

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY

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April 22, 2009

Norman R. Augustine, Chair
Scientific Management Review Board
Office of the Director
National Institutes of Health, Building 1
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Mr. Augustine,

On behalf of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed merger of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA).

The AACAP is a medical membership association established by child and adolescent psychiatrists in 1953. Now over 8,000 members strong, the AACAP is the leading national medical association dedicated to treating and improving the quality of life for the estimated 7 – 12 million American children and adolescents under 18 years of age who are affected by emotional, behavioral, and developmental disorders.

Given the tremendous co-occurrence of mental disorders and substance abuse, AACAP is acutely aware of the importance of the prevention and treatment of adolescent substance use disorders. The AACAP Substance Abuse and Addiction Committee includes representatives from our membership who have a special expertise in prevention, treatment, research, and education on co-occurring mental disorders and substance abuse.

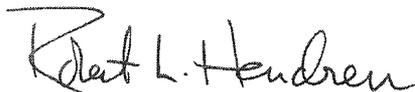
Because alcohol and other substance abuse disorders co-exist with such frequency, the AACAP Substance Abuse and Addiction Committee supports the idea of a collaborative focus on alcohol and substance use disorders. At the same time, the Committee is concerned that a possible merger or restructuring would impact the allocation of resources and funding support of these important public health topics.

The AACAP would like to stress the ongoing importance of and need for research funding across the spectrum of substance use disorders and urge NIH to not lose focus of the overall missions of NIDA and NIAAA if any restructure process is to occur. Should this plan become a reality, the lower levels of a new institute would need to be organized so that they preserve specific areas of basic science as well as specific areas of focus (e.g., underage drinking, prescription drug misuse/dependence, club drugs, nicotine use, etc.). Additionally, because NIDA and NIAAA have both engaged in educational activities at a number of levels, including government administrators, elected officials, general public, school-aged children, and scientists, we would encourage a continued growth of resources available for these initiatives.

The AACAP is dedicated to addressing the problem of substance abuse through early identification and treatment of risk factors, provision of integrated clinical services, promotion of research, and advocacy. In working toward the advancement of this mission, we also propose that any restructuring plan include a more formalized connection with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Such collaborations are an important step for child and adolescent psychiatrists when it comes to translating research findings to clinical practice and in disseminating evidence-based practices through professional publications, continuing medical education, and public education.

Thank you again for your time and consideration in this matter. We look forward to maintaining open lines of communication throughout the restructuring consideration process to ensure the current level of support and conduct of research across a full range of disciplines are continued.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert L. Hendren". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

Robert L. Hendren, D.O.
AACAP President

CC: Alessandra Kazura, M.D., Co-Chair, Substance Abuse and Addiction Committee
Himanshu Upadhyaya, M.B.B.S., Co-Chair, Substance Abuse and Addiction Committee