



SOCIETY OF ADDICTION PSYCHOLOGY (Division 50, American Psychological Association)

May 23, 2023

A message from the Executive Committee of the Society of Addiction Psychology

To our fellow members and affiliated colleagues,

We wanted to address an issue that several division members brought to our attention. Our president, Dr. Aaron Weiner, made a series of public comments on social media over a period of several months up through mid-February 2023 that elicited strong reactions from members of our division both on- and off-line. These reactions centered, in part, around concern that the posts represented official opinions or positions of the Division. Specifically, one comment seemed to minimize the utility of harm reduction interventions. Another comment, in response to a news article featuring mothers who use THC to enhance their parenting, implied a need for Child Protective Services to be involved with parents who use substances while caring for their children. Dr. Weiner subsequently met with members of the executive board to discuss these events, both individually and as a group, and deleted the comments soon thereafter. He agreed they were conceptually incomplete, inflammatory, and understandably being perceived as representing the Division as a whole. On behalf of our division and Dr. Weiner, we are reaching out to offer a formal apology, clarify our division's values, and propose steps forward.

First, we, the executive board and Dr. Weiner, are deeply sorry for perpetuating stigma toward individuals who use substances. We also apologize for any implication that we do not support harm reduction approaches and the people who engage with these services. As a division, we have supported, and will continue to support, policies that make empirically-supported harm reduction services more accessible, especially to the most marginalized and vulnerable members of our society. Our division views harm reduction as essential to addressing alcohol and other drug use in the US, as evidenced by the very large body of empirical literature supporting its efficacy in preventing harm, promoting population health, and improving functional outcomes for individuals using substances. We apologize for, and renounce, any statements that have been made that are inconsistent with these views.

Second, based on our initial conversations as an executive board and desire to prevent further missteps and/or misunderstandings, we propose the following actions:

- 1) Executive board members will remove division roles/affiliations from the profiles of their personal social media accounts. They will also add "Views are my own" or a similar variant to all social media bios. Only division-specific social media accounts (e.g., @apadivision50) will list the name of the division.
- 2) Executive board members will be mindful of their division roles when expressing personal perspectives on alcohol and drug policy in public, especially (though not limited to) social media posts. If an executive board member is unsure whether content they wish to post may be perceived as harmful to division members or those we serve (e.g., individuals who use alcohol and other drugs), they may submit the post to the communications and technology committee for review and consultation.

- 3) Beginning with the 2024 election cycle, candidates for elected positions will be asked to detail their positions on key alcohol and drug policy issues in their candidate statements, with the goal of increasing transparency during the election process. The elections chair has approved and will help implement this policy.

Our hope is that we use these events as a springboard toward growth, to enhance our personal and professional connections with one another. In so doing, we will be positioned to change course when we are doing harm and stay on track when doing well.

Regards,

Aaron Weiner, President
Seema Clifasefi, President-Elect
Mark Sobell, Past President
Linda Rinehart, Secretary
Jaye Derrick, Treasurer
Bruce Liese, Council Representative
V. Ann Waldorf, Council Representative
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Mary Beth Miller, Member-at-Large (Early Career Psychologist)
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