevention and early intervention. This requires a comprehensive approach, particularly in schools where a large proportion of students do not engage actively and face barriers to learning. The guide covers improving the conditions for learning, personalization as fundamental, steps for effective RTI, specialized assistance, and a continuum of intervention. These steps for successful implementation aim to increase students’ intrinsic motivation for school success in a positive school climate. Case studies, checklists, activities, and discussion questions further illustrate the frameworks presented. Download the guide at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Newsletter/Winter12.pdf>

**SPSSI Online Advocacy Center.** The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) has launched an online Advocacy Center. The Advocacy Center web page is integrated with the other policy pages of the SPSSI site to provide comprehensive resources for psychologists interested in using research for policy reform. Resources include news, videos, policy briefing papers on immigration and minorities, LGBT issues, and poverty and unemployment; tools for communicating with Congress and other government officials; tips for writing policy briefs or opinion editorials; and resources for participating in media interviews. The page also features examples of past advocacy by SPSSI members. Check out all these new online tools at <http://www.spssi.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=1592&parentID=471>

## **Upcoming Events, Webinars, & Requests for Comments**

**Baltimore School Choice Discussion & Dinner.** Baltimore-area students, parents, teachers, and community activists will discuss the benefits of educational freedom in Maryland on Friday, **February 3, 2012**. The theme for discussion includes access to quality public schools, public charter schools, magnet schools, virtual schools, private schools, and homeschooling, and Baltimore teachers and former students will share their perspectives. The event will take place at the Lithuanian Hall (851 Hollins St.) at 6:00 pm. Community discussions like these are important for raising awareness of educational options and opportunities. If you would like to join, please RSVP to Liepa Gust at [lgust@aoatoday.com](mailto:lgust@aoatoday.com)

**Child Welfare, Race, & Disparity: New Findings, New Opportunities.** Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago will host a Child and Family Policy Forum on **February 9, 2012**. The event will focus on racial disparities in the child welfare system. Questions include: Do areas with high disparity rates share other

characteristics (e.g., family structure, unemployment, parental educational attainment)? Does the magnitude of the gap differ by geography? How should disparity affect public investments designed to promote equity among children? Panelists include Fred Wulczyn, Senior Research Fellow at Chapin Hall, David Sanders, Executive Vice President of Systems Improvement at Casey Family Programs, John Mattingly, Senior Fellow at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Lonnie Snowden, Professor of Public Health at University of California, Berkeley. For more information about attending in person, or to register for a live webcast, visit <http://chapinhallfeb9.eventbrite.com/>

**Diversity Across Europe: Implications for Nursing.** The Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI) Honor Society of Nursing will host a conference on the implications of diversity for nursing, July 12-14, 2012 in Cardiff, Wales, UK. The conference aims to bring together leaders from diverse clinical and academic settings to stimulate networking and collaboration, foster understanding of diversity, and promote knowledge exchange between researchers and nurses. The deadline for abstract submissions is **February 14, 2012**. Abstracts are sought for both poster and oral presentations. For more information, visit <http://www.bojac.eu/EC2012/call-for-abstracts>

**Advancing Children's Right to Education Online Dialogue.** New Tactics in Human Rights is hosting an online discussion **February 15 – 21, 2012** regarding access to education and strategies for reform. According to the Right to Education Project, 69 million children do not attend school, and more than 700 million are illiterate. Practitioners around the world have developed innovative programs to ensure that children have access to education in their local communities. The online dialogue is an opportunity for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to share their experiences and ideas and discuss questions and challenges. Join the conversation at <http://www.newtactics.org/en/dialogue/advancing-childrens-right-education>

**9<sup>th</sup> SPSSI Convention on Changing Societies: Learning from and for Research, Social Action, and Policy.** The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) will host its 9<sup>th</sup> biennial convention on July 21-24, 2012, in Charlotte, NC. The topic for the conference involves societal change, such as environmental disasters, migration, economic upheaval, and social movements, and how researchers, activists, and policy-makers can learn and respond to these social problems. The deadline for submitting proposals for the conference has been extended to **February 20, 2012**. Submission types include symposia (90 minutes) interactive discussions (1 hour), 15 minute presentations, and poster presentations. Find more specific instructions for submissions at <http://www.spssi.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewPage&pageID=480&nodeID=1>

**3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Violence in Healthcare.** The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Violence in the Health Sector, "Linking Local Initiatives with Global Learning," will take place October 24-26, 2012 in Vancouver, Canada. Themes for this year's conference include: patterns of aggression or violence in healthcare, impacts of aggression or violence, and initiatives and solutions to aggression or

violence in healthcare. The deadline to submit abstracts for the conference is **March 1, 2012**. For submission guidelines and details about the conference, visit <http://www.oudconsultancy.nl/vancouver/violence/submissionguidel.html>

**18<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities:**

**Focus on Reentry.** The 18<sup>th</sup> annual Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities (TASC) Conference will be held **March 21-23, 2012** in Baltimore, Maryland. The topic of this year's conference is "Drugs and Crime: Focus on Reentry." Speakers will include Denise O'Donnell, Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Michael Clark, Director of the Center for Strength-Based Strategies in Michigan, and Gary Maynard, Maryland Secretary of Public Safety and Corrections Services. Register for the conference at <http://www.nationaltasc.org/conference.php>

**Georgetown Center for Child and Human Development Training Institutes.**

The 2012 Training Institutes will focus on innovative systems of care approaches to improve children's mental health service delivery in a changing environment. The trainings will take place **July 25-29, 2012** in Orlando, Florida. Attend a variety of sessions including general sessions with prominent speakers, workshops, special forums, and poster presentations. Trainings will include a Native American services track and a youth leadership track. Four intensive Pre-Institute Training Programs will take place July 24 and 25, focusing on cultural competence, leadership, health reform, and residential treatment interventions. Continuing Education Credits are available for all sessions. For more information, visit <http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/training/88504.html>

**Research Chair in Child and Youth Mental Health in Canada.** The Department of Psychology at the University of Calgary, Canada, invites applications for a tenure-track position and Tier II Canada Research Chair in Child and Youth Mental Health. Applicants should have strong research records appropriate for supervising doctoral-level research, as well as a strong commitment to teaching undergraduate and graduate students. A doctorate in clinical psychology, including a CPA or APA accredited clinical internship, is required. The successful applicant will be expected to establish an externally funded program of research in youth mental health. He or she will be appointed as an assistant or associate professor within the Department of Psychology, with cross-appointment in the Department of Psychiatry, and would be a full member of the Hotchkiss Brain Institute. Application letters, statements of research interests, teaching philosophy, curriculum vitae, representative reprints, and two letters of recommendation should be sent to Dr. David Hodgins, Chair of the Clinical Psychology Search, Department of Psychology, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada, T2N1N4, email: [dhodgins@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dhodgins@ucalgary.ca)

**Chief Operating Officer at Horizons for Homeless Children.** Horizons for Homeless Children (HHC) is a community of professionals committed to changing the lives of young children and their families experiencing homelessness. It operates two direct service programs: Community Children's Centers, Boston's only comprehensive, full-time early education and childcare centers specifically for young homeless children, and Playspace Programs, recreational and educational spaces located in every family shelter in Massachusetts. HHC invites applications for

a Chief Operating Officer (COO), who will manage four directors responsible for the majority of HHC's staff (70+ people), and will play a critical role in HHC's executive team. He or she will broaden HHC's influence on the lives of homeless children by developing, implementing, and measuring early childhood programs, the Family Partnerships Program, the Evaluation and Innovation Program, and the Training and Technical Assistance Program. The COO will ideally bring 10 years of experience and a strong track record of leading and managing a high quality, multi-site early education or child/family direct service program.