SOCIETY OF MENTAL HEALTH  
(Revised 2023)

BY-LAWS

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 
budget 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.
two-year period prior to the annual meeting will be considered. For the Dissertation Award, dissertations defended within
year. For the Best Publication Award, books, published articles, and book chapters that have appeared in print within a
dissertation 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 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-
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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.