



CONSORTIUM of SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

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COSSA Celebrates 20th Anniversary of NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research

In 1995, Congress created the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) to enhance the NIH's capacity to understand the behavioral and social factors associated with health. To mark the 20th anniversary of OBSSR's creation, the Coalition for the Advancement of Health through Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (CAHT-BSSR), which is co-chaired by COSSA, has joined with 21 other professional associations, scientific societies, coalitions, and organizations for a [poster exhibition and reception on Capitol Hill](#). The event, which is open to the public, will take place on June 24 from 5:30-7:30 pm in the Cannon Caucus Room of the Cannon House Office Building. It will highlight social and behavioral science research supported across the NIH, with 17 of NIH's 27 institutes, centers, and offices exhibiting at the reception.

"The creation of the OBSSR by Congress two decades ago has been instrumental in addressing the importance of the behavioral and social sciences in examining the myriad of factors that contribute to individual health," said Raynard Kington, M.D., Ph.D., President of Grinnell University and former OBSSR director. "Twenty years later, these sciences continue to have a very important role to play at every stage of the continuum of health research, from the most basic, which seeks to understand the fundamental structures and systems of the human body and its interaction with the environment, to the most applied research aimed at ensuring that scientific advances are applied in real-life settings. We are fortunate as a nation that the NIH has embraced the idea that support of the behavioral and social sciences are essential if it is to succeed in accomplishing its mission." Current acting OBSSR Director William Riley said, "There is no more exciting time to be a behavioral or social scientist."

"During the past twenty years, OBSSR has fostered collaborations between NIH's institutes and centers to support research in the behavioral and social sciences that furthers NIH's mission and promotes the health of our nation," said Norman B. Anderson, Ph.D., OBSSR's founding director and now CEO of the American Psychological Association. "Among its many contributions, OBSSR has facilitated research on the refinement of scientific methodologies from qualitative research to transdisciplinary systems science."

"Behavioral factors, including tobacco smoking, physical activity, and diet are among the best predictors of the length and quality of our lives," said OBSSR's most recent director, Robert M. Kaplan, PhD., now Chief Science Officer within the Office of the Director at the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. "In addition, social circumstances have a profound effect on health outcomes. Over the last 20 years, OBSSR has provided vital intellectual leadership to bring these factors to public attention. The office stimulated important new research directions and helped achieve widespread integration of behavioral and social sciences research into biomedical research and healthcare practice."

"Most people associate NIH with finding cures for disease," said Christine Bachrach, who recently retired after 30 years of federal service including at OBSSR and the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. "Behavioral and social science research is critical for ensuring that those cures are effectively and widely put into practice. But even more importantly, behavioral and social science is the lynchpin for understanding how better to prevent disease, both through changes in behavior and through changes to the social systems that shape human lives and behaviors, and contribute so dramatically to health and disease."

On this, the 20th anniversary of OBSSR's creation, COSSA congratulates the Office on its contributions to promoting human health and well-being.

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations is a nonprofit organization serving as a united voice for more than 100 professional associations, scientific societies, research centers and institutes, and colleges and universities who care about a robust social and behavioral scientific research enterprise.

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