

APA Official Actions

Position Statement on Leadership of State Behavioral Health Services

Approved by the Board of Trustees, July 2025
Approved by the Assembly, May 2025
Approved by the Board of Trustees, December 2019
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Approved by the Assembly, November 2008

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“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:

State behavioral health services function as critical public health institutions for individuals with mental illness, substance use disorder/chemical dependency, and developmental disabilities. They provide essential care and support to these populations, addressing their unique needs. However, despite the importance of these services, there remain significant barriers to care. These include a lack of access to behavioral health institutions led by psychiatrists extensively trained in the latest biopsychosocial evidence-based medical practices.

APA Position:

To promote best practices and the highest-quality of care for individuals who benefit from state behavioral health services, a board-certified psychiatrist must be included at the senior management level. These services include state mental health and addiction authorities that provide, administer, and have regulatory authority for the prevention, treatment, and recovery support services for persons with mental illness, substance use disorders, and/or developmental disabilities.