

Donna M. Norris, MD
**APA President-Elect Candidate Statement for the American
Society of Adolescent Psychiatry**

Thank you for this opportunity to present my position on challenges facing adolescent psychiatry. As a psychiatrist in private practice who treats children and adolescents, I know well the difficulties which many adolescents and families face today. Adolescence is a tumultuous time in the lives of many youth. This period is made more difficult for youth who have mental illnesses and/or substance use disorders. Today, we are witnessing a significant downturn in our economy which can destabilize families on which our young patients depend for support. In many communities, the employment opportunities this year for adolescents have been bleak due to fiscal budget constraints. Other important concerns relate to the decreased financial resources of the schools that impacts on their abilities to provide adolescents with needed preventive, educational, and supportive services. In this challenging environment, there is even greater need for attention to the mental health needs of youth. Health care reform will hopefully yield affordable health coverage for all children, youth and young adults up to 26 years. Additional components of health reform may provide coverage for prevention, early identification, and effective treatment for mental and substance use disorders. The APA fought for parity and passed a Board action in support of a public plan with voluntary physician participation. As I write this commentary, Senate votes are scheduled in a few days which will test the support for various health reform options. The impact of the strength of the APA's effective advocacy network is stronger with the valued collaborative work of the American Society for Adolescent Psychiatry and our other allied psychiatric colleagues. There is hope for progress in meeting the needs of young people with this greater focus on change in the health care reform. Another concern for the profession is the insufficient number of psychiatrists available to treat adolescents and their families. This is further complicated by an uneven geographic distribution of professionals. The American Society for Adolescent Psychiatry is to be commended for its focus on improving the science and educational opportunities for its members, which in turn, increases the capacity of psychiatric practitioners to serve this population. I am a member of the medical staff of the Children's Hospital Medical Center and the Program in Psychiatry & the Law at Beth Israel/Deaconess Hospital in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. During my training in child psychiatry, my education was closely linked to the juvenile justice system at the Judge Baker Children's Center and Children's Hospital in Boston. I learned early that advocacy is an important component in planning for adolescents who have difficulties within their homes, their schools, and/or the courts. My professional experiences include serving as an Attending Staff Psychiatrist on an Adolescent and Psychosomatic Inpatient Unit of Boston Children's Hospital, and supervising medical students and psychiatric residents. Within the Boston Juvenile Court Clinic, I supervised psychiatric trainees in their evaluation and treatment of adolescents and their families under the jurisdiction of the Court. Within the APA, my leadership has been extensive and includes service as Speaker of the Assembly, Area 1 Trustee, and APA Secretary-Treasurer. While serving as Secretary-Treasurer, I advocated for transparency in the budgetary process and establishment of clear priorities within a framework of fiscal responsibility. As with many other medical organizations, the APA is experiencing financial strain within

the current economic crisis. The APA continues to advocate with a strong voice dedicated to advancing the profession's mission of serving patients and providing members with the best science. I am honored to be a candidate for APA President-Elect and very much appreciate this opportunity to share my thoughts regarding the challenges which face our patients and the profession. I look forward to working with you to ensure that the adolescents of our nation receive needed quality mental health services.