



May 20, 2013

Dear AAIDD Members;

Spring has finally arrived and our Annual Meeting is just around the corner (June 3-6, 2013). I hope many of you will be joining [Punxsutawney Pete](#) and me in Pittsburgh, PA at the [137<sup>th</sup> AAIDD Annual Meeting](#). James R. Thompson, PhD our AAIDD President-elect/Conference Chair, and the Conference Planning Committee have assembled an exciting program for the ***Race to Catch the Future***. This year's conference offers a growing number of workshops that have been approved for Continuing Education units for licensed social workers and psychologists.

As I shared with you in my September letter, my number one priority this past year was to make certain that we worked with the American Psychiatric Association (APA) as they developed the 5th edition of their *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), especially as it related to revisions to the terminology and diagnostic criteria of the condition now known as intellectual disability. AAIDD took the lead in responding to the DSM-5 May 2012 draft document indicating that the APA was poised to rename "mental retardation" as "intellectual developmental disorder" in DSM-5. We felt this change would have been disastrous for persons with intellectual disability and their families. Margaret Nygren, EdD, AAIDD Executive Director/CEO, led the effort to issue a press release outlining AAIDD's concerns to the major news outlets and resulted in the publication of several articles increasing awareness of the AAIDD concerns regarding this issue, including articles in [Disability Scoop](#), [Chicago Tribune](#), [Apostrophe](#), and [Exceptional Parent](#). We also reached out to other relevant disability and professional partner organizations to join us in disseminating these shared comments, concerns and recommendations to the DSM-5 working group. Ultimately, it was a team effort that included comments submitted by the American Academy of Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine, American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry & Special Olympics (joint letter), American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, American Psychological Association—Division 33, The Arc, Inclusion International, Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), and NADD that moved the DSM-5 working group to do the right thing. We were pleased to receive an official communication from APA on December 19, 2012, stating that the DSM-5 name and criteria of the condition now known as "intellectual disability" would be in alignment with that promulgated by AAIDD.

Although a few may naively think that what we name a condition does not matter a whole lot, most of us understand that, in fact, the name we use matters A LOT. It is critical for many reasons that researchers, clinicians, educators, policy makers—everyone—uses the same, correct name when referring to the same condition.

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The World Health Organization (WHO) is also at present working on revising their classification system. Although the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) is not expected to be published until 2015, work is underway. At the behest of the WHO, AAIDD hosted a North American Expert Panel on Intellectual Disability to review and comment on the draft version of the ICD-11 working group's proposed changes to the condition previously known as mental retardation in the ICD-10. This panel, convened on January 7-8, 2013, included the WHO project officer and nine experts affiliated with six major professional/disability organizations (AAIDD, AUCD, The Arc, APA, Division 33 of the American Psychological Association, and Canadian Association for Research and Education in Intellectual Disabilities). An outcome of this meeting was the presentation of formal recommendations from AAIDD to the WHO on the terminology and diagnostic criteria. The [April Special Issue of the journal \*Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities\*](#) provides an overview of the recommendations. We hope that the ICD-11 will reconsider renaming the condition "intellectual developmental disorders" and will adopt a definition that is congruent with the AAIDD definition of intellectual disability.

We are pleased with having successfully influenced the DSM-5 and contributed to the ICD-11. We thank AAIDD's leadership and we are especially grateful to our partner organizations. AAIDD forged a coalition of disability and professional organizations who joined voices and brought unified concerns regarding the naming, defining, and classifying of intellectual disability to the attention of the leadership of the American Psychiatric Association and the DSM-5 working group. It was a great example of collaboration on a big scale to bring about big change.

I wish to also highlight some of our Association's other exciting accomplishments this past year:

- **A new journal!** *Inclusion* is a new AAIDD peer-reviewed journal that provides a multidisciplinary forum for the presentation and discussion of evidence-based interventions and strategies that promote the full inclusion of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I want to congratulate Michael L. Wehmeyer, PhD and Karrie A. Shogren, PhD for being appointed as the *Inclusion* journal's inaugural editors. The journal is in good hands.
- **A new web platform!** AAIDD secured developers to redesign our website to make it easier for members and others to access to the high quality information and resources AAIDD has to offer. Don't miss the soft launch of our new and exciting website at this year's annual meeting in Pittsburgh, PA.
- **Award Winning Authors!** Congratulations to Michael L. Wehmeyer, PhD and J. David Smith, PhD, authors of *Good Blood, Bad Blood: Science, Nature, and the Myth of the Kallikaks*, for receiving a Bronze Medal in the 2013 Independent Publisher Book Awards. Congratulations also to Lisa M. O'Hearn, MA, Director of the AAIDD Publications Program, for her work on the production of this publication.
- AAIDD designed three attractive promotional postcards, containing the following mission-centric messages: (1) AAIDD is at the intersection of equality, dignity, and

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human rights; (2) AAIDD is your connection to the latest and best information; and (3) AAIDD is the answer to [any] question in the disability profession. These postcards have been distributed to approximately 30,000 IDD professionals in an effort to promote membership in our Association.

- I hope, like me, you enjoyed our creative and humorous side as illustrated in the videos promoting our annual meeting with the special appearance of Punxsutawney Pete!
- Increased visibility of our Association activities on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. If you have not already “liked” us on Facebook - please do so. Also, be sure to follow the conference activities on twitter and tweet using the hashtag **#AAIDD13**.
- Don’t forget to join the *Social Media Challenge* to win a Google Nexus 7 Tablet! Another cool and innovative idea from AAIDD to promote our 2013 Annual Meeting.
- AAIDD delegation to Brazil to learn about intellectual and developmental disabilities services and meet and network with Brazilian colleagues!
- A wealth of exceptional online courses developed with our partner Essential Learning/Relias Learning.
- Ongoing engagement with our membership—[check out the member profile videos](#).
- Ongoing work with many partner organizations to achieve our mission and vision.

I also want to acknowledge and thank my fellow Board members (Sharon C. Gomez, James R. Thompson, Amy S. Hewitt, Patti N. Martin, Peter J. Smith, Denis W. Keyes, Loui Lord Nelson, and Elizabeth Perkins) who have worked diligently this past year to ensure the growth and continued relevance of our Association. It has been a true pleasure serving on the Board of Directors with this great group of colleagues and friends. Of course, none of this would be possible without Margaret Nygren, EdD, Executive Director/CEO, who directs our Association in her usual masterful way. AAIDD has thrived and continued to grow its outreach under Maggie's skillful leadership. AAIDD activities, products, and services could not happen without a dedicated national office staff. We truly have a committed and highly qualified staff that understands the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities and ensures the delivery of our products, activities, and services.

In closing, I want to thank you for choosing to be a member of AAIDD. We are only as strong and influential as our membership! AAIDD is strong because of visionary leaders in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities like you, who contribute and produce the science, journal articles, books, tests, trainings, and provide services that move our field forward.

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I hope to have a chance to chat with you in Pittsburgh.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marc." with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Marc J. Tassé, PhD, FAAIDD  
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