



**AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION**

April 27, 2026

Ian Masson, President
Catholic Psychotherapy Association
828 Smith Ave Ste C
Thomasville, GA 31792

Dear Dr. Masson:

Thank you for your letters regarding the role of APA's clinical practice guidelines in the treatment of gender dysphoria, including the questions raised in your January 27, 2026, letter, your March 31, 2026 correspondence in response to my March 9, 2026 letter, and the Catholic Psychotherapy Association's open letter to the APA Council of Representatives. APA values dialogue with all parts of the psychology community, and I welcome the opportunity to state APA's positions clearly.

You have asked whether APA's guidelines permit psychologists to exercise independent clinical judgment when treating patients presenting with gender dysphoria, and specifically whether a psychologist who recommends exploratory psychotherapy, rather than social or medical transition, is acting within the standard of care. You have also sought clarity on the nature and legal effect of APA guidelines and Council policy. This letter addresses each of these points.

Independent Clinical Judgment and Exploratory Psychotherapy

A psychologist who conducts a comprehensive evaluation, identifies co-occurring conditions such as depression, anxiety, or neurodevelopmental differences, and recommends a course of exploratory psychotherapy is acting within the standard of care as reflected in APA's guidelines. APA's guidelines support thorough assessment and the exercise of independent clinical judgment. They do not mandate any particular treatment recommendation or direct the clinician toward a predetermined outcome. APA recognizes the importance of a neutral therapeutic space for process-oriented care, in which patients

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can explore their distress without the therapist directing them toward any predetermined conclusion.

Nature of APA Guidelines and Council Policy

Guidelines and policy adopted by APA's Council of Representatives provide aspirational guidance to psychologists and to the field. They do not impose professional obligations or sanctions on individual practitioners, and they do not supersede ethical standards, licensure law, or regulation. APA guidelines carry no legal authority; their influence is persuasive and normative, not regulatory.

Scope of APA's Clinical Practice Guidelines

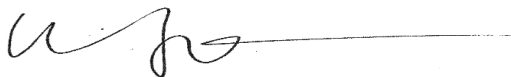
APA's clinical practice guidelines address psychological practice: the psychologist's role in assessment, psychotherapy, and support. Decisions regarding medical interventions fall within the scope of medical practice and are appropriately made by medical professionals in consultation with their care teams, the patients themselves, and their families. APA supports access to comprehensive healthcare, and our guidelines focus on ensuring that the psychological component of that care is evidence-based, thorough, and patient-centered.

Commitment to Evidence-Based Guidance

APA develops and revises its guidance through a rigorous, evidence-based process that accounts for the current state of the research literature. We remain committed to ensuring our guidance reflects the best available science.

It may be helpful to your membership to post my correspondence on your website at <https://catholicpsychotherapy.org/2026/02/26/open-letter-to-apa/>, which currently states that APA has provided no reply to your inquiries.

Respectfully,



Wendi S. Williams, Ph.D.

President

American Psychological Association

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