

APA Official Actions

Position Statement on Assessing the Risk for Violence

Approved by the Board of Trustees, July 2023

Approved by the Assembly, May 2023

“Policy documents are approved by the APA Assembly and Board of Trustees. . . These are . . . position statements that define APA official policy on specific subjects. . .” – *APA Operations Manual*

Issue:

Through clinical assessment and the use of structured risk assessments, psychiatrists can identify risk factors that may contribute to violence. However, it is difficult to predict definitively who will act violently.

APA Position:

During their careers, most psychiatrists will assess the risk of violence to others. While psychiatrists can often identify circumstances associated with an increased likelihood of violent behavior, they cannot predict dangerousness with definitive accuracy. Over any given period, some individuals assessed as at low risk will act violently, while others assessed as at high risk will not.

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