

APA Policy on Policies

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Introduction:

The Academic Pediatric Association is an association of over 2,000 academic pediatric generalists and child health care leaders at America's medical centers and pediatric practices. APA members work to improve the health of children, adolescents and families by training the next generation of pediatric practitioners, conducting research to promote the health and well-being of children, adolescents, and families, and providing care to some of the most vulnerable members of our society. It is essential that the organization also address public policy issues vital to child health. APA policies provide a historical record of the Association's stance on a variety of child health related topics.

Purpose of APA Policies

Over time, it has become clear that the policy development process must address three distinct purposes of APA policy: policies that affect the internal conduct of the organization itself, policies that articulate the organization's public position on matters vital to the health and well-being of children, adolescents, and families, and policies that define core APA principles that will guide its subsequent policies and practices. One policy statement might address one, two, or all three dimensions, and the term "policy" is used in this document to cover all three types of policies. Policies that only affect internal procedures of the organization, may, at the discretion of the Board, be fast-tracked, and may not require the literature review and extensive review process that other policies require.

Policy Development Process

The policy development process must reflect the varied interests of the APA membership. The process must strike a balance between competing goals. These include: that APA policies be based on robust evaluations of the existing evidence, which may be time-consuming and staff-intensive; that the process ensure timely and responsive action to the changing needs of the APA membership and the external environment; that the process maximize the opportunity for membership engagement in policy development; and, finally, that the process not place an undue burden on the voluntary contributions of APA members and elected officials.

The organizational structure of the APA includes four standing committees: Research, Education, Health Care Delivery, and Public Policy and Advocacy. In addition, there are ten regions and a multitude of Special Interest Groups (SIGs).

The APA policy process has been established to allow policy statements to be systematically proposed, reviewed, and approved before their publication and dissemination. It guides through the process of submitted proposals intended to become policies of the Association.

Origination of Policy Statements: Intent to Submit

Any current member of the APA may submit a proposed policy statement. However, each submission needs to be developed with a sponsoring entity, i.e., a standing committee, SIG, and/or region.

Table 1 is the *Intent to Submit an APA Policy Statement* form that must be submitted before the actual policy statement is developed and/or approval can be obtained.

The *Intent to Submit* form will avoid needless time and effort in preparing a policy statement if it lacks the support of a sponsoring entity or the Board decides against proceeding with the proposed policy. For policies that do proceed, it allows for early input from both the sponsoring entity and the Board, e.g., to suggest literature, contacts, and expert consultants for policy development. The *Intent to Submit* form has a section that asks which other APA entities (SIGs, Committees, Regions), other than the sponsoring entity, should review the policy after it is written. The heart of the *Intent to Submit* form is the abstract. It provides a succinct statement (no more than 500 words) as to why the APA should develop a policy statement on the suggested topic. It should include a discussion of relevant cost-benefit and medical-legal aspects of the policy issue, and the potential impact of the statement on pediatrics and on the APA. It should make clear whether the policy is intended primarily to regulate specific APA operating procedures (“internal policy statement”), to announce specific APA child health policy positions (“public policy statement”), or to define core APA principles that will guide its subsequent policies and practices (“statement of principles”).

The *Intent to Submit* form should be submitted to the Executive Director of the APA by fax, mail and/or e-mail. The proposed policy statement will be discussed at the next regularly scheduled APA Board meeting and/or conference call, resulting in approval, disapproval or a request to resubmit. The decision will be forwarded to both the lead author and the chair of the sponsoring entity. The sponsoring entity will automatically assume responsibility for the initial review. The Board at this time may also request a secondary review panel to broaden APA input into the policy development process. If requested, the Board will recommend a specific committee and/or SIG as well as a contact person for the lead author.

Once the need for a policy statement has been acknowledged and an *Intent to Submit* form has been approved by the APA Board of Directors, the lead author may proceed with the development of the policy statement, under the auspices of the sponsoring entity.

Development of the Literature Review

The author must conduct an up-to-date and systematic literature review on the topic to be addressed, unless one has recently been conducted by another entity, and submit it to the chair of the sponsoring entity for approval. The literature review should employ critical analysis of the relevant data, with attention to both benefits and risks related to potential policy recommendations. In the absence of clear data, information supported by practice and experience may be acceptable if it reflects a consensus opinion of the pediatric community. Models for evidence reviews include the United States Preventive Services Task Force and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality evidence reports. In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has developed a statement on the use of evidence in developing AAP policy.

The review must include a consideration of policy statements, technical reports and/or guidelines published by other national medical and public health organizations. This is necessary to determine whether the author’s position agrees with or differs substantially from the published positions of other organizations. Collaboration with other organizations regarding writing and/or review should also be clearly identified.

In addition to submitting the literature review to the chair of the sponsoring entity, the author may choose to submit the literature review to the Journal as a manuscript for consideration. For the literature review, the Journal’s peer-review process will prevail. If both the

Journal decides to publish the literature review and the Board decides to publish the policy statement in the Journal (see below), the literature review and policy statement will be published as companion pieces.

At the time of approval, the Board may elect to waive the requirement for a literature review for policy statements that affect only the internal functioning of the organization (e.g., the policy on Board travel).

Development of the Policy Statement

After the literature review has been approved by the chair of the sponsoring entity, the author must write and format the policy in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Table 2, the *Policy Statement Formatting Guidelines*. The subject matter to be addressed in the policy statement must be of demonstrable importance for the APA as an organization. It should not be focused solely on a special interest of an individual APA member. The policy statement should provide recommendations that are consistent with the literature, logically presented and defensible. The author should be judicious in the number, scope, and specificity of the recommendations included in any one policy. The authors should make every attempt to assure that the information included in the policy statement is current at the time of its publication and that it will probably not need modification for at least three years.

The lead author is encouraged to work closely with the chair of the sponsoring entity to maintain linkages that will be helpful during the review process.

Policy Statement Review and Implementation Process

After the policy statement has been written, it must be formally reviewed by the sponsoring entity (initial review panel) and a secondary review panel if so requested by the Board (see above). The lead author should first notify the APA Executive Director that the policy statement is being submitted to the chair of the sponsoring entity for initial review. The policy will also be sent to other APA entities that were suggested for review of the policy in the *Intent to Submit* form by the APA Executive Director, after consultation with the Board concerning additional APA entities appropriate for review. Those entities will be asked to respond with feedback within 30 days. That chair then establishes and oversees a formal review panel, consisting of, at minimum, the chair and two additional members of the sponsoring entity. The need for additional reviewers falls to the discretion of the chair of the sponsoring entity and may consist of other APA members or experts from other organizations. Review panel members will be asked to estimate the likely impact of the policy on the APA, including any financial implications of the new policy, as well as incorporate or respond to comments made by the other APA entities providing feedback. The review process may require several cycles to address the comments and critique of the review panel. If the APA Board has requested a secondary panel review, it should proceed simultaneously with the review by the sponsoring entity.

At the time of approval, the Board may elect to shorten the timeline for the pre-review of policy statements that affect only the internal functioning of the organization (e.g., the policy on Board travel).

After all review panel concerns have been addressed and the policy statement is formatted in accordance with the details outlined in Table 2, it should be submitted to the APA Board by the lead author with a completed Policy Statement Checklist (Table 3). As part of this checklist, the author may suggest other organizations whose endorsement of the APA policy should be sought and strategies that could be used to evaluate the impact of the policy.

Simultaneously with this transmittal, the draft policy will be posted for member comments on the APA website for 30 days (in the Public Policy & Advocacy Section) and an email will be sent out on the APA list-serv alerting members to the policy and requesting comments. The draft policy will also be e-mailed to the APA Public Policy & Advocacy list-serve for additional review. Working closely with APA staff, the Chair of the Public Policy & Advocacy Committee will summarize member comments and provide those to the Board for deliberation.

The Executive Director will disseminate copies of the submitted policy statement to each member of the Board of Directors for review. The APA President or his/her designee will then present the proposed policy statement for discussion and review at a Board meeting or conference call. This review may result in a request for further revisions, followed by resubmission directly to the APA Board. Final approval must be obtained by the APA Board to reflect the overall position of the Association and its membership. Unanimous agreement of the Board is optimal; however the Board can adopt a policy with approval by three-quarters of the members of the APA Board present and voting (a super-majority is required due to the potentially controversial nature of issues undertaken for policy development).

After the statement has been approved, the Board will then determine whether it intends to proceed with publication. If so, the Board will notify the Journal editor. Editorial review by the Journal may result in either acceptance or a request to revise for style, formatting, or clarification. If the APA Board decides not to publish the approved statement in the Journal, the author will be offered the opportunity to disseminate the statement through other means (e.g., APA website, APA newsletter).

Policy statements that affect only the internal functioning of the organization (e.g., the policy on Board travel) will be posted on the members' only section of the website after approval.

When a policy statement is published, the authors and sponsoring entity will be identified and "Approved by the APA Board" will be indicated. Consultants, SIGs, and others involved in creating the policy statement will also be identified. The APA Board will also consider other areas for dissemination, such as the APA newsletter and website. Further, the APA Board and administrative staff will direct resources and allocate time to enhance the likelihood of successful implementation of the policy.

Updating Statements

Given the ever-expanding research base for clinical and public health practice and ongoing changes in the external policy environment affecting children's health and health care, it is critical that APA policies be based on current evidence and be salient to current policy concerns. Therefore, APA policies will automatically expire five years after publication unless they are reaffirmed, revised or retired on or before that time. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Public Policy and Advocacy Committee to establish a process for initiating policy reviews sufficiently in advance of the five-year deadline to prevent the lapse of policies which should be maintained. This review and updating process entails the following steps:

1. The Chair of the Public Policy and Advocacy committee will contact the lead author or appropriate alternative representative and query as to the currency and saliency of the policy. The lead author will respond by either demonstrating, through at least a limited literature review and summary, that the policy is still relevant and that the recommendations are still sound or by updating the evidence review and the

recommendations. A checklist for the areas that the author should address is provided in Table 4. The Chair of the sponsoring entity will determine whether a review group is necessary.

2. If the policy undergoes no substantive change, it will be reviewed and discussed by the Board and if preliminary approval is given, be proposed to the membership for re-affirmation through a 30-day public comment period on the APA website (in the public policy & advocacy section) and an email sent out on the APA listserv. Working closely with APA staff, the Chair of the Public Policy & Advocacy Committee will summarize member comments and provide those to the Board for their use in their deliberation for final approval. At the conclusion of this process the Board will discuss and vote on the policy in a manner similar to new policies.
3. If the policy needs to be substantively revised and updated, it will go through the process outlined above for new policy development, except that the intent for statement stage does not apply.

Endorsing Policies

The APA is frequently called upon to endorse or “sign on” to positions established by other organizations. The ability to do this in an expeditious manner is important to the APA’s ability to effectively advocate for the needs of children and their families. At a minimum, the request to endorse should be sent to the President and the Chair of the Public Policy and Advocacy Committee for review. If, based on their judgment, endorsement requires further discussion, the policy will be brought forward to the Public Policy and Advocacy Committee and/or the full Board for Comment and then discussed and decided on by the Executive Committee of the Board. In certain instances, it may be appropriate for the APA to write a letter of support for the policy rather than issuing a formal endorsement.

Table 1: Intent to Submit an APA Policy Statement

Date: _____

Lead Author/Submitter: _____

Sponsoring Oversight Entity, i.e., Standing Committee, SIG, Region: _____

Topic/Title of Policy Statement: _____

Will this be submitted to other organizations? _____ Yes _____ No
If yes, which ones: _____

Is this intended as an internal policy affecting APA conduct, a policy articulating APA position on a matter of broad public interest, or a core APA statement of principles that will guide subsequent APA policies and practices (select all that apply)? _____ Internal _____ Public
_____ Statement of Principles

Abstract for Justification for the Policy Statement (No more than 500 words: Please attach)

Sponsoring Oversight Entity: _____ Approval _____ Disapproval
Name & Signature _____ Date: _____
Comments from Chair of the Sponsoring Oversight Entity:

APA Board of Directors Recommendation:
_____ Approval to Proceed _____ Disapproval _____ Revise & Resubmit
_____ Internal _____ Public _____ Statement of Principles
_____ Request for a secondary review panel (additional committee and/or SIG)
Comments from Board of Directors:

Date:

Table 2: Policy Statement Formatting Guidelines

Title	The title must reflect the purpose of the policy statement in a clear and concise manner.
Abstract	The abstract must include the purpose of the policy statement, key concepts contained within, and key recommendations.
Statement of Problem	The statement should include a brief overview of issues addressed in terms of importance to the APA with relevant background data and statistical information. It should highlight new information or issues that are important to academic pediatric generalists.
Summary/Conclusion	The summary should highlight important concepts addressed in the policy statement and list suggestions for future research and/or analysis.
Recommendations	The recommendations must be internally consistent and non-conflicting with other APA-stated positions.
Implementation	The author should suggest ways and means by which the recommendations might be implemented and evaluated.
Draft Length	Policy statements should be 1000-3000 words in double-spaced Times Roman 12-point font.
References	References must be checked not only by the lead author but also by the internal review conducted by the sponsoring entity.

Table 3: Checklist for Final Policy Statement Submission

Lead Author: _____

Sponsoring Entity: Standing Committee, SIG, Region, APA Board

Primary Review Panel Members:

1. _____ (Chair)

2. _____

3. _____

Initial Review Panel Comments:

Initial Review Panel Recommendation: ___ Approval ___ Disapproval

Date: _____

Secondary Review Panel (if requested):

1. _____ (Chair)

2. _____

3. _____

Secondary Review Panel Comments:

Secondary Review Panel Recommendation: ___ Approval ___ Disapproval

Date: _____

Suggested co-sponsors/endorsing organizations

Suggestions for evaluating impact of the policy

Table 4: Checklist for Updating Policy Statement Submission

Lead Author: _____

Sponsoring Entity: Standing Committee, SIG, Region, APA Board

Key changes to policy statement:

Impact of statement to date:

Benefit to the APA of maintaining/re-affirming statement:

Review Panel (if requested):

1. _____ (Chair)

2. _____

3. _____

Review Panel Comments:

Review Panel Recommendation: ___Approval ___Disapproval

Date: _____

Suggested co-sponsors/endorsing organizations

Suggestions for evaluating further impact of the policy