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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**AMERICAN GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL  
SUBCOMMITTEE REGARDING THE BENEFITS OF GROUP INTERVENTIONS  
FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

**NEW YORK, Feb. 29, 2008** – The American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA) provided testimony to the Subcommittee on Health of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs at their February 28, 2008 Hearing on “Mental Health Treatment for Families: Supporting Those Who Support Our Veterans.”

Suzanne Phillips, Psy.D., ABPP, CGP, a licensed psychologist of 30 years, with significant experience in the field of trauma, including working with uniformed service populations and veterans, as well as training mental health professionals in the effective delivery of group interventions, testified on behalf of AGPA as to the relevance and benefits of group programs initiated following the events of September 11, 2001 (with support from the New York Times Company Foundation as well as other private and governmental funders) to veterans and their families in responding to and supporting their mental health needs.

Dr. Phillips provided testimony as to the therapeutic effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of group interventions in responding to trauma and the benefits and assistance they can provide to veterans who are experiencing complications in returning home from war in normalizing and validating their experiences and fostering reconnection to their families and their communities. Group interventions have long been a preferred therapeutic intervention in times of war due to their proven ability to provide effective programs to meet the sudden and greatly increased demand for services coupled with the limited availability of qualified clinicians.

The group programs and trainings to service providers that AGPA offered in the aftermath of 9/11 in-person, online and via the telephone (the latter particularly useful for those in remote and rural areas with minimal access to services) hold significant potential as options for expanding services to veterans, their families and those who serve them. Drawing upon research that supports the strength of close social ties such as marriage and families as the most potent antidotes to the despair and isolation of combat stress, Dr. Phillips noted that “group is a natural model for the uniformed services and has applicability for veterans as it uses the ‘band of brothers cohesion’ as an effective bridge back to their marriages” as well as their support systems at home, including their children and extended families and community.

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## *About AGPA*

The American Group Psychotherapy Association is the oldest and largest professional association dedicated to the field of group psychotherapy, operating through a tri-partite structure: AGPA, a professional and educational organization; the Group Psychotherapy Foundation, its philanthropic arm; and the National Registry of Certified Group Psychotherapists, a standard setting and certifying body. This multidisciplinary association has approximately 3,000 members, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, clinical mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, pastoral counselors and creative arts therapists, many of whom have been recognized as specialists through the Certified Group Psychotherapist credential. The association has 31 local and regional societies located across the country. Its members are experienced mental health professionals who lead psychotherapy groups and various non-clinical groups. Many are organizational specialists who work with businesses, not-for-profit organizations, communities and other "natural" groups to help them improve their functioning.

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