

Council of Representatives



The Council of Representatives (Council) of the American Psychological Association (APA) is the legislative body for the association. A critical role of Council is to direct and inform the process of development of policies that promote the science of psychology and that use psychological knowledge to address important current and emerging societal issues and needs. Motions for Council consideration may come from a board, committee, division, SPTA, or a Council Representative. Members of Council have a fiduciary duty to promote the best interests of the association in service of the general public. Members must avoid conflicts of interest as delineated in the Council Conflict of Interest document and conduct themselves in accordance with legal, ethical and professional guidelines and standards.

While Council members have lives outside of Council and are busy with their careers and families, being a Council member requires a commitment that needs to be understood when accepting a nomination to be slated for election to Council. It is important for APA Divisions, affiliated state, provincial, and territorial psychological associations (SPTAs) and ethnic psychological associations (EPAs) to share these expectations with nominees prior to placing their names on the election slate for a position as a Council representative. These expectations would then be reintroduced during the orientation of new members and further reinforced annually with returning Council members, included in the front of each Council Agenda book and archived in the Council Member Handbook.

It is not reasonable to expect Council members to attend all Council meetings, Townhall meetings, webinars, etc. However, the more active in Council and the more familiar with materials and issues, the more effective a Council member will be and thus, the more effective Council as a whole will be. It is expected that Council members will review, understand and take responsibility for facets of their role and responsibilities as described in the following sections:

1. **Attendance:** Council members strive to attend all formal Council meetings, and when it is not possible, to find a suitable substitute. Guidelines for substitutes and proxies will be distributed through Council Leadership Team (CLT). Attendance at all informal preparatory meetings such as webinars, town halls, and other virtual meetings is strongly encouraged. If a Council member cannot attend a Council activity, the Council member will make every effort to review minutes and/or access the recorded programs. Council members should be encouraged to attend caucuses of their choosing which they view as of interest or relevance to them. Divisions and SPTAs should be encouraged to cover the costs of Caucus membership of their representatives given the importance of Caucus participation in Council governance.

2. **Mentors for New Members:** Each new Council member will be assigned a mentor by the Council Orientation and Mentorship Program (COMP). Incoming representatives will be sent a survey to provide information related to matching an appropriate mentor be assigned. Generally, this would be a more experienced Council member who has volunteered to work with new member(s) and provide additional orientation concerning their role in Council. Specific mentor requests will be honored to the degree possible or, in other cases, CLT will assign an individual from a same sized state or division. Additional requests and factors are considered as much as possible. New members will meet with their mentors prior to the first Council meeting, if possible, and spend time with their mentor during the Council meeting and on an ongoing basis, as needed.
3. **Review of Council Materials:** Council members prepare for meetings by reading and reviewing the Agenda Book, the Council's website, and other relevant information available prior to the Council meeting and by being familiar with the agenda items to be introduced, covered, and discussed.
4. **Special Interests:** Council members identify areas of Council's responsibility (e.g., APA policies for the profession) in which they have a special interest and/or expertise and especially engage in Council's work in those areas by means of increased depth and detail of material review and by sharing their views and input in Council formally and informally in and between Council meetings. They use the COR Website to monitor current policies in development and implementation and engage interactively with policies relevant to their interests, expertise and/or are significant to their constituents.
5. **Expressing Views on Issues:** Council members express their views on Council matters through appropriate and inclusive channels of communication during and between Council meetings. Further, they do so without denigrating another individual, group of individuals or ideas. For debates on Council floor, members are encouraged to voice their views, questions and concerns, but will be mindful of any time constraints as directed by the President and in the interest of other members wishing to speak. In order to encourage the expression and inclusion of all the diverse voices of Council members, the culture of Council must be consistently hospitable and welcoming. This entails self-reflexivity of one's own privileges and power and active engagement in challenging conversations that foster an inclusive Council culture.
6. **Service in Ancillary Groups:** Council members strive to volunteer and participate in ancillary groups such as work groups, task forces, committees, and policy liaison assignments caucuses that are of interest.
7. **Communication with Constituents:** Council members, who are elected by their respective constituencies, undertake to share Council's work with those whom they represent through on going communication that both provides relevant information about Council and also brings constituent views and perspectives to Council for its consideration. Additionally, while Council member communication with constituents is a core function, actual votes should be a function of what the Council representative determines is in the best interest of APA.

8. ***Civility and Respect:*** Council members strive to always maintain respect and civility for other Council members, staff, etc. It is of the utmost importance that Council members respect diverse points of view, seeking out diverse opinions, welcome the contributions of peers with different perspectives, and take responsibility for assuring a Council culture in which diverse opinions are sought, heard, valued, and incorporated into policy.