

ISTSS Policies and Procedures for Affiliation

*Drafted and Revised by the International Structure and Affiliations Committee
(Originally Approved by the Board of Directors on November 3, 2005)*

Background

The Process of Review and Revision

International Structure and Affiliations Committee started to review and revise affiliation policies and procedures in response to a request by ISTSS President, Paula Schnurr. In May 2004, a draft document was circulated to key stakeholders and international leaders in traumatic stress in order to reach agreement about the underlying principles and aims for affiliation. Agreement on this document set the stage for subsequent draft proposals about what affiliation offers to all parties and how affiliation is accomplished and maintained. Each of these proposals was circulated for review and comment to leaders both within ISTSS and within the current affiliate trauma societies. The content of the present document reflects this iterative consultative process and should provide a foundation for ISTSS affiliation activities into the future.

The History of Affiliation

There are eight trauma societies formally identified as affiliates of ISTSS at present: *African Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (AfSTSS)*, *Argentine Society for Psychotrauma (SAPsi)*, *Association de Langue Francaise pour l'Etude du Stress et du Traumatisme (ALFEST)*, *Australasian Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ASTSS)*, *Canadian Traumatic Stress Studies Network (CTSN)*, *Deutschsprachige Gesellschaft Für Psychotraumatologie (DeGPT)*, *European Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ESTSS)*, and *Japanese Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (JSTSS)*. These relationships reflect the efforts of many leaders in the traumatic stress field and represent tangible progress toward the vision of an international community of trauma societies. Evidence for high levels of interest in and support for affiliation has been evident in many discussions within the ISTSS Board, as well as in numerous discussions between representatives of ISTSS and other trauma societies, all aimed at strengthening international partnerships.

The Challenges of Revision

IS&A Committee identified two reasons why it has been difficult to achieve consensus about revision of affiliation policies. First and foremost, discussion has tended to focus on the details of affiliation rather than on establishing a shared vision about why it exists and what it aims to accomplish. Absence of an agreed upon conceptual foundation deprived the process of a consistent point of reference against which to judge specific proposals. Second, some of the more ambitious proposals tied to affiliation have involved potential costs, expansion of organizational structures, and a degree of uncertainty, all of which made stakeholders uneasy about change. The present effort was strongly influenced by the need to avoid, or at least minimize, these stumbling blocks.

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The International Scope of ISTSS

An international perspective has been present from the early days of ISTSS and was formalized by a name change in 1990. This is reflected in the following excerpts from Dr. Sandy Bloom's history of the organization (*Our Hearts and Our Hopes are Turned to Peace: Origins of The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies*; accessible under the "What is ISTSS" link on the ISTSS website <www.istss.org>):

From the beginning of the Society there was a strong interest in developing liaison relationships with international organizations like the UN, WHO, and the World Psychiatric Group. The International Liaison Committee, chaired by Robert Laufer with Yael Danieli serving as Board Liaison, was one of the original Board committees. Its mission was to "seek out ways to bring groups and persons from other countries into dialogue with the Society and its members around issues of mutual concern" (Figley, 1986b).

At the April 1990 mid-year meeting of the Board, the much-debated decision was made to change the name of the Society to the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS), to at least reflect the sincere intentions of the organization (Lindy, 1990b)..., the Board of Directors met for an intensive strategic planning meeting to construct a vision of the Society for Traumatic Stress for 1995. Together, they envisioned "an international society with 3000 members, mental health workers and other caregivers devoted to clinical research and policy dimensions of trauma, its pathological syndromes, and its patterns of recovery. We would be the primary body worldwide with such a charge. Directors saw computer terminals accessible to all members with information worldwide regarding service delivery, scientific knowledge, treatment techniques, referral sources, and job opportunities. The scientific meeting of 1995 would take place perhaps in Hiroshima, Japan. The JTS would be available in other languages for regions of STSS unable to read English. Our governance would undergo a democratic overhaul to reflect the international scope of the Society. " (Lindy, 1990b, p.1).

Early in the life of the organization there was consideration of a federal structure, with the ISTSS as the overarching umbrella for regional societies. But the actual implementation of such an idea has had to wait on the development of sufficient international regionalization to support such organizational development. Meanwhile, most of the financial support continues to come from the United States' members.

The current mission statement for ISTSS reflects most recent thinking about its aims:

The ISTSS is an international multidisciplinary, professional membership organization that promotes advancement and exchange of knowledge about severe stress and trauma. This knowledge includes understanding the scope and consequences of traumatic exposure, preventing traumatic events and ameliorating their consequences, and advocating for the field of traumatic stress.

Supporting advancement and exchange of knowledge on an international basis reflects a belief that traumatic stress is universal to human experience and its consequences are a concern for all of humankind. International scope fosters scientific advancement by encouraging knowledge exchange among diverse societies and cultures, a factor that may be crucial to achieving full understanding of the effects of trauma. International scope also facilitates reciprocity in the sharing of knowledge and provides a basis for disseminating educational resources that increase the standard of care for traumatized individuals worldwide.

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Potential Benefits of International Scope

Serving as an international focal point for the traumatic stress field has potential benefits that include:

- 1) A high profile in the professional community that helps to attract new members, including leading figures in the field.
- 2) Member access to and communication with professional colleagues worldwide that provides incentive for joining the organization.
- 3) Enhanced ability to advocate for the field as the result of involvement with other professional groups, international organizations, NGOs, governments, etc.
- 4) Increased likelihood of media contacts that expand opportunities for educating the public about traumatic stress.
- 5) Enhanced prestige and impact for presentations at the Annual Meeting and publications in the Journal of Traumatic Stress.

Roles of International Structure and Affiliations Committee and Executive Committee

The affiliate structure of ISTSS is a means for translating the international concept into action. The main governance body for this effort is International Structure and Affiliations (IS&A) Committee. This is a standing committee that has as its charge: 1) to recommend Bylaws and procedures that advance the international scope of the Society; 2) to encourage networking of trauma professionals worldwide; 3) to help increase and maintain breadth of programming for the Annual Meeting; and 4) to encourage suitable international representation on Society leadership and professional activities. In addition, IS&A Committee serves as the body that reviews requests from trauma societies that wish to affiliate with ISTSS and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors concerning these requests.

At its 2003 Annual Meeting, the ISTSS Board created the Organizational Liaison (OL) Committee to consider requests and make recommendations to the Board about time-limited activities with other organizations. The availability of this option made it easier to establish and apply affiliation criteria aimed at creating enduring relationships with other organizations. Later, OL Committee was disbanded and responsibility for considering requests about time-limited activities passed to Executive Committee.

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Working Assumptions Concerning Affiliate Structure

The following list reflects a set of assumptions that were used to guide thinking about ISTSS structure and the nature of affiliations among major trauma societies.

- 1) The costs and logistics associated with maintaining international activities can be substantial. Among existing trauma societies, ISTSS currently is most able to undertake such activities.
- 2) International scope is an aspirational concept that will be achieved incrementally over time.
- 3) The most immediate benefits of affiliation are facilitation of communication across trauma societies and establishment of working relationships on which to undertake activities of mutual interest (e.g., the World Congress).
- 4) Affiliation must be based on mutual respect and tangible reciprocity between participating organizations.
- 5) Affiliation must allow for diversity of perspective that arises from different cultural, intellectual, and linguistic backgrounds.
- 6) Affiliation is intended as an enduring relationship, with periodic renewal.
- 7) Affiliation cannot undermine the autonomy of participating organizations.
- 8) The financial cost of affiliation must be reasonable for all participating organizations.
- 9) Existing affiliate relationships need to be preserved as the terms of affiliation are revised.

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Criteria and Procedures for Affiliation

General Qualifications

- 1) The potential affiliate organization must have a primary focus on research, education, clinical services, and/or policy formulation related to severe stress and trauma.
- 2) The organization's mission and its bylaws or constitution must be consistent with those of ISTSS and, by implication, those of existing affiliate organizations.
- 3) The organization must be noncommercial (i.e., nonprofit or not-for-profit).
- 4) The organization must represent a geographic region outside the United States or a non-English-language-speaking community.
- 5) The organization must exist as a viable entity with a substantial number of individual members.

The Process for Requesting New Affiliation

- 1) A request is submitted in writing, in English, to the Executive Director in ISTSS Headquarters. The request is then passed to the International Structure and Affiliations Committee, which reviews the materials, seeks clarification or additional information if necessary, and makes a recommendation to the ISTSS Board of Directors. Requests are ratified by formal vote of the Board.
- 2) The person who submits the request must be in a formal leadership position in the originating organization. The ISTSS Board has indicated a preference for this person being an ISTSS member at the time the request is submitted.
- 3) The written materials for new affiliation should include:
 - a) a cover letter from the President of the organization stating the request for affiliation, the willingness to engage in a mutual exchange of benefits, and indicating details of any benefits that will be extended to ISTSS or ISTSS members;
 - b) a brief history of the organization;
 - c) a copy of incorporation information, if applicable;
 - d) the current mission statement;

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- e) copies of all documents that state the official rules and provisions of the organization (bylaws, constitution, etc.);
 - f) a list of current governance positions and the leaders who occupy them;
 - g) the number of current members in each membership category, or a current membership list or directory;
 - h) a current list of rates for membership dues and conference registration fees (if applicable); and
 - i) information about activities or initiatives that demonstrate the organization's value to its members and its impact on the trauma the field (e.g., conferences, publications, workshops, and other training opportunities).
- 4) Requests for affiliation should be submitted at least three months prior to the date of the ISTSS Board meeting at which a vote might be taken. Meeting dates vary year-to-year, but March 1st (for the Midyear Meeting) and August 1st (for the Annual Meeting) are approximate deadlines.

Annual Updates

Organizational activities and leadership typically change annually, therefore, all existing affiliate societies will be asked for some updated information each year. The timing of the request will generally be prior to the ISTSS Annual Meeting so that relevant information can be shared with the ISTSS Board:

- (a) *Update on organizational leadership and the business office:* A current list of elected leaders and their contact information, along with mailing, telephone, email, and website information for organizational operations.
- (b) *Update on organizational status:* This includes the number of current members and any changes that have occurred since the previous update (or original affiliation request) with regard to incorporation status, bylaws or constitution, or the mission of the organization.
- (c) *Update on organizational activities:* A brief summary of key activities of the affiliate organization during the previous year. This information, in particular, is intended to educate ISTSS Board members about affiliate activities and to help them identify potential opportunities for joint initiatives.

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Ongoing Role for IS&A Committee

The International Structure and Affiliations Committee has responsibility for ensuring that affiliate organizations are informed about annual changes in ISTSS, key initiatives and activities, etc.

IS&A Committee also works to resolve questions about or difficulties with affiliation arrangements, either directly or acting through the ISTSS President.

Pre-Affiliate Status

At its midyear meeting in 2007, the Board approved pre-affiliate status as a two-year, renewable option that can apply when a request does not meet all affiliation criteria but has potential to do so given additional time and effort. The form of support provided to assist a pre-affiliate organization will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the ISTSS Board under guidance from International Structure and Affiliations Committee. This support can include a subset of the benefits offered to affiliate organizations and their members. In addition, members of the ISTSS International Structure and Affiliations Committee are available as consultants to leaders of a pre-affiliate organization about matters relating to ISTSS and organizational development.

Termination or Suspension of Affiliation

Affiliation is voluntary and can be ended by either party, but it is generally expected to be a continuing, long-term relationship. Reasonable notice (e.g., 60 days) should be given for actions by either party that suspend or end affiliation between organizations.

Benefits from ISTSS to Affiliate Organizations and Their Members

The benefits for affiliated societies are both material and collegial in nature. Affiliation aims to encourage acknowledgement of linguistic and cultural identity, appreciation for subgroup concepts and ideas, and opportunity for recognition of such ideas on the international stage. Ultimately, the aim of offering benefits is to further the growth and development of the traumatic stress field and to promote an international community of involved professionals. The current set of benefits maintains continuity with past arrangements, but is expected to change over time as additional benefits become feasible or current benefits lose appeal.

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Specific Benefits to Affiliates

- 1) Opportunity for joint participation in planning and obtaining profit from the World Congress on Traumatic Stress, including the opportunity to host the World Congress meeting. (Note: The distribution of responsibilities and arrangements for profit sharing are negotiated among the participating organizations as appropriate for each World Congress.)
- 2) Opportunity for the affiliate society to identify accepted presentations to be highlighted in the program of the ISTSS Annual Meeting. These presumably will be presentations having some connection to the affiliate. The mechanism for selection and the number of endorsement opportunities will be set by the ISTSS Annual Program Chair. (Note: This opportunity will apply to presentations in English, but if level of interest justifies and costs allow, it could include non-English presentations with real-time English translation, or vice versa).
- 3) Opportunity for the affiliate society to publish informational articles and announcements without cost in the ISTSS newsletter, StressPoints, subject to normal editorial oversight. (Note: While the editor of the newsletter will retain the right to accept, reject, or edit any articles submitted, this responsibility will be exercised with due consideration.)
- 4) Opportunity for cost-free or at-cost postings on the ISTSS website, subject to normal ISTSS website governance procedures.
- 5) Opportunity for ex-officio (non-voting) participation in the Annual Meeting of the ISTSS Board of Directors. Affiliate society presidents may attend or may appoint a mutually suitable representative.
- 6) Opportunity to participate in the annual Leadership Summit hosted by ISTSS at its Annual Meeting. This gathering of leaders representing traumatic stress societies worldwide fosters acquaintanceships and provides a forum for exchanging information and gaining perspective on issues of common interest. It can serve as a starting point for collaborative activities such as the World Congress.
- 7) Opportunity to obtain StressPoints articles prior to publication so that they can be translated and distributed to non-English-speaking members of the affiliate society. (Note: Permission for affiliate organizations to distribute StressPoints articles is based on the added value they provide by arranging for translation. English-language versions of StressPoints are distributed by ISTSS exclusively.)

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- 8) Registration rates at the ISTSS Annual Meeting for full and student members of the affiliate society that match those offered to ISTSS members.
- 9) No-cost use of the ISTSS mailing list once per year and of the ISTSS email distribution list on a reasonable basis. Email announcements from affiliate societies will be distributed by ISTSS Headquarters to the same comprehensive member list used for ISTSS emails rather than to the more restricted list used for general announcements.
- 10) Each full or student member of an affiliate society is given the choice of either a discount on ISTSS membership or a discount on a free-standing subscription to Journal of Traumatic Stress. Discount rates for membership dues and JTS subscriptions are set annually by ISTSS Finance Committee in consultation with International Structure and Affiliations Committee. (Note: The initial recommended discount on membership dues is 20%, with the World Bank discount rate being used if it is lower. The initial recommended discounted subscription rate for JTS is the full cost incurred by ISTSS for publication and processing, with ISTSS retaining royalty payments for the discounted JTS subscriptions.)
- 11) Priority comparable to ISTSS full and student members with regard to financial aid opportunities such as membership subsidies, conference registration waivers, and travel grants.
- 12) Expedited processing of requests for ISTSS promotional endorsement of conferences and other professional activities organized by the affiliate, subject to normal criteria used by the ISTSS Executive Committee.
- 13) Increased opportunities for presentations by prominent ISTSS members at affiliate conferences and efforts by ISTSS to facilitate such contacts. (Note: Affiliate conferences that coincide with the annual mid-year meeting of the ISTSS Board historically have been able to take advantage of this opportunity.)
- 14) As feasible, ISTSS will continue to schedule midyear meeting of the Board of Directors in conjunction with a conference hosted by an affiliate society.

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Benefits from Affiliate Organizations to ISTSS and Its Members

This section outlines a set of benefits that is reciprocal to those pledged by ISTSS to affiliated trauma societies. As with the other list, the aim of offering benefits is to further the growth and development of the traumatic stress field and to promote an international community of involved professionals. The list is expected to change over time as additional benefits become feasible or current benefits lose appeal.

Specific Benefits to ISTSS

- 1) To the extent feasible, the affiliate organization is committed to participate in World Congress planning and support.
- 2) There is opportunity for ISTSS to endorse (i.e., highlight) presentations at major meetings (e.g., annual conventions) organized by the affiliate society.
- 3) There is opportunity for ISTSS to publish informational articles and announcements without cost in the newsletter or similar publications of the affiliate society.
- 4) There is opportunity for ISTSS to post material cost-free or at-cost on the website (if any) of the affiliate society, subject to normal website governance procedures.
- 5) Opportunity for ex-officio (non-voting) participation at the Board of Directors meeting of the affiliate society. ISTSS presidents may attend or may appoint a mutually suitable representative.
- 6) As feasible, there is opportunity for ISTSS to obtain articles from affiliate society publications (e.g., newsletters; possibly professional journals) so that they can be translated (if necessary) and distributed to ISTSS members.
- 7) Discounts are offered to full and student members of ISTSS on registration rates for major meetings (e.g., conventions) organized by the affiliate society. (Note: While registration rates are always determined by the affiliate organization itself, the expectation is that discounted rates will be lower than those offered to nonmembers and, if feasible, will match those offered to members of the affiliate.)
- 8) There is opportunity for ISTSS to have cost-free use of the affiliate society mailing list once per year and reasonable use of the affiliate society email distribution list (if any).

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- 9) To the extent feasible, discounts are offered on membership and journal subscription rates for full and student members of ISTSS. (Note: The magnitude of any discount is determined by the affiliate society.)
- 10) Priority comparable to full and student members of the affiliate society with regard to financial aid opportunities, if any (e.g., membership subsidies; conference registration waivers; travel grants).
- 11) Promotional endorsement of conferences and other professional activities organized by ISTSS, subject to normal approval procedures and criteria used by the affiliate organization.
- 12) Efforts by the affiliate to facilitate presentations by prominent affiliate society members at ISTSS conferences.
- 13) Willingness of the affiliate to consider assisting with both planning and arrangements for a mid-year meeting of the ISTSS Board in conjunction with an affiliate-sponsored conference.