



**The SCRA Public Policy Committee in Action:
Advocacy, Collaboration, and Capacity Building**

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Abstract

Interest in social policy work has been on the rise in the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA). SCRA's Public Policy Committee aims to affect local, state, and national policy on topics relevant to community psychology through advocacy, collaboration, and capacity building. To communicate SCRA's perspective on pressing social issues, the Public Policy Committee created a policy position statement procedure to address ongoing problems and a rapid response action procedure for urgent matters (e.g., advocacy campaigns). Options for dissemination of policy initiatives include *The Community Psychologist* (TCP), *American Journal of Community Psychology* (AJCP), SCRA listservs, and others. Examples of position statements approved or under development include mass incarceration, juvenile justice, immigration reform, and global climate change. Examples of past rapid response actions include the areas of gun legislation, sequester cuts, and psychologists' involvement in torture. To expand SCRA's policy reach, SCRA has partnered with other organizations in capacity building efforts. For example, SCRA and the Public Policy Committee partnered with the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) to conduct a *Short Course in Policy Involvement* and an advocacy training day on Capitol Hill (United States Congress). Finally, the Public Policy Committee has engaged in strategic initiatives to increase the capacity of SCRA members to engage in policy and advocacy work. Strategic initiatives include the annual SCRA Public Policy Small Grants Program, student practicum positions on the Public Policy Committee, surveys of SCRA membership regarding policy and advocacy engagement, and a policy track at SCRA biennial conferences.

For at least ten years the Society for Community Research and Action has seen a rise in interest in social policy work (SCRA; Division 27 of the American Psychological Association [APA]). This is evident in the significant increase in member involvement and policy activities undertaken. As past co-chairs and a graduate practicum student of the SCRA Public Policy Committee (herein Committee), we will discuss recent efforts to affect policy change through advocacy, collaboration, and capacity building.

Recently, the Committee embarked upon a number of new methods to spread the reach

of SCRA's policy influence. Advocacy is an integral component of the work of the Committee. Through the creation of policy position statements for ongoing problems and rapid response action procedures for urgent matters, the Committee is able to communicate SCRA's perspective on pressing social issues and matters of public health and well-being. Policy position statements provide summaries of scientific research and accumulated knowledge from practice accompanied by recommendations to policy makers and the general public (e.g., Society for Community Research and Action, 2013). The policy position statements and rapid

response actions are published in summary form in *The Community Psychologist* (TCP) newsletter. Policy position statements are published in complete form in the *American Journal of Community Psychology* (AJCP). Policy position statements and rapid response actions can include advocacy campaigns to help achieve the desired changes. In addition to public policy statements and rapid responses, another important Committee initiative to enhance policy influence, as well as contribute to capacity building, is the SCRA-funded Policy Small Grants Program, which is also open to applicants outside the United States.

The Committee increasingly explores ways to enhance capacity building and policy influence through collaboration with other groups. This has included, for example, partnering with the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI; Division 9 of the APA) to conduct a *Short Course in Policy Involvement* and an advocacy training day on Capitol Hill (United States Congress) in Washington, D.C. The Committee has also worked with the National Prevention Science Coalition, a group advocating for the governmental adoption of a *Prevention Model* for use in multiple domains of public policy.

Training is another way the Committee builds capacity. The Committee created a policy practicum program for student members of SCRA. The practicum goals are: 1) to provide opportunities for students to gain experience in a specified policy area, 2) to develop core competencies in public policy analysis, development, and advocacy, and 3) to develop a template that could be adopted and used by faculty of community psychology training programs to enhance policy experience. Finally, the Committee is developing resources that depict the critical components of a policy advocacy campaign. These resources will be available to students,

faculty, professionals, and the public via www.SCRA27.org.

In this paper we will discuss these recent developmental efforts of the Committee to spread SCRA's influence to affect change through policy, advocacy, collaboration, and capacity building in more detail. Presented from the unique perspective of community psychologists, these efforts can be replicated by others wishing to advance learning and experiences around policy. But first, let us examine the relevance of policy work to community psychology.

Need for Policy and Advocacy Work in Community Psychology

Policy making in the United States is not a simple task. Bogenschneider and Corbett (2010) assert that "policymaking is one of the most complex undertakings known to humankind" (p. 264). Policy making is influenced by processes and procedures as well as evidence. The process occurs not in isolation but is influenced by an ecology comprising multiple phases, levels, domains, sources of power, and uses of evidence (Aber, Bishop-Josef, Jones, McLearn, & Phillips, 2007; Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2010; Kingdon, 1984; Kraft & Furlong, 2010; Maton, Humphreys, Jason, & Shinn, in press; Phillips, 2000). The policy cycle can be activated on interrelated national, state, and local levels of government (Kraft & Furlong, 2010).

The United States has seen a multitude of recent social policy issues at all levels of policy making of interest to community psychologists. These include federal policy seeking to provide equitable and universal health care coverage through the Affordable Care Act; state legislation encouraging employers to "Ban the Box" (removing the criminal record check box from hiring applications), thus increasing opportunities for persons convicted of felonies to attain

gainful employment; and local ordinances to provide housing and, as appropriate, treatment for people who have been homeless or have suffered from addiction. No matter what the social policy issue, affected individuals, communities, and organizations, who may be powerless, oppressed, vulnerable, and lacking a “voice” or representation, may become willing partners in pushing their policy agendas forward. Community psychologists are well positioned to assist in these efforts (Maton et al., in press) and can help provide a voice and participatory mechanism for change for vulnerable individuals and populations.

Equipped with the values of social justice, empowerment, citizen participation, and research skills as well as an understanding of ecological frameworks, community psychologists strive to enhance the quality of life for individuals within communities. This work would be incomplete if it did not include advancing the work of policy and advocacy. Advancing policy agendas is a critical mechanism to affect change at the population level (Kingdon, 1984).

The Committee seeks to affect change through policy, advocacy, collaboration, and capacity building. Initially named the Social Policy Committee, it was created in 1989, by Deborah Phillips and Brian Wilcox, the first co-chairs. Based on Committee columns in the *The Community Psychologist* over the years, a primary activity of the Committee until recently has been educational, informing members about social policy processes, social issues, policy developments, and the involvement of SCRA members in local, state, national, and international policy endeavors. A number of distinguished SCRA members, many of whom have been actively involved in policy change efforts, have served as chairs of the Committee, including Deborah Phillips, Brian Wilcox, Trudy Vincent, Andrea

Solarz, Carolyn Feis, Anthony Biglan, Brian Smedley, Sarah Cook, Sharon Portwood, Steven Howe, Jennifer Woolard, Preston Britner, Joseph Ferrari, Steven Pokorny, and Nicole Porter.

It has taken decades for the Committee to become as directly involved in advocacy efforts on policy matters as it is currently, but an early turning point was the 1997 Biennial Conference on Community Research and Action, held in Columbia, South Carolina. At that conference, there were several symposiums held on policy work. Community psychologists described their policy engagements at the local, state, and federal levels, related to a plethora of issues including child protection and support, community development, disability rights, HIV/AIDS and other global health policy issues, homelessness, juvenile justice, mental health, sexual violence, and welfare reform. What was most groundbreaking at that conference, however, was the open and lively debate at the heavily attended business meeting over whether SCRA should take a more direct role as an organization in policy advocacy.

The most contentious issue raised was whether taking a public stand on controversial issues could be divisive to the organization or jeopardize its nonprofit status or its relationship to the APA. Those questions still arise as institutional constraints, but have been substantially addressed in recent years by the Committee creating clear, step-by-step processes for developing and vetting policy position statements and member calls to action requiring approval by the Committee and SCRA Executive Committee, and informing the APA’s Public Interest Government Relations Office (see below).

Judah Viola served as chair for several years, beginning in 2011, with the mission of re-energizing the Committee. Beginning in 2011, the Committee embarked upon a number of new and challenging endeavors, including policy position statements, rapid response actions, and a small grants program, creating avenues to spread the reach of policy and advocacy work. Over the past two years the Committee has seen growth in its membership. Currently there are 104 individuals who have joined the Committee (i.e., added to the committee listserv), with 15-20 actively participating in monthly Committee conference calls and/or email discussions.

Gaining experience in policy work can be challenging for community psychologists in both academic and applied settings, and opportunities for training future community psychologists in policy may be limited. Before initiating steps to enhance capacity in policy analysis, organizing, and advocacy, the Committee needed to identify and understand the needs of SCRA membership. In 2012, the Committee conducted a survey of SCRA members (279 completed surveys, approximately 25% of those on the SCRA listserv) which found that respondents (74%) viewed integrating policy relevant coursework into graduate programs and providing workshops or training sessions at conferences (70%) as critical for building capacity around policy and advocacy work. Respondents also felt that collaboration with a number of organizations to expand policy related activities was essential to SCRA's mission. Among those organizations were the Society for Prevention Research (58% of respondents), SPSSI (57%), Psychologists for Social Responsibility (53%), and the APA (51%; Maton, Strompolis, & Wisniewski, 2013). The Committee discussed these and related findings and identified ways to

address the policy and advocacy needs of SCRA's membership, including many of the initiatives discussed below.

Expanding our Reach: Building Capacity for Policy and Advocacy Work

Below we describe in more detail our efforts to build the capacity of SCRA members for policy and advocacy work. Two primary methods used have been interdivisional collaborations and the development of task forces and working groups.

Interdivisional Collaborations

Policy Workshop

On June 30 and July 1, 2013, the Committee, SPSSI, the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), the Society for Environmental, Population, and Conservation Psychology (SEPCP), and the American Psychology-Law Society (AP-LS), with financial support from an APA interdivisional grant, hosted a highly successful, well-attended policy workshop on Capitol Hill. The workshop included both *communications* and *applications* components. The communications portion (Day 1) addressed the vital importance of effective translation of scientific findings for a variety of non-scientist audiences. This component featured separate sessions on how to communicate psychological research to the general public, to policy makers, and in legal settings. The applications component (Day 2) focused on the myriad of ways that psychologists apply psychological research in community settings and in (federal) legislative realms. In addition, some of the other sessions on this day presented information on training fellowships sponsored by the APA and others, and also on policy careers in government, think tanks, and mission-driven advocacy organizations. The workshop also featured many networking opportunities during which participants with common interests could

meet and interact informally across Divisions, career stages, and research and sub-disciplinary foci. In particular, there was an opening reception, a group dinner, and group lunches and breaks between sessions.

The workshop was highly anticipated and exceptionally well-received. The vast majority of the 203 applications were from highly qualified candidates. Of the 44 selected participants, 41 accepted the invitation to attend. A total of 14 participants received travel scholarships from SCRA or SPSSI; thus, the vast majority of participants paid their own travel expenses and the registration fee (\$150) in order to take part. Our experience suggests there is a strong interest in this kind of training, especially among graduate students and early career professionals.

In the short-term, attendees' enthusiasm for greater involvement in policy work was clear. Presenters were similarly enthusiastic about their participation. The Committee believes the collaboration between the sponsoring Divisions was positive, and that it will help build a strong foundation for future joint projects – including, potentially, APA Convention programming and other joint meetings/workshops.

Advocacy Training Day on Capitol Hill

The Committee co-sponsored an Advocacy Training Day on Capitol Hill, held on August 6, 2014. This event brought over 50 psychologists and graduate students onto Capitol Hill to lobby for paid family medical leave. The co-sponsors included SPSSI and the APA Public Interest Government Relations Office (APA-PI).

Participants spent the morning in a training workshop during which they learned about The Family Medical Insurance Leave Act ([H.R. 3712/S. 1810](#)) and about how to effectively advocate on Capitol Hill. They then spent the afternoon meeting with staff of their Senators

and Representatives (a total of more than 75 different offices), asking them to co-sponsor the legislation using many of the arguments summarized in a leave-behind sheet provided by the trainers.



Figure 1: Participants in Advocacy Training Day on Capitol Hill

The participants had a “fun filled” day of learning (See Figure 1). As noted by one of the participants: “The training emphasized that it is possible to have fun while advocating for a good cause – and it *was* fun. As we left the training to head to our respective meetings, we were invigorated by the numerous psychologists, students, and affiliates who work to see that our research strengthens our society and directly benefits our people” (Kurzban, Buckingham, & Mahdi, 2014, p. 14).

This was a significant accomplishment for SCRA, the Committee, and our partners, not only because we believe in the importance of the legislation (currently under consideration in Congress), but also because of the experience we provided to our members, encouraging them to continue to engage in the legislative process. Organizing the training day was a true act of collaboration between SPSSI, APA-PI, and the Committee.

The Committee expects to work together with SPSSI to hold similar events in the future.

Tools for Practice

Around the time the competencies for community psychology practice were released, the Committee began strategic conversations to strengthen engagement within the Committee by members of SCRA and to build the capacity of current Committee members to take part in policy and advocacy activities. As part of this dialogue, the need was noted for policies and procedures for SCRA and Committee members to communicate positions on important social issues and to draft calls-to-action. This resulted in the approval (by SCRA's Executive Committee) of the *Policy Position Statement* and the *Rapid Response Actions* procedures. The procedures can be found at www.scra27.org/what-we-do/policy/, and they outline both the content necessary for position statements and calls-to-action and the processes to gain approval for these activities.

Policy position statements communicate SCRA's perspective on pressing social issues and matters of public health and well-being through the provision of clear, succinct summaries of scientific research and accumulated knowledge from practice (Maryman, Maton, & Perkins, 2014). These statements offer recommendations that can be adopted by policy makers or the general public (see <http://www.scra27.org/what-we-do/policy/policy-position-statements/>).

When issues are time sensitive, rapid response actions allow for the evaluation and adoption of actions that can be engaged in by the membership (Maryman, Maton, & Perkins, 2014). Calls to action that were submitted and approved by the Committee and the SCRA EC have addressed sequester cuts (United States' budget cuts to programs

essential for the health and welfare of vulnerable citizens and communities), gun legislation (changes to United States' gun control, safety, and research laws), self-help support groups (changes to APA policies and procedures on the inclusion of self-help support groups to improve health and wellness), and global violence against girls (implementation of international human rights standards). Twenty individuals representing 16 states completed the call to action regarding gun legislation (tracking was not available for the sequester cuts). Although SCRA members participate in other advocacy activities (e.g., calls-to-action from the APA), these rapid response actions were spearheaded by SCRA members. The Committee is currently examining various call to action platforms to increase engagement with SCRA members and track call to action responses.

Small Grants Program

With the development of community psychology competencies (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012), policy and advocacy skills were formally recognized as part of community psychology practice. The *Public Policy Analysis, Development and Advocacy* competency states that community psychologists should have "the ability to build and sustain effective communication and working relationships with policy makers, elected officials, and community leaders" (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012, p. 12). With the recognition of policy and advocacy skills as necessary for community psychologists, members of the Committee realized the need for enhanced opportunities for SCRA members to engage in policy and advocacy work. The Committee proposed and advocated for grant funds to support policy and advocacy activities of SCRA members. The Committee secured \$15,000 for annual grants to support policy and advocacy

activities of SCRA members and released a request for proposals for small grants worth up to \$5,000. Fifteen small grants have been awarded since inception of the program in 2011, three per year, totaling close to \$75,000 (some proposals requested under \$5,000). The projects funded by the Committee's small grants program represent the diversity of SCRA membership and their focus areas of interest. Examples of funded projects include an evaluation of advocacy efforts of a nonprofit organization serving children and families in poverty (Miles, 2011); creation of a public education and advocacy website on costs of incarceration (<http://chicagosmilliondollarblocks.com/>; Lugalía-Hollon & Cooper, 2012); a multi-method approach to improving mobility of women experiencing homelessness (Matson, 2012); an implementation investigation and intervention regarding the Affordable Care Act (Boyd, 2013); gender responsiveness in the juvenile justice system (Anderson & Davidson, 2014); and an international examination of an anti-fracking movement in Bulgaria (Mihaylov, 2015).

The creation of the small grants program has benefited SCRA in a number of significant ways. First, as the recognition of policy and advocacy skills as core competencies for community psychologists continues, many educational programs are looking for ways to engage community psychology students in the policy and advocacy arena. In fact, in the first five years of the small grants program, nine students have applied for and received grants for policy and advocacy work within and outside of academic institutions (out of 15 total funded grants). Second, the small grants program has led to significant accomplishments for the grantees. For example, Martínez (2012) provided two technical reports to the Connecticut State Department of Education, presented the work

at regional and national conferences, and submitted a publication to AJCP. Additionally, Stropolis and Branham (2013) built advocacy capacity within a state-wide coalition in South Carolina that led to the pledge by four legislators to introduce or co-sponsor legislation to prevent child passenger injuries and fatalities. Finally, the small grants program, beyond building the policy-relevant capacity of SCRA members, has provided an outlet to voice SCRA values within the policy and advocacy arena.

Student Practicum

The 2012 survey highlighted the need to increase policy skills among SCRA members. In part with that goal in mind, in early 2013, then-Policy Committee Chair Judah Viola and Melissa Stropolis (then a student member and later Chair of the Committee) developed the Public Policy Committee Student Practicum. The Public Policy Committee Student Practicum was designed to provide SCRA students with opportunities to engage in policy and advocacy activities with structured support and guidance from identified members of the Committee. Students who are selected to participate in the Public Policy Committee Student Practicum can receive credit from their academic institutions (community practica are often required by programs) and allow for the customization of policy and advocacy experiences that align with the students' interests, goals, and desired experience.

Two students (Taylor Bishop Scott from the University of North Carolina-Charlotte and J'Vonnah Maryman from Wichita State University) were selected to participate in the inaugural practicum in 2013-2014 and were supervised by the co-chairs of the Committee, Doug Perkins from Vanderbilt University and Ken Maton from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. The students engaged in a

number of activities, including an examination of social media in the policy and advocacy arena, contributing to *TCP* articles (see Maryman, Maton, & Perkins, 2014; Scott & Wollman, 2014; Scott & Maryman, 2015), facilitating collaboration with other interest groups, and hosting a webinar to connect with other students interested in policy and advocacy. Their practicum experience also afforded them the opportunity to serve as reviewers for the small grants program. The Committee continued with the student practicum by selecting three students in the 2014-2015 academic year. These students contributed to the development of call-to-action procedures and policy position statements (mass incarceration and family detention). The Committee is currently reviewing applications for the 2015-2016 academic year.

Task Forces and Working Groups

An integral aspect of the Committee's work is supporting, collaborating with, and helping to develop task forces and working groups to advance policy and advocacy priorities. Some of the task forces and interest groups have completed or are developing policy position statements and/or rapid response actions. Several of the task forces and interest groups are described below.

Collaboration with the National Prevention Science Coalition

The National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives (NPSC) began as prevention scientists and advocates joined to pursue a common vision: the prioritization of proactive, prevention strategies in public programs and policies over reactive, treatment-oriented practices that tend to generate greater costs to human suffering and to taxpayers. NPSC is a national network of researchers, policymakers, organizations, and advocates that focuses on three goals: 1)

translational science in the prevention area, 2) enhancing prevention-related implementation and systems change, and 3) advocacy/policy to promote governmental adoption of a "prevention model" to reduce expenditures and benefit society (www.npscoalition.org). The NPSC has developed a number of written products, including blogs and opinion editorials, as well as hosted a number of Congressional briefings on Capitol Hill (learn more at www.npscoalition.org). SCRA Policy Committee member Taylor Bishop Scott has been actively involved in the NPSC and serves as the liaison between the Committee and NPSC. The NPSC and Committee work together on opportunities that arise based on common interests among members and the current political climate. For example, the groups share an interest in advocacy efforts for reauthorizing and enhancing the focus of empirical approaches in the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act (see below), which has been the primary focus of Robin Jenkins' work, who also serves as a member of the NPSC and the Committee.

Mass Incarceration

Mass incarceration represents one of the most glaring and alarming problems in the United States and an area of interest to community psychologists. The United States leads the world in per capita prison population. In 2012, Maton and Perkins solicited a policy position statement on this issue, and Keith Humphreys responded by drafting an initial position proposal on reducing the size of the prison population in the United States. The Committee enthusiastically approved the development of a policy position statement, and leadership was taken over by Brad Olson. Brad proposed, formed, and leads a SCRA Task Force on Mass Incarceration (which was approved by both the Committee and then-

SCRA President Fabricio Balcazar). The work of the Mass Incarceration Task Force culminated in a well-attended participatory town meeting on the topic and statement at the 2015 SCRA Biennial Conference, and a collaboratively written, draft policy position statement. The statement covers many aspects of this complex problem. These include the degrading social, psychological, economic, and health effects of mass incarceration at the individual, family, and community levels; racial and other disparities in the criminal justice system (Alexander, 2010); and specific policy recommendations at the federal, state (particularly important for criminal law), and local levels. The Mass Incarceration Task Force hopes to have the statement approved in 2015, published in 2016, and then begin a concerted advocacy campaign with help from the APA, SPSSI, and other interested organizations.

Global Climate Change

In 2013, Maton, Perkins, and Strompolis explored policy issues of mutual concern with SPSSI leaders. The discussions revealed that members of both organizations were interested in collaboration on climate change. Prior to the discussions relevant work had already been conducted by members of the two divisions (e.g., *American Psychologist* special issue, May-June 2011; a [SPSSI policy statement](#); [APA Council Resolution](#); and a special issue organized by SCRA Environment and Justice Interest Group members: Riemer & Reich, 2011). A collaborative Global Climate Change group decided to focus not on policies to prevent or mitigate climate change (as they judged that “horse” to have already left a rapidly sinking “barn”), but instead to focus on policies and other ways to help individuals and communities adapt and develop resiliency toward inevitable climate change. The Global Climate Change group developed a climate

change adaptation theoretical model, reviewed past policy statements, and plans to develop a new policy position statement focused on individual, community, and societal adaptation to climate change.

Immigration

There has always been interest among SCRA members about issues related to immigration. The Committee’s new initiative to support policy position statements created an opportunity for pursuing this topic. The process started about a year ago and led Former SCRA President Fabricio Balcazar to mobilize an effort to generate a policy statement on the topic. Balcazar utilized the support of Patricia Esparza, a Committee practicum student who was interested in the topic and Brinton Lykes, a colleague also interested in immigration. Lykes brought to the team a very experienced immigration lawyer, Jessica Chico, and another graduate student, Kevin Ferreira. The group decided to focus the policy position statement on the incarceration of undocumented migrant families in the United States. A draft statement was review by the APA and approved by the Committee and SCRA’s Executive Committee just as the Obama administration was ordered by a Federal court to close most of the family prisons that have been opened over the last few years. The work group will continue to watch this issue evolve and has submitted the policy statement to the AJCP.

Juvenile Justice

SCRA has a number of members with expertise and policy experience in the area of juvenile justice. Several of them, led by Jen Woolard and Committee member Robin Jenkins, are working on a policy position statement related to reauthorization of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). First passed in 1974,

the JJDDPA authorizes a nationwide juvenile justice planning and advisory system, including funding for delinquency prevention and improvements in juvenile justice system programs and practices. JJDDPA was last reauthorized 2002, without major substantive changes. The last substantive reauthorization was in 1992, when a focus on racial disparities was added. The policy position statement will build upon the growing body of research-based knowledge in the juvenile justice area, including but not limited to, a focus on prevention, removal of juveniles from adult jails, improved mental health and substance abuse services, and racial disparities.

Community Health Workers

Since 2014, Venoncia M. Baté-Ambrus has been participating on monthly Committee calls to update its members on the status of Community Health Workers (CHW) policy. Baté-Ambrus serves as the link between the SCRA Community Health Interest Group and the Committee. SCRA has a vested interest in the progress of CHW policy development, especially in light of the Committee's and the EC's approval of a rapid response action endorsing efforts to pass Illinois House Bill 5412, a bill to improve the Illinois CHW infrastructure by appointing an advisory board to make workforce development recommendations. The bill was signed into law by Governor Pat Quinn on July 31, 2014. Baté-Ambrus currently serves as an un-appointed, community representative on the Illinois CHW Advisory Board and a co-chair on its Workforce Development and Behavioral Health Core Competency workgroup. She co-authored an article in the July-Sept 2015 volume of the *Journal of Ambulatory Care Management* entitled *Many Ingredients, One Sublime Dish: The Recipe for the Passage of Illinois HB5412 Into Law*. Baté-Ambrus has also been the chief

planner/coordinator of the Region V Great Lakes CHW Summit held in Chicago on Oct 30-31, 2015. The Summit convened CHWs and stakeholders from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin who shared best practices, sharpened advocacy skills, promoted multicultural dialogue, and explored other ways to strengthen the CHW workforce.

Letter to the APA on Torture

Several SCRA members, including Committee member Brad Olson, have been involved in efforts to reverse the APA's policy on permitting psychologists' participation in Department of Defense and Central Intelligence Agency national security interrogations. Although that has not been an issue the Committee has been as directly involved in, if there is a call-to-action, rapid response action requests, or policy position statements developed, the Committee will likely be drawn into those processes more deeply. Recently, the EC sent a letter to the APA sharing the division's concerns in response to the Hoffman Report (<http://www.scra27.org/who-we-are/apa/>), and Brad and others were actively involved in advocacy activities at the APA convention that contributed to sweeping changes in APA policies and processes, including the banning of psychologists' participation in national security interrogations.

Discussion – Future Directions

Within the policy arena, community psychologists have contributed to social change through effective relationship building, communication, strategic analysis, and use of research (Maton et al, in press). Each of these critical elements, in turn, has proved integral to the work of the SCRA Policy Committee. Taken together, they have helped to promote a common agenda and a set of initiatives with the potential to

influence policies and practices that impact communities, groups, and individuals. The task forces, working groups, rapid responses, policy statements, grants, student practica, and other capacity building efforts described above have provided a number of opportunities for the Public Policy Committee to expand its policy reach and impact. In the past, as with most voluntary groups, the activity level of the Committee has waxed and waned depending on the interest of members and available time of the Chair. The current Committee is committed to maintaining and, if possible, increasing the momentum for SCRA policy and advocacy work and impact.

One area for future work involves potential collaboration between the Committee, the SCRA Prevention and Promotion Interest Group, and the NPSC to support an effort to advance Affordable Care Act regulations for nonprofit hospitals that require the hospitals to spend dollars on "community benefit" projects. The community benefit projects are not clearly defined but could present opportunities for collaborative work that incorporate policy and/or advocacy components. A second area is collaboration with the SCRA Council for Education Programs (CEP). CEP is interested in enhancing the opportunities for graduate students in our training programs to gain further education, competence, and experience in policy work. The Committee plans to work closely with and contribute to CEP's work in this important arena. To address the potential for these and related activities to "fall through the cracks", the Committee has identified liaisons (members of the Committee) to contact and attend meetings of the NPSC and CEP. The liaisons not only report on activities of the groups but also identify areas for potential collaboration with the Committee.

Yet another area representing both great progress but also future potential is the Policy page on the SCRA website (<http://www.scra27.org/what-we-do/policy/>), which has been greatly improved as a resource for policy training and advocacy work, thanks especially to the efforts of Michael Brubacher and Jean Hill. Some new web resources include: 1) autobiographical profiles, 2) success stories and advice from SCRA members engaged in policy work (particularly helpful for students and early career community psychologists), 3) a page of ideas and information on how to get involved and be an effective issue advocate, compiled by Rebecca Rodríguez and Taylor Bishop Scott, 4) a video related to the SCRA policy position statement drafted by Leonard Jason, and 5) various links to important resources (e.g., information from past SCRA policy workshops, external policy websites and blogs, policy internships and fellowships, policy and advocacy terms and definitions, policy course syllabi, relevant books and websites, and the report of the 2012 Survey noted above). Similar to the NPSC and CEP, the Committee has a liaison to SCRA's Website Committee to assist with improvements for policy- and advocacy-related engagement. The Committee also keeps the website as a regular agenda item to monitor and track ideas and changes. Look for updates and new resources on the website in the future!

Most importantly, the Committee needs members to step forward with ideas for policy initiatives, rapid response action requests, policy position statements, and capacity building opportunities. The Committee's future vitality and contributions to system and policy change will depend, as always, on the active involvement of a broad spectrum of the SCRA membership. To that end, Committee members consistently seek

new opportunities to engage members to serve on the Committee. This outreach includes responding to policy- and advocacy-related emails on the SCRA listserv, talking to interested members at regional and national conferences, and promoting the accomplishments and activities of the Committee. Come join us!

Conclusion

Policy research, analysis, and advocacy by individual community psychologists in the United States and around the globe have been going on for decades (Maton et al., in press). That is why it is surprising that active policy work by SCRA as an institution is such a relatively recent phenomenon. The Public Policy Committee was created many years ago--and has been moderately active at times (e.g., highlighting the applied policy work of Tom Wolff and others); however, it has never been active in a sustained fashion to the extent that has occurred over the past three or four years, starting with Judah Viola's chairing of the Committee. Policy work is time consuming and can be thankless at times, but the rewards are great in terms of both personal and professional satisfaction, and include having an impact beyond the typical level of an individual study, program, or other intervention. Influencing change at the community-wide, city, state, or national levels requires extensive effort and relationship building, collaborations with multiple groups, persistence, and a long-term time perspective. SCRA and all national and international community psychology organizations should be even more deeply and actively committed to such work over the long-term. The foregoing activities and resources provide some examples of how the Committee is beginning to live up to that commitment.

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