

APA Official Actions

Position Statement on Resolution Against Racism and Racial Discrimination and Their Adverse Impacts on Mental Health

Approved by the Board of Trustees, July 2018

Approved by the Assembly, May 2018

“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:

The American Psychiatric Association recognizes that racism and racial discrimination adversely affect mental health by diminishing the victim’s self-image, confidence, and optimal mental functioning. Racism also renders the perpetrator unprepared for the 21st century society that is becoming increasingly multicultural and global. Racism and racial discrimination are two of several factors leading to mental health care disparities. A recent meta-analysis indicated that exposure to racism was associated with poorer mental health, including depression and anxiety (Paradies et al., 2015). The APA believes that all forms of racism and racial discrimination affect mental health and wellbeing and negatively impact the nation as a whole.

POSITION:

Therefore, the American Psychiatric Association:

1. Supports current and future actions to eliminate racism and racial discrimination by fostering a respectful appreciation of multiculturalism, diversity, and efforts of greater inclusion
2. Encourages mental health professionals to be mindful of the existence and impact of racism and racial discrimination in the lives of patients and their families, in clinical encounters, and in the development of mental health services
3. Supports member and public education on impacts of racism and racial discrimination, advocacy for equitable mental health services for all patients, and further research into the impacts of racism and racial discrimination as an important public mental health issue
4. Recognizes the detrimental effects that racism has on the mental health of people of color and supports policies and laws which would reduce further harm

Authors:

Council on Minority Mental Health and Health Disparities

Paradies Y., Ben J., Denson N., Elias A., Priest N., Pieterse A., et al. (2015) Racism as a determinant of health: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS ONE* 10(9): e0138511.