



AACP Position Statement

Mental Health and Climate Change

Our Vision:

Advocate and partner to **implement resiliency and recovery oriented services** while continuously improving systems for those we serve

Influence health and social policies to develop and sustain coordinated public health and clinical delivery systems that are aligned with compatible funding and payment methods, guided by principles of social justice and evidence-informed clinical practices, and supplied by a systems-ready workforce.

Create and sustain a professional community for those who work in public, community and non-traditional service settings

Develop and disseminate knowledge and skills for effective and sustainable practices and systems to advance population health

Challenge: Climate change poses significant threats to public health in general and to mental health in particular.

Position: The American Association of Community Psychiatrists (AACCP) recognizes that climate change poses significant threats to public health in general and to mental health in particular. Persons with mental illnesses and behavioral health challenges are disproportionately impacted by the consequences of climate change. Psychiatrists are uniquely positioned to help reduce barriers to addressing climate change, such as denial, hopelessness and behavioral passivity, and to enhance efforts to communicate the public health and mental health risks of climate change through mechanisms that result in sustained behavioral change. As advocates for mental health and persons with mental illness, psychiatrists have an important role to play in efforts to control the adverse effects of climate change.

AACP recognizes and commits to efforts to prevent and mitigate climate change impacts through:

- **Education** of individuals, community leaders, policy makers and healthcare professionals about the public health and mental health impacts of climate change
- Collaboration with public mental health departments to enhance infrastructure and develop **response plans** to address the reactive mental health effects of climate related weather events as well as the anticipatory distress experienced by individuals and communities concerned about the impact of climate change
- Encouraging open and ongoing communication and collaboration within the healthcare community regarding **ways that individuals and communities can reduce the adverse mental health effects of climate change**, including the progressive development of strategies to allow individuals and communities to build adaptive resilience for climate change-associated stresses and traumas within individuals, organizations, communities, and society
- Engaging in **policy and program development** by calling upon U.S. policy makers, to reduce or eliminate denial of the reality and immediacy of climate change and to make the necessary behavioral changes needed to mitigate the underlying causes as well as reduce the progression of climate change
- Recognizing the **disproportionate burden of climate change on vulnerable populations**, including persons with mental illness, and advocate for policies that respond and protect them

Please reference the attached position paper for more information about implementing this position.