

**SOCIOLOGY OF MENTAL HEALTH**  
**(Revised 2023)**

**BY-LAWS**

Established November 1991, revised by referendum 1996, June 2005, June 2011, June 2012, June 2016, June 2023

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Section on the Sociology of Mental Health is to provide an integrative and supportive organizational framework for sociological research on mental health. It encourages this purpose through meeting participation, conferences, publications, and other means deemed appropriate by the Council of the Section. The Section does not promote a particular definition of mental health; rather, the term is inclusive, ranging from serious mental disorders through subjective indicators of the quality of life.

**Officers and Council:** The Officers of the Section shall consist of the following: a Chair, a Chair-elect, a Past Chair, and a Secretary-Treasurer. The Council consists of the Officers and seven additional members. The seven additional Council members include the Chair of the Nominating Committee, Chair of the Publications Committee, the Newsletter Editor, Chair of the Mental Health Section Award Committee, Membership Chair, and two standing members, one of whom will be a graduate student. All members of Council, with the exception of the Newsletter Editor (who is appointed), shall be elected by the membership.

Council members serve two-year terms, except the Chair (who is on the Council for three years, as Chair-elect, Chair, and Past Chair), the Secretary-Treasurer (who is on Council for three years, and Newsletter Editor (who serves a four year term). Responsibilities of the Section Officers are as follows. The Chair-elect will serve in the first year as a member of the Program and Awards Committees. The Chair will serve as Chair of the Council, Program Committee Chair, and Presider at the annual business meeting. The Past Chair remains on Council and serves as a member of the Awards Committee. The Secretary-Treasurer shall take and circulate minutes of meeting, and keep and present documents and financial records of the Section.

Except for the office of Secretary-Treasurer, annual elections will alternate between two versions. In odd years, elections will be for Chair-elect, Chair of the Publications Committee, the Membership Chair, and one standing Council member. In even years, elections will be for Chair-elect, Chair of the Nominating Committee, Chair of the Awards Committee, and the student member. Election for the office of Secretary-Treasurer will be held every three years beginning in 2014. Thus, subsequent elections for this office will be held in 2017, 2020, 2023, and every third year thereafter.

Officers may not succeed themselves. No member may hold two elective offices simultaneously. No member may be a member of Council for more than a continuous five-year period, and no member may hold Council positions for more than seven years of any ten-year period.

The Newsletter Editor shall be appointed by the Publications Committee Chair and confirmed by Council. The term of office shall be four years.

Only members of the American Sociological Section who are also members of the Section on the Sociology of Mental Health are eligible to hold office. A student holding a position as standing member of Council must be a student member of the ASA, a student member of the Section, and be currently enrolled in a graduate program at the time of election. Current section Officers and other Council members have voting rights at Council meetings. The Chair of the Nominations Committee, Newsletter Editor, and incoming Officers and Council members shall have voice but not vote. If an elected office is vacated before the end of the term, it will be filled for the unexpired term by appointment of the Chair as approved by the Council.

**Powers of the Council:** The Council is vested with the power to carry out all necessary operations for the Section, acting as the representatives of the membership. To that end, it shall meet annually on the occasion of the ASA Annual Meeting. The Council shall make decisions by majority rule of its attending, voting members. The Council meeting is restricted to Council members and invited guests. The general business meeting is open to all Section members and shall be devoted to discussion of issues presented by Council or by membership.

Questions to be brought before the Section membership for approval may originate with the Council itself, by a petition of 10 percent of the Section membership or by 25 members of the Section (whichever is less), and may be referred to a ballot of Section members by the same means. Any resolution passed by the annual business meeting of the Section shall automatically be submitted to the Section membership by ballot.

**Elections and Voting:** The elections of the Section shall be carried out in cooperation with the American Sociological Association and coordinated to its schedule. A simple majority of the members voting for each Council position shall determine the outcome, as it shall for all referenda or revisions of by-laws as may be submitted for vote. In the elections for seats on the Council

(normally with two candidates per position), the two candidates having the largest number of votes shall be elected when two seats are available. Newly elected Officers and Council members shall assume office immediately after the adjournment of the business meeting of the Section at the Annual Meeting of the ASA. They are encouraged to attend the council meeting that occurs prior to the business meeting that marks the start of their terms, to familiarize themselves with other council members and upcoming work.

**Committees:** There shall be a Nominating Committee, consisting of the Committee Chair and the student member of Council. The Nominating Committee shall present two members for each office to be voted on by the Section via ballot, as stipulated above. Candidates may also be added to the ballot by petitions of at least 25 members of the Section. In case of such petitions, there may be more than two choices for a particular position. Normally, members of the Nominating Committee will collect nomination forms at the annual business meeting, and after by mail, and will normally include the single most nominated member as one of their two choices. The other choice(s) will be determined by ranking by members of the Nominating Committee, from a list of names generated by nomination forms.

There shall be a Program Committee, consisting of the Chair and Chair-elect of the Section. The Program Committee will appoint organizers for the upcoming year's ASA sessions, and will oversee development of topics in these sessions. The committee will attempt to ensure year to year diversity among session offerings. The Program Committee will also work in conjunction with the ASA Program Committee to encourage sessions pertaining to the theme of the annual meeting as well as organize and encourage joint sessions with associated sections.

There shall be a Publications Committee consisting of the Publications Chair and Newsletter-Editor. The purpose of this Committee will be to prepare a Section Newsletter to be distributed to section membership through the American Sociological Association. In addition, if special publication projects are undertaken by the Section, the Publications Committee will serve as the organizational arm of the Section in searching for and arranging appropriate publication sources.

There shall be a Mental Health Awards Committee, which will consider entries for all Section awards (see below). The membership of the Committee will be as follows: The Chair of the Committee, the Chair-elect of the Section, the Past-Chair of the Section, the non-student standing member of Council, the lead (or sole) author of the best publication award for the past year, the recipient of the best dissertation award in the past year, and a Past-Chair of the Mental Health Awards Committee who will be appointed by the current Chair of the Committee and will serve for a term agreed upon by the Past-Chair so appointed. In making awards, the Awards Committee will be receptive to work from a broad range of sociological traditions by the diverse membership of the section. The Committee shall be responsible for deciding each year on the recipients of all Section Awards (see below).

The Membership Chair is responsible for encouraging Section membership through activities proposed to and approved by Council (ex. mailings to lapsed Section members). When deemed necessary, the Membership Chair may request appointment of additional committee members with Council approval.

Other committees shall be appointed by the Chair with the approval of Council on an ad hoc basis. The tenure of an ad hoc committee shall be determined by Council at the time it is constituted. The Chair of the ad hoc committee shall have voice but no vote at Council meetings.

There shall be a Journal Publication Committee consisting of the Publications Chair, the chair-elect, the past chair and the non-student standing member of Council.

The Journal Editor shall be selected by the section Council. The Journal Publication Committee shall solicit nominations and shall submit a list to Council of nominees for the editorship, to which list the Council may add or delete names. For purposes of selecting the new Editor, the current Editor shall be a non-voting member of the Journal Publication Committee.

The Editorial Board shall be composed of the Editor of the Journal as chair and a set of Deputy and Associate Editors. The number and composition of the Editorial Board shall be determined by the Council. Associate Editors shall be appointed by the Journal Publication Committee for three-year terms on the recommendation of the Editor. Approximately one-third of the terms of Associate Editors shall expire each year.

The Editor shall be responsible for the editorial management of the journal. The Editor shall have the authority to appoint such special issue editors as the Editor may deem necessary. Each Editor must work within the policies established by the Journal Publications Committee and within the budget set by Council. The Editor shall submit an annual report on the activities of the Journal including a financial statement, submission/acceptance rates and plans for future issues, etc. to the Journal Publication Committee prior to the annual meeting.

The Editor shall have the right to reject for publication any paper or other communication that is submitted.

**Section Awards:** The Section will consider four awards each year: The Leonard I. Pearlin Award for Distinguished Scholarly Contributions for the Sociological Study of Mental Health, the Best Publication of the Year award, the Dissertation Award, and the Annual Graduate Student Paper Award. Each award may be, but need not, be awarded each year. For the Best Publication Award, books, published articles, and book chapters that have appeared in print within a two-year period prior to the annual meeting will be considered. For the Dissertation Award, dissertations defended within

the two academic years prior to the annual meeting will be considered. For the Annual Graduate Student Paper Award, papers completed or published within the two academic years prior to the annual meeting will be considered. Papers authored by more than one student are acceptable but papers coauthored with faculty are not eligible. Awards will be presented at the annual business meeting or reception.

**Membership:** The membership of the Section is open to any member of the American Sociological Association without regard to the classification of the membership. Members who do not pay their Section dues shall be suspended, and dropped from the roles after two years.

**Dues:** Dues shall be set by the Council to cover the operation of the Section in accord with the requirements of the American Sociological Association.

**By-law Changes:** Proposed changes in these by-laws must first be discussed at an annual business meeting of the Section, then approved by a majority of the Council, and finally approved by a majority of the Section members through a formal vote carried out in cooperation with the American Sociological Association.