Ohio Psychological Association: Official Statement

OPA Official Statement on the Executive Order to Restrict Diversity Training

October 21, 2020
Written by: The Ohio Psychological Association’s Board of Directors and Committees

On September 22, 2020, President Trump and his Administration issued Executive Order 13950 on “Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping.” Its language calls for an end to “divisive concepts” that are included in numerous diversity-related trainings among federal employees, contractors, and government trainees.

The Ohio Psychological Association (OPA) believes this order will create confusion, delimit opportunities to provide essential training on social justice and diversity matters that affect public sector workers who serve a pluralistic constituency, and will lead to a diminution of efforts to combat discrimination across many dimensions of the human condition. Already since its issuance, OPA has been made aware of psychologists who have been uninvited to give presentations that promote diversity awareness and cultural sensitivity in government settings.

Describing diversity trainings as being “malign[ed]” ideologies reveals an overall failure to appreciate the disparities and humanity among underrepresented and diverse groups. The Executive Order states that the efforts to promote awareness of racism and sexism “perpetuates racial stereotypes and division.” Such language is blatantly contrary to the direct efforts of psychology as a profession to correct social and racial inequalities while striving to do no harm in supporting constituents across this country and State of Ohio. The denial of well documented social inequities defies social science and disrespects those who struggle every day to be heard. For such an order to be issued during COVID 19, which disproportionately affects Black and Indigenous People of Color and lower social economic status groups, is simply chilling and perpetuates misinformation in a time where there is already ample societal discord around social justice topics.

The Ohio Psychological Association condemns this Executive Order as being contrary to the social scientifically substantiated, longitudinal history of discrimination in our country. OPA opposes the restriction of diversity training, education, and social justice efforts that limits psychology’s freedom of speech, permits legislative silencing of our professional ethos, and undermines the diversity efforts of this Association.

OPA asks that all of our members continue to practice culturally sensitive care, training, and provide and receive education consistent with the best practices and social justice efforts of our profession. We must continue to monitor ourselves for implicit bias and improve our cultural humility.

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The Ohio Psychological Association, in Columbus, Ohio, is membership organization of approximately 1,500 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.