

## *Transition, Growth, and Democratic Process*



By

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Hopefully all WAIMH members are fully aware that WAIMH is in transition as it moves its central offices from the United States of America to Finland. Many meetings and a steady stream of emails is facilitating the process of transition and we anticipate a smooth and error free move immediately after the Yokohama World Congress in 2008. A second planned transition was put into place this past summer when the WAIMH board met in Ahvenanmaa and adopted a series of bylaw changes designed to both streamline the association and to increase the role of Affiliate Associations in WAIMH's governance. This transition and democratization of WAIMH is directly related to the extraordinary growth in the association, growth that has doubled the number of Affiliates over the past decade. We have received an application for Affiliate status from the Gauteng Association for Infant Mental Health in South Africa and in November, colleagues in Ireland will hold their organizing meeting and soon thereafter we expect to receive yet another application for Affiliate status.

Our original organizational structure served us well. We blended the best organizational components of the World Association for Infant Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines and the International Association for

Infant Mental Health and forged an association with a world-wide mission but a locally focused organizational structure. The marriage has given birth to Affiliates on five continents spanning slightly more than 50 countries. Clearly there is a need for broader involvement in the management of WAIMH's organization. More voices must be contributing to policy recommendations, expanded training programs need to be developed, greater sensitivity to cultural diversity is required, and diversity of early prevention programs must be examined. To meet these needs, the WAIMH restructured its board by reducing the number of members, while simultaneously allocating two board positions for individuals from Affiliates. To accomplish this it will be necessary to create an Affiliate Council, consisting of all of the Affiliate presidents. The Council chairperson will serve on the WAIMH board of directors along with one other individual elected by the members of affiliate associations. The newly organized seven member board will meet annually to review progress made on WAIMH's action agenda. On biennial years, the seven will be joined by WAIMH's past president, the editors of the *Infant Mental Health Journal* and *The Signal*, the current and past chairpersons of the world congress program committee in order to act on any policy or program issues developed by the Affiliate Council or by the WAIMH board itself. We anticipate that the Affiliate Council will emerge as a major influence on WAIMH policy.

BUT, WAIMH members hold the key to all of these changes. The key is a

vote! Soon every WAIMH member will be receiving a document that will illustrate all of the proposed changes in the by-laws along with justifications for each change. You will also receive a ballot. It is critical that all members of WAIMH vote and return their vote by regular mail, by fax, or by email within the specific time (all is explained in the documents you will receive). If the bylaws are approved, we will begin to implement them immediately. In anticipation, as chair of the Yokohama world congress, I have given time at the congress for the initial meeting of the Affiliate Council.

We are extremely excited about the proposed changes in WAIMH's organizational structure. Since there are currently 46 Affiliates and all will be members of the Council, we will have an extraordinarily diverse set of opinions contributing to the formulation and implementation of WAIMH business and association practices. Our transition was fueled by growth, our growth has led to democratization in governance, and we expect our new structure will fuel even greater growth and world-wide impact for infant mental health.