

Psychiatric Participation in Interrogation* of Detainees

POSITION STATEMENT

Approved by the Board of Trustees, May 2006
Approved by the Assembly of District Branches, May 2006

"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*.

1. The American Psychiatric Association reiterates its position that psychiatrists should not participate in, or otherwise assist or facilitate, the commission of torture of any person. Psychiatrists who become aware that torture has occurred, is occurring, or has been planned must report it promptly to a person or persons in a position to take corrective action.

2. a) Every person in military or civilian detention, whether in the United States or elsewhere, is entitled to appropriate medical care under domestic and international humanitarian law. b) Psychiatrists providing medical care to individual detainees owe their primary obligation to the well-being of their patients, including advocating for their patients, and should not participate or assist in any way, whether directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly, in the interrogation of their patients on behalf of military or civilian agencies or law enforcement authorities. c) Psychiatrists should not disclose any part of the medical records of any patient, or information derived from the treatment relationship, to persons conducting interrogation of the detainee. d) This paragraph is not meant to preclude treating psychiatrists who become aware that the detainee may pose a significant threat of harm to him/herself or to others from ascertaining the nature and the seriousness of the threat or from notifying appropriate authorities of that threat, consistent with the obligations applicable to other treatment relationships.

3. No psychiatrist should participate directly in the interrogation of persons held in custody by military or civilian investigative or law enforcement authorities, whether in the United States or elsewhere. Direct participation includes being present in the interrogation room, asking or suggesting questions, or advising authorities on the use of specific techniques of interrogation with particular detainees. However, psychiatrists may provide training to military or civilian investigative or law enforcement personnel on recognizing and responding to persons with mental illnesses, on the possible medical and psychological effects of particular techniques and conditions of interrogation, and on other areas within their professional expertise.

**As used in this statement, "interrogation" refers to a deliberate attempt to elicit information from a detainee for the purposes of incriminating the detainee, identifying other persons who have committed or may be planning to commit acts of violence or other crimes, or otherwise obtaining information that is believed to be of value for criminal justice or national security purposes. It does not include interviews or other interactions with a detainee that have been appropriately authorized by a court or by counsel for the detainee or that are conducted by or on behalf of correctional authorities with a prisoner serving a criminal sentence.*