



BPA News

Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The 2026 Black Psychiatrists of America (BPA) Spring Conference, "Ancestral Echoes and Neurobiological Resilience: Confronting Historical Trauma to Advance Black Mental Health," held March 26–29, 2026, in New Orleans, was an outstanding success. The meeting brought together a dynamic and diverse group of mental health professionals and truly captured the culture, soul, and history of this vibrant city.



*BPA Executive Director,
Dr. Napoleon Higgins*

Attendance was strong, with psychiatrists, psychologists, trainees, and allied mental health professionals all contributing to a rich and engaging experience. The scientific sessions were exceptionally well-prepared, with speakers delivering thoughtful, high-quality presentations that advanced dialogue around critical issues in mental health, particularly within Black communities and the broader diaspora.

(continued on next page)



The 2026 Transcultural Conference will be held in Ghana from November 12-15, 2026.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE, cont.

Beyond the formal sessions, the conference came alive through meaningful connections. Attendees had the opportunity to network, collaborate, and build lasting professional relationships while enjoying the unique energy of New Orleans. From shared meals to informal gatherings, there was a strong sense of community, purpose, and camaraderie throughout the event.

Equally important was the spirit of fellowship that defined the meeting.

Participants not only learned from one another but also celebrated together, embracing the city's music, cuisine, and cultural richness.

Overall, the conference exemplified the essence of BPA: excellence in education, meaningful connection, and a continued commitment to advancing mental health equity for Black communities.

Warm regards,

Napoleon B. Higgins, Jr., MD
Executive Director
Black Psychiatrists of America



Spring Conference 2026



thank you!

SPRING CONFERENCE SPONSORS



BPA Members Honored at Spring Conference 2026

By Stephen McLeod-Bryant, MD

Conference attendees had the opportunity to applaud the exemplary contributions of five BPA members at a special luncheon Saturday afternoon, March 28, 2026.

Dr. Francois Williams, currently a psychiatrist at Tanner Health's Willowbrooke Psychiatric Center and formerly a Head Psychiatrist at Georgia State University who has also provided care at Atlanta University Student Health and Wellness Center, received the Dr. Isaac Slaughter Award for Outstanding Leadership in Psychiatry. **Dr. Aaron Mack**, resident in psychiatry at Howard University Hospital and APA SAMHSA Minority Fellow, received the Dr. Jeanne Spurlock Award for Outstanding Resident. **Dr. Kelly Akah**, a Clinical Instructor in Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania and Chair of the Community Diversity Fellowship of the APA Foundation, received a Dr. James Ralph Award for Outstanding Public Service. **Dr. Mardoche Sidor**, Medical Director of NYC nonprofit Urban Pathways and Founder/CEO/President of the SWEET Institute, also received a Dr. James Ralph Award for Outstanding Public Service. Finally, **Dr. Rahn Bailey**, President of the BPA and President-elect of the APA, received the Dr. Lloyd Elam Award for Lifetime Achievement.

All are to be commended for their extraordinary efforts enriching the Black community. And many thanks to those of you who took the time and effort to nominate these deserving individuals.

Stephen McLeod-Bryant, MD
Immediate Past President



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President's Address

By Rahn Kennedy Bailey, MD

As I step into my role as President of the Black Psychiatrists of America this past November, after serving as President-Elect from 2023 to 2025, I am filled with both gratitude and excitement. It brings me great joy to continue BPA's long-standing tradition of hosting two national conferences each year. Our spring meeting, held annually on the third Friday in March, follows closely after Match Day and is intentionally geared toward academic topics. It serves medical students, residents, and early-career psychiatrists, particularly those navigating the match process or seeking new opportunities. This meeting is especially beneficial for unmatched medical students, while also creating space for those who have successfully matched and are preparing for the next phase of their careers. In contrast, our fall meeting, held during the last weekend of November outside of the continental United States, offers a transcultural experience. I am especially excited for this year's conference, which will take place in Accra, Ghana. This international setting allows us to blend diverse cultural perspectives and better understand how cultural context and historical experiences influence mental health, particularly among individuals of Afro-Caribbean descent.



*BPA President, Dr. Rahn Bailey with
BPA President Elect, Dr. Nicole Washington*

Our Spring Conference this past March was, in my opinion, spectacular for three key reasons. First, we had an outstanding turnout, supported by an excellent location and seamless organization by our leadership team. Special thanks to BPA CEO Dr. Napoleon Higgins and Program Coordinator Dr. Nicole Washington for their exceptional work in planning and executing a highly successful program in New Orleans. Second, I want to acknowledge the many local and national professionals, across both primary care and mental health, who attended, presented, and contributed through outstanding lectures and research posters. Third, the academic framework of the conference spoke volumes about the direction of our organization, particularly our commitment to recognizing and diagnosing mental health conditions through an Afro-centered and culturally relevant lens. The program was comprehensive, with lectures spanning areas such as child and adolescent, geriatric, and consultation-liaison psychiatry, reflecting the breadth and depth of our field.

President's Address, cont.

By Rahn Kennedy Bailey, MD

I would like to spotlight a first-time participant, Rachael Oyebade, a third-year medical student at Howard University College of Medicine, who demonstrated initiative by attending, presenting her work, and engaging fully with the conference through the support of her mentor, Dr. Danielle Hairston. Her experience reflects the strength of BPA's collaborative environment, where emerging physicians can learn directly from seasoned professionals. As she shared, "experiencing the BPA conference was tremendously fulfilling. As someone who chose to attend an HBCU for medical school to train alongside providers who share similar cultural ties, being part of a conference dedicated to that same mission within psychiatry affirmed my desire to pursue this field." With a strong interest in child and adolescent psychiatry, she actively sought opportunities to connect, collaborate, and grow within the specialty, and she did just that. She met inspiring leaders, including Dr. Sarah Denaud, who encouraged her to remain steadfast in her journey. She also gained valuable clinical insight from physicians such as Dr. Monica Taylor, who offered guidance on excelling in residency while maintaining personal wellness. Her experience highlights the tangible value of BPA's mentorship and knowledge-sharing culture.

In addition, BPA continues to strengthen its footprint across the country, with conferences over the past years held in cities such as Atlanta, Nashville, Washington, DC, Los Angeles and most recently, New Orleans. We are excited for future gatherings, including our March 2027 meeting, which will be held in Houston. As President, I warmly invite all to join BPA and take part in both our academically focused spring conference and our culturally enriching fall conference.

I would like to close by thanking our entire team, our executive staff, Board of Directors, and conference leadership. Your dedication and consistency made this conference a success, and you have my sincere appreciation and admiration for a job well done.

Rahn Kennedy Bailey, MD
President
Black Psychiatrists of America

Black Psychiatrists of Greater Houston Meeting

By Taiwo Babatope, MD, MPH, MBA

My trainees and I were honored to spend the evening with Rahn Bailey, MD, FAPA, ACP — APA President-Elect and President of the Black Psychiatrists of America — along with Executive Director Dr. Napoleon Higgins Jr. and other distinguished Black psychiatrists from the Greater Houston area at the BLACK PSYCHIATRISTS OF AMERICA INC Black History Month Meeting. Their collective devotion to psychiatry, advocacy, and the APA is nothing short of legendary.



Black Psychiatrists of Greater Houston 2026

Dr. Michael Ingram delivered a compelling presentation on aligning treatment goals with unmet needs in Major Depressive Disorder, while Dr. Rahn Bailey, MD, FAPA, ACP shared some of his short and long-term goals for leading psychiatrists all across the country. We were also joined by pillars of child and adolescent psychiatry training in Houston — Drs. Daryl Knox and Sonja Randle — who have trained and mentored so many of us in the field. It was also a joy to reconnect with senior colleagues and now friends, including Dr. Kalonda Bradshaw, and Steven Starks, MD, MBA, DFAPA, whose tireless work in health equity, anti-racism, and mental health policy for marginalized communities continues to inspire the rest of us. My trainees Sandy Juste, MD MS, Dr. Ahsal Major and I were privileged to witness legends share space, exchange Black history facts, and engage in conversations that educated, inspired, and uplifted us all. A truly memorable evening!

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A New Chapter in Student Wellness: Dr. Ja’Nelle Blocker Joins Howard’s Spiritual Health and Wellness Center

Dr. Ja’Nelle Blocker, M.D., ABOIM recently joined the Howard University College of Medicine’s Spiritual Health and Wellness Center as its first clinical psychiatrist dedicated to serving medical students. In this pioneering role, Dr. Blocker will provide part-time acute care services, including crisis management and initial psychiatric evaluations, to support the mental health and overall well-being of the College’s student community.

This new position represents a significant expansion of Howard University’s commitment to holistic student care. By integrating psychiatric services within the Spiritual Health and Wellness Center, the College of Medicine is strengthening its multidisciplinary approach to supporting students through the academic, emotional, and personal challenges inherent in medical training.

Dr. Blocker brings to the role a deep understanding of the pressures medical students face and a passion for helping future physicians sustain their emotional resilience while pursuing demanding professional goals. The addition of psychiatric care as part of the institution’s wellness offerings further underscores Howard University’s broader mission to nurture not only academic excellence but also personal and spiritual growth among its students.

Through this work, Dr. Blocker aims to foster a supportive environment where medical students can access timely, compassionate mental health care, ensuring that the next generation of physicians enters the field with both the knowledge and the emotional resources essential to lifelong well-being and effective patient care.



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Celebrating Excellence: Dr. Altha Stewart Honored with RCP Honorary Fellowship

By Nicole Washington, DO

The Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc (BPA) is incredibly proud to announce that our past president, Dr. Altha Stewart, MD, has been awarded the prestigious Honorary Fellowship by the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCP).

This international distinction is one of the highest honors bestowed by the RCP, recognizing individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the field of psychiatry on a global scale. This is the highest award given by the RCP and only five Honorary Fellowships are awarded each year.



Dr. Stewart's career has been defined by her tireless advocacy for underserved populations and her role as a trailblazer in organized medicine. Her recent fellowship is a testament to a lifetime of service, including:

- Historic Leadership: In 2018, Dr. Stewart became the first African American president of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in its 175-year history.
- Community Advocacy: At the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC), she serves as Senior Associate Dean for Community Health Engagement and as a pioneer for trauma-informed care for justice-involved youth as Director of the Center for Health in Justice-Involved Youth.

Dr. Stewart has long been a pillar of the BPA serving as a past president and receiving our Lifetime



We want to feature **YOU** in our next newsletter! Share your wins so we can celebrate you. [Submit your highlight or article by July 3, 2026.](#)

Celebrating Excellence: Dr. Altha Stewart Honored with RCP Honorary Fellowship, cont.

By Nicole Washington, DO

Achievement Award in 2017. Her induction into the Royal College of Psychiatrists as an Honorary Fellow not only honors her personal brilliance but also elevates the mission of Black psychiatrists globally.

*"Psychiatry has to be the leader of the kind of change we want to see in the world."
-- Dr. Altha Stewart*



The Black Psychiatrists of America Presents

2026 TRANSCULTURAL CONFERENCE

Roots of Resilience: Confronting the Legacy of Racism and Advancing Mental Health in the Diaspora

PRE-CONFERENCE
Ashanti Region
November 10-12

CONFERENCE
Accra, Ghana
November 12-15

POST-CONFERENCE
Volta Region
November 16-18



<https://blackpsychiatrists.org/bpa-fall-conference>



University of Tennessee Health Science Center Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship Enters a New Era Under Dr. Allison Ford's Leadership

The University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry continues to advance its mission of excellence in education, clinical care, and service as the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship moves forward under the leadership of Dr. Allison R. Ford, MD, Interim Program Director. With a renewed emphasis on individualized training, trauma-informed care, and workforce development, the program remains a premier training destination for physicians pursuing careers in child and adolescent psychiatry.

Fellowship Recruitment for Academic Year 2026-2027

The UTHSC Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry is currently seeking minimum PGY-3 residents who are interested in applying to the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship for the 2026–2027 academic year. This two-year, ACGME-accredited fellowship offers diverse and comprehensive clinical experiences with built-in flexibility, allowing fellows to tailor their training to align with individual career goals in clinical practice, academics, public service, or subspecialty work.



Dr. Allison Ford

A Clinically Rich, Trauma-Informed Training Experience

Anchored at Le Bonheur Children's Hospital, the fellowship provides a clinically rich, trauma-informed training environment that emphasizes a deep developmental understanding of children, adolescents, and their families. Fellows gain experience across a wide range of psychiatric conditions and systems of care while working closely with multidisciplinary teams in both inpatient and outpatient settings.



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University of Tennessee Health Science Center Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship Enters a New Era Under Dr. Allison Ford's Leadership, cont.



Le Bonheur Children's Hospital

In addition to training at Le Bonheur, fellows rotate through several unique and high-impact clinical experiences, including:

- Psycho-oncology at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital
- Community child and adolescent psychiatry
- Juvenile justice systems
- Foster care and child welfare systems

These diverse rotations ensure fellows develop the skills needed to care for medically complex patients, underserved populations, and youth involved in complex social systems.

Educational Excellence and Personalized Mentorship

The fellowship combines immersive clinical experiences with a robust didactic curriculum, close supervision, and strong mentorship. The program's small size fosters a supportive learning atmosphere where fellows receive individualized guidance from dedicated faculty who are deeply invested in trainee success.

Fellows also engage in teaching and collaboration with psychiatry residents, medical students, and other learners at UTHSC, reinforcing the program's commitment to academic medicine and

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University of Tennessee Health Science Center Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship Enters a New Era Under Dr. Allison Ford's Leadership, cont.

professional development.

Leadership Spotlight: Dr. Allison Ford, MD

Dr. Allison R. Ford, MD, serves as Interim Program Director of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship and is an Assistant Professor in the UTHSC Department of Psychiatry. Dr. Ford is also the Interim Program Director of the Post Pediatric Portal Program (PPPP), reflecting her broad leadership role in psychiatric education and physician workforce development.

A practicing child and adolescent psychiatrist at Le Bonheur Children's Hospital, Dr. Ford brings extensive clinical insight and a collaborative leadership style to the program. Her vision emphasizes trainee-centered education, trauma-informed care, and preparing fellows to meet the evolving mental health needs of children and adolescents.

Training in Memphis

Located in Memphis, Tennessee, fellows benefit from a low cost of living while enjoying the cultural richness of a vibrant river city. Memphis offers NBA basketball, world-class music history, diverse museums, and an extensive network of city parks and green spaces providing an excellent quality of life during fellowship training.

Looking Ahead

Under Dr. Ford's leadership, the UTHSC Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship continues to grow as a program rooted in compassion, rigor, and innovation. As demand for child and adolescent mental health services rises nationwide, the fellowship remains committed to training skilled, thoughtful, and resilient psychiatrists who will lead and serve across diverse clinical and community settings.

Please reach out if you are interested in joining our fellowship. Applications are now being considered for open positions in the 2026–2027 academic year.

<https://www.uthsc.edu/psychiatry/divisions/child-adolescent-psych/child-and-adolescent-fellowship/index.php>



RECEPTION AT THE APA ANNUAL MEETING BLACK PSYCHIATRISTS OF AMERICA

May 18, 2026



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Dr. Strong Honored for Leadership, Engagement, and Community Partnership

Dr. Sheritta A. Strong, Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Assistant Vice Chancellor for Campus Engagement at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC), was honored as a recipient of the Engagement Legacy Award at the Department of Psychiatry's Annual New Year's Awards Ceremony on January 28, 2026. This award recognizes faculty, staff, or trainees who demonstrate a sustained commitment to engagement, service, teaching, and advocacy, leaving a lasting impact on both the institution and the communities it serves.



Dr. Strong receives award alongside other award recipients at the annual awards event

Selected by a committee, Dr. Strong was recognized for her exceptional contributions and visionary leadership in advancing engagement efforts within the Department of Psychiatry and across the UNMC campus. Her work has helped foster a culture centered on connection, collaboration, and community impact.

Dr. Strong's work extends beyond the academic setting into the Omaha community. She was recognized for her dedication to underserved populations through both clinical outreach and education. Her contributions to the student-run SHARING Clinic—an evening clinic that provides free healthcare services—and her ongoing work with Charles Drew Health Center—a federally qualified health center serving patients in the heart of the community—highlight her commitment to addressing health disparities and expanding access to care.

Colleagues noted that Dr. Strong “consistently works to optimize teaching and clinical outreach to underserved groups” and emphasized her active involvement in group initiatives, educational advancement, and community engagement. She was also acknowledged for leading with courage and grace, as well as for facilitating an impactful fireside chat with retired psychiatrist and mentor Dr. Beth Ann Brooks, reflecting her commitment to mentorship and meaningful dialogue.

In addition to Dr. Strong's individual recognition, the partnership between UNMC Department of

Dr. Strong Honored for Leadership, Engagement, and Community Partnership, cont.

Psychiatry and Charles Drew Health Center was honored, with Charles Drew Health Center named a recipient of the Outstanding Partnership Award. This award recognizes individuals, teams, or institutions that demonstrate inspiring collaboration in service of both mission and community and is selected by departmental leadership.

The partnership was recognized for its impact on outpatient care, including efforts to enhance patient care, reduce administrative barriers, and strengthen a culture of collaboration—particularly within systems operating with limited resources. The Charles Drew leadership team and staff were commended for their unwavering commitment to patient-centered care, working alongside partners to advocate for and support patients navigating complex healthcare systems.

Together, these recognitions highlight the power of leadership and partnership in advancing health equity in Omaha. Through her work and collaborations, Dr. Strong continues to build a legacy grounded in service, engagement, and meaningful community impact.

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We are excited to launch the Mount Sinai-New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) Research Fellowship in Public Psychiatry

By Sidney Hankerson, MD, MBA

This dynamic program is dedicated to training the next generation of psychiatrists who are passionate about eliminating mental health disparities. **The fellowship will start on July 1, 2026.**

The two-year program aims to equip Research Equity Fellows to conduct research to develop and test strategies, programs, and policies to eliminate barriers to mental health care in close collaboration with clinicians, policy makers, and community partners.

The fellowship structure allocates approximately 80% of the time to research activities and 20% to clinical work at the Behavioral Health Center at Rivington. Fellows will also have meetings with leaders from the New York State Office of Mental Health.

Eligibility Requirements:

- U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- MD, DO, or equivalent degree. An Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)-accredited residency program in psychiatry is required.
- Ideal applicants will demonstrate a long-term ambition to become an independent investigator and/or work in health policy to promote mental health equity.

Salary

Trainees will be paid a competitive salary according to their degree and experience (PGY level). Funds are available to reimburse the cost of registration and travel to scientific meetings.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. Interested candidates can send the following application materials to Amber Stacks at Amber.Stacks@mountsinai.org.

- CV
- Personal Statement (Maximum of 2 pages) highlighting their interest and commitment in mental health disparities research
- Names and contact information of 2 professional references

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