Ohio Psychological Association: Official Statement

OPA Supports Afghan Community

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Over the past week, the world has witnessed Afghanistan descend into turmoil with the American military withdrawal, and the Taliban’s ascent into governance. The Ohio Psychological Association (OPA) stands in support of the Afghan community as their members navigate the traumatic events that have taken place as their community begins to experience substantive changes to their country’s leadership structures.

Afghanistan has experienced nearly 40 years of civil unrest due to competing wars and various insurgent occupations. Recently, it has been existing as an Islamic Republic for the last 20 years through continuous US military involvement. While the American military presence is not without controversy, their presence has brought some stability into the country with advances in many metrics of quality of life. With the current departure of the US military, Taliban officials were able to regain control of the entire country within days. The return of the Taliban means the likely reinstatement of strict and brutal Sharia law governance. There is immense fear that the Taliban will soon reestablish these policies from the 1990s and early 2000s, which were enforced with violent interpretations of Islam and broad human rights violations that vastly restricted the rights of women, children, and those accused of crimes. Media images and international coverage have displayed the desperate scenes within Kabul’s International Airport and across the country as allies and US loyalists desperately attempt to flee the country.

The United States, along with its NATO member allies, will likely see an influx of refugees and immigrants in the coming weeks. Afghan families who reside in the US have been, and will likely continue to be, traumatized by the brutal media images and anguish over concerns for friends and family. US military families with past and current connections to military action are also at increased risk of post-traumatic responses from viewing footage of Afghanistan’s crumbling society and Taliban forces surging. Given such instability, multicultural understanding of Afghan society, behavioral health awareness, community resources will be imperative to support impacted individuals. OPA is committed to assisting with the needs of Afghan families, affected Ohioans, and the psychologists and community mental health providers offering support.

The following resources may offer additional support:

Supporting Refugee Children & Youth: Tips for Educators
Role of Schools in Supporting Traumatized Students:  

Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning:  http://www.springinstitute.org/

NCTSN Refugee Trauma:  https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/refugee-trauma

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_The Ohio Psychological Association, in Columbus, Ohio, is membership organization of approximately 1,550 Ohio psychologists. Its mission is to advance psychology as a science, as a profession and as a means of promoting human welfare. For more information or for a psychologist referral, visit www.ohpsych.org._