



International Section



July 7, 2020

Addendum: We acknowledge that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's [new regulations](#) announced on July 6, 2020 targets our international student community, creating panic, confusion within the community as our students continue to navigate a global pandemic living apart from their friends and family. With this untimely, uncompassionate and unjustifiable action, our international students are now faced with a risky and difficult decision: choosing between their academic careers and their health and safety. Please follow the action items mentioned in the Statement as a way to support and show up for our international students.

June 27, 2020

The ICP (International Counseling Psychology) community is deeply concerned about the impacts of the latest [Presidential Proclamation](#) on the well-being and career opportunities of international students, postdoctoral fellows, practitioners, and scholars. The proclamation states its intention to protect the U.S. labor force by framing the non-immigrant worker as a threat to the U.S. job market. The ICP community strongly condemns this scapegoating mentality and divisive language that turns marginalized vulnerable groups against each other. We recognize that the targeting of highly skilled immigrants is deeply intertwined with U.S.'s racist history starting with the genocide and stealing of Native land, enslaving and forcibly bringing Africans to this land for economic gain, internment of Japanese American citizens, attacks on South Asians and Muslims following 9/11 to the latest Muslim Ban to the racial inequities highlighted by this pandemic and the murders of innocent Black people.

The [National Academies Press Consensus Study Report \(2017\)](#) concluded that "... long-run economic growth in the United States would be considerably dimmed without the contribution of high-skilled immigrants." This proclamation not only denies the contributions of immigrant and non-immigrant workforce as is well-documented in [economic and labor statistics and research](#) but also hurts the U.S. economy in the long run. In the field of psychology, many international students and psychologists bring diverse cross-cultural perspectives, linguistic skills, and intellectual assets that enrich the overall quality of mental health services.

Within the community, we feel the impact in different ways such as grief, related to the loss of our international colleagues and peers who bring valuable skills and perspectives, and persistent psychological distress, fear, and uncertainty due to abrupt and unexpected changes to career plans in the midst of a pandemic and racial injustice across the nation. For any professional without an established valid U.S. visa, this proclamation has swiftly brought on tremendous uncertainty regarding their employment and career outlook in the U.S. and separation from family and loved ones.

These feelings of uncertainty have also been reflected in the research literature. While extensive research on the health and wellbeing of H-1B workers is lacking, some [studies](#) stress that the current administration's immigration policies have aggravated feelings of crisis in the immigrant communities. Other [research](#) indicates that living in persistent fear related to visa-related job insecurity heightens psychological distress and anxiety, and frustration from lack of systemic support.



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Therefore, we call on our psychologist and student peers for actions and advocacy in the following ways:

1. **Build your awareness** about the racist history of the U.S. immigration system and the different visa categories that may apply to your trainees, students, and colleagues.
2. **Contact your lawmakers** to support immigration reform including House Bill 1044 and Senate Bill 386.
Urge Congress to Support International Students & Scholars by signing the petition to protect OPT (Optional Practical Training) and to support international students and scholars. Sign [this petition](#) allowing international students to remain in the U.S. if Fall classes are conducted online due to the pandemic.
3. **Advocate** for your international trainees, students, and colleagues by (a) recognizing and checking-in with them about the impact of the proclamations (e.g., increased psychological distress) on international students and colleagues, and providing/creating support spaces to process this distress; (b) reaching out to your institution's international offices and Human Resources offices for resources or a training related to how this proclamation and recent social issues affect your students and staff; (c) calling out xenophobia; (d) establishing emergency financial and/or legal assistance to support those whose legal statuses were displaced by the current proclamation; and (e) engaging in research on the mental health and well-being and unique experiences of H-1B/nonimmigrant visa workers
4. **Donate** to organizations such as Justice Action Center, American Immigration Lawyers Association, and Innovation Law Lab that filed a federal lawsuit related to the April 2020 Proclamation.

International Section of APA Division 17 Society of Counseling Psychology

With an Endorsement of Executive Board of APA Division 17 Society of Counseling Psychology