

The Board of Certified Professional Counselors Procedures

THE AMHCA CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE

The AMHCA Board of Directors in March of 1978 voted as its goal the establishment of National Certification of Professional Counselors by July 1980 (AMHCA 1978). This decision marked a successful completion of the work of the AMHCA Licensure Committee, which began in January 1977 under the direction of Steve Lindenberg. The March 1978 decision used a "Blueprint" (Messina 1978) that was developed from the work of the AMHCA Licensure Committee.

The 1977-1978 Licensure Committee voted to recommend national certification instead of state licensure as the effort into which the AMHCA leadership should put its energy. This recommendation was based on reading the HEW research and recommendations concerning credentialing of health-related professions (Messina 1979).

In March an AMHCA Credentialing Committee was established to oversee the attainment of the goal of 1978-1980. The Certification Committee was formed, and charged with the development of recommendations for the procedures to certify professional counselors.

The Certification Committee met May 20, 1978 and drafted an initial set of procedures accepted by the AMHCA Board of Directors on June 24, 1978 (AMHCA 1978). The initial draft was printed in the AMHCA News in August (AMHCA Certification Committee 1978). The Certification Committee met on July 15, 1978 to revise the procedures, and worked on this final draft until September 9, 1978 when they presented it to the AMHCA Board. On September 9, 1978 the Board (AMHCA 1978) voted to initiate these procedures, thus putting into motion the creation of a national network for certifying professional counselors.

For further information concerning the history and the process of the development of these procedures, please contact the AMHCA Certifica-

The AMHCA Certification Committee is composed of James J. Messina (Chairperson), Joyce Breasure, Susan Jacobson (representative, American Association of Mental Health Counselors), Ron Leymaster, Steve Lindenberg, and Joe Scelsa.

tion Committee, 1607 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

REFERENCES

- American Mental Health Counselors Association. Minutes of March 18-19, June 24-25, and September 9-10, 1978 Board of Directors Meetings. Washington, D.C.: Author, 1978.
- AMHCA Certification Committee. Initial draft of Procedures for Board of Certified Professional Counselors. *AMHCA News*, 1978, 2, 3-4.
- Messina, J. J. Why establish a certification system for professional counselors? A rationale. *AMHCA Journal*, 1979, 1, 9-22.
- Messina, J. J.; Breasure, J.; Jacobson, S.; Leymaster, R.; Lindenberg, S.; & Scelsa, J. Blueprint for the advancement of the counseling profession. Unpublished text, AMHCA, Washington, D.C., 1978.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- A. **Accreditation:** is the recognition and acceptance of a formal academic or training program through the approval of a professional organization on a national, regional, or state level.
- B. **Advisory Council:** is a group of selected individuals that advises a certification board to validate and monitor their certification procedures to ensure that the standards are uniform and applied fairly in the public's best interest.
- C. **Allied Mental Health Profession:** is any profession related to counseling providing services to the public for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health related problems, which includes psychiatry, psychology, psychiatric social work, and psychiatric nursing.
- D. **Certification:** is the process by which a nongovernmental agency or association grants recognition to an individual who has met certain predetermined qualifications specified by that agency or association to ensure that the public health, safety, and welfare will be reasonably well protected.
- E. **Certification Board:** is a group of professionals established to determine which individuals meet its requirements for recognition by certification.
- F. **Certification Examination:** is developed and used under private auspices to determine the level of practitioners' competency in a specific profession.
- G. **Certified Professional Counselor:** is a counselor certified as having the competency to assist individuals or groups in achieving optimal mental health, through personal and social development and adjustment in order to prevent the debilitating effects of certain somatic, emotional, and intra- and/or interpersonal disorders.
- H. **Counseling:** is the process of assisting individuals or groups, through a helping relationship, to achieve optimal mental health through personal and social development and adjustment in order to prevent the debilitating effects of certain somatic, emotional, and intra- and/or interpersonal disorders.
- I. **Credentialing:** is the formal recognition of professional or technical competence. It is a generic term referring to the process of certification and licensure.
- J. **Licensure:** is the process by which an agency of government grants permission to an individual to engage in a given occupation upon finding that the applicant has attained the minimal degree of competency necessary to en-

sure that the public health, safety, and welfare will be reasonably well protected.

K. **Performance-based Competencies:** are the procedures and technical skills an individual must demonstrate to receive recognition through the credentialing process. Such competencies are directly related to the services for which the individual is to be credentialed and are not merely based on academic learning.

L. **Proficiency Examination:** is used to determine the level of proficiency of practitioners with opportunity for those whose competency is based primarily on on-the-job training and experience.

M. **Registry:** is a published document that lists by name and other pertinent information those individuals who have been certified by their respective professional certification board. Such a document is offered to the public to ensure its improved ability to choose competent practitioners.

N. **Supervised Counseling Work Experience:** is the provision of counseling under the direction and/or tutelage of an allied mental health professional or a certified professional counselor, where the certification board's guidelines for approved supervisors have been met.

BOARD OF CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS

I. The Purpose of the Board

In the best interest of protecting the public's health, safety, and welfare, and to ensure a viable identity and minimal proficiency in the professional community, this Board is hereby creating a national certification system for professional counselors to:

- A. Establish national standards of practice for professional counselors that reflect practical and current application of sound theoretical foundation
- B. Establish guidelines and determine applicants' qualifications for entering into the certification process
- C. Provide, administer, monitor, and evaluate the examination(s) given to all candidates to assess their professional competency
- D. Monitor the certification procedures to ensure that they are nondiscriminatory and voluntary in nature
- E. Establish guidelines for a procedure by which individuals who have obtained skill and knowledge outside the educational setting can be admitted to the certification process
- F. Publish annually a Registry that lists the individuals who are certified professional counselors
- G. Establish and maintain a procedure for recertification

H. Support research into new and innovative certification procedures and examinations

I. Establish the Board in a fashion consistent with the policies and regulations of the National Commission for Health Certifying Agencies

II. The Structure of the Board

- A. Shall be nongovernmental and shall meet no less than once every six months
- B. Shall conduct certification activities that are national in scope, which may be administered on the regional or state level
- C. Shall be administratively independent of professional organizations that represent the professionals to be certified by the board. At present these organizations are the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA), the American Association of Mental Health Counselors (AAMHC), and the American Association of Clinical Counselors (AACC), and may include the following: American Association of Marriage and Family Counselors (AAMFC), National Association of Professional Psychologists (NAPP), National Association of Prevention Professionals (NAPP), National Com-

- mittee of Mental Health Educators (NCMHE).
- D. Shall consist of seven members who are certified professional counselors
 - E. The Board shall have a chairperson (3-year term), vice-chairperson (3-year term) and secretary (3-year term). The other four members shall each be the chairpersons of the Regional Boards (3-year terms). Not more than 50 percent of the Board shall be newly elected during any given year
 - F. Selection shall be as follows:
 - 1. The procedures and policies of the nominations and election of the officers of the Board shall be the responsibility of the Advisory Council beginning April 1982
 - 2. The Board officers shall be elected by the Advisory Council beginning April 1982
 - 3. Nominations will be solicited annually from all cooperating professional organizations that are actively participating in the certification procedures
 - G. Members' terms shall not exceed five years and shall be limited to one term
 - H. Board member nominations and election procedures shall not be discriminatory in nature as to age, sex, race, or national origin, and will be publicized as such
 - I. Members will be monitored by the Advisory Council, which will establish and enforce criteria for the evaluation of the performance of the members. The Advisory Council is empowered to establish disciplinary procedures, which may include removal
 - J. The Board shall become a separate incorporated entity by January 1, 1982
- III. Advisory Council to the Board
- A. Purpose of Advisory Council: The Certification Board shall have an Advisory Council whose purpose is
 - 1. To elect the officers of the Certification Board based on the nominations received from the professional organizations that are using the certification procedures, and from the Regional Boards
 - 2. To monitor and advise the Certification Board
 - 3. To ensure to the public and professional community that the certification procedures are valid and uniformly and fairly applied
- B. Structure of the Advisory Council
- 1. The Advisory Council shall consist of seventeen (17) members as follows:
 - a) three (3) members of the lay public to be selected by the rest of the Advisory Council from nominations at large
 - b) three (3) members who are certified professional counselors who are nominated by the professional organizations utilizing the certification procedures
 - c) four (4) members of related mental health professions each respectively nominated by the following designated national organizations
 - (1) one (1) Licensed Psychiatrist nominated by the American Psychiatric Association (APA)
 - (2) one (1) Licensed Clinical Psychologist nominated by the American Psychological Association (APA)
 - (3) one (1) Licensed Psychiatric Social Worker (if applicable) nominated by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
 - (4) one (1) Licensed Psychiatric Registered Nurse nominated by the American Nurses Association (ANA)
 - d) one (1) member who is a Family Practitioner nominated by the American Medical Association (AMA) or American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)
 - e) two (2) members who rep-

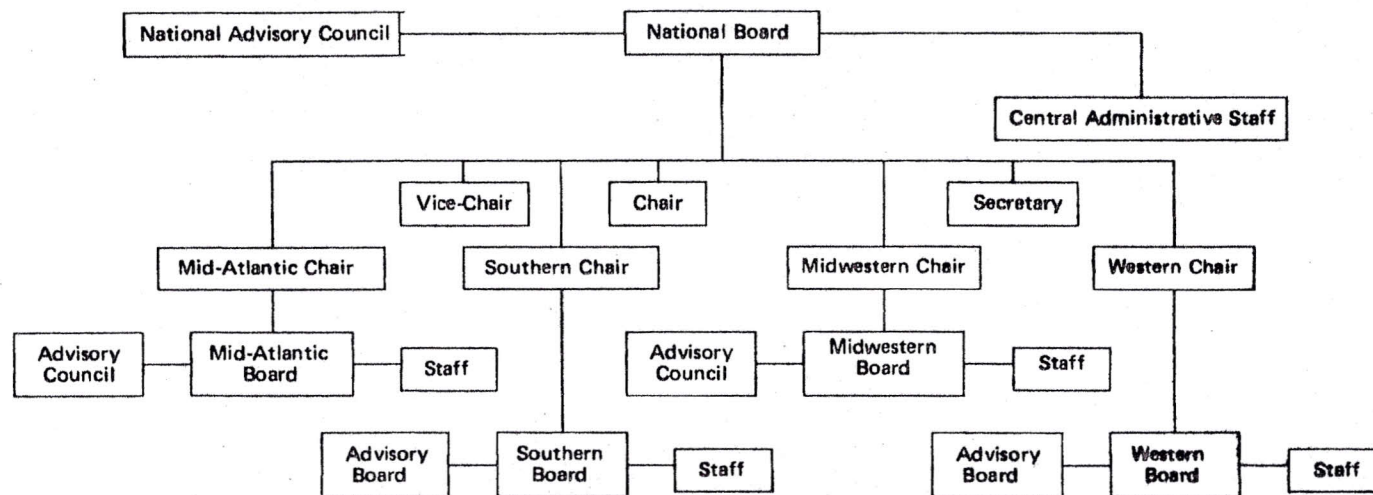
represent policy-making organizations of health care insurance providers

- (1) one (1) nominated by the National Association of Blue Shield Plans
 - (2) one (1) nominated by the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA)
 - f) one (1) member who represents employers of professional counselors, nominated by the National Council of Community Mental Health Centers (NCCMHC)
 - g) one (1) member who represents the trainers of professional counselors, nominated by the Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors (ACES)
 - h) one (1) member who represents mental health consumer advocates, nominated by the National Mental Health Association (NAMH)
 - i) one (1) member who represents the National Institute of Mental Health, nominated by the manpower branch of NIMH
2. Each member of the Advisory Council shall serve no more than one term of three (3) years. The initial Advisory Council, once organized, shall determine the staggering of the terms of the first members to ensure that no more than one third of the Board retires each year.
 3. The Advisory Council shall meet no less than once each year. The first meeting shall occur between July 1980 and January 1981.
 4. The Advisory Council shall select yearly from within its membership a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary who shall respectively serve for no more than a single one-year term.

IV. Regional Boards of Certified Professional Counselors, Regional Advisory

Councils, and State Boards of Certified Professional Counselors

- A. A Board of Certified Professional Counselors shall be established in each of the following regions: Mid-Atlantic, South, Midwest, and West
- B. The purpose of the Regional Board is to assist in the process of screening applicants for candidacy and admission to the certification examination
- C. The Regional Boards shall consist of only one certified professional counselor from each state within the regions as follows:
 1. Mid-Atlantic Region (12): New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Connecticut
 2. Midwestern Region (13): Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas, Oklahoma, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri
 3. Southern Region (13): Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee
 4. Western Region (14): California, Washington, Oregon, Hawaii, Alaska, Arizona, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Minnesota, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado
- D. The Regional Board members shall be appointed by their respective Regional Advisory Council beginning April 1982
- E. A Regional Board member shall be appointed for not more than five years and for no more than one term
- F. The Chairpersons of the four Regional Boards (three-year terms) shall be elected by the members of the Regional Board beginning April 1982. The Regional Chairpersons shall sit on the National Board as representatives of their region for the duration of their three-year terms



Organization of Board of Certified Professional Counselors

- G. An Advisory Council to each Regional Board shall be established by January 1981. The responsibility on the regional level of the Regional Advisory Council is similar in nature to that of the National Advisory Council. The composition of the Council and term of office of each member should follow the guidelines set for the National Advisory Council as closely as possible.
- H. Procedures similar to those of the National and Regional Boards and Advisory Councils shall be established by July 1980 by the National Board to create (if necessary) State Boards of Certified Professional Counselors.

V. *Resources of the Certification Board*

- A. The Certification Board shall be empowered to support its purpose by the assessing of fees to applicants for certification, renewal, and recertification, and also to seek financial support through grants from public and private sources.
- B. The Certification Board shall employ such staff as deemed necessary to fulfill its purposes
- C. The Certification Board shall contract with the Professional Examination Service (PES) of New York to:
1. Provide the certification examination known as the Professional Counselors Examination
 2. Administer the examination at sites and provide proctors
 3. Score and report the results of the examination to the Board
 4. Continue development and revision of the examination and establish reliability and validity levels for all forms of the examination
 5. Research and develop a performance-based competency examination for implementation by July 1982

VI. *Evaluation Mechanism*

- A. The Professional Counselors Examination shall consist of the following:

Content	Items
Counseling Theories and Techniques (47 items)	1-47
Rehabilitation of the Mentally and Physically Handicapped (12 items)	48-59
Vocational and Career Counseling (15 items)	60-74
Understanding Abnormal Behavior (14 items)	74-88
Theories of Human Behavior, Learning, and Personality (14 items)	89-102
Group Dynamics, Theories, and Techniques (16 items)	103-118
Evaluation and Appraisal Procedures (15 items)	119-133
Professional Identity, Function, and Ethics (17 items)	134-150

- B. The examination shall be periodically reviewed by the Board and through contact with PES shall update and modify it
- C. The Board of Certified Professional Counselors shall take such measures as deemed necessary that the reliability and validity of the examination is not compromised
- D. The Board shall set the pass/fail levels for the examination in a fair and reasonable manner
- E. By July 1982 a performance-based competency examination developed by the Professional Examination Service in cooperation with the Board and the American Mental Health Counselors Association will replace the existing examination

VII. *Public Information*

- A. The Board shall publish an annual summary of certification activities including the following:
1. The certification procedures and guidelines
 2. Summary of the outline of content of the examination
 3. Summary of certification activities for the year, including number tested, number

passed, number failing, number certified, number renewed, and number recertified

VIII. Proposed Certification Procedures

A. Types of certification

1. Certified Professional Counselor: An individual counselor is so certified as having the competency to assist individuals or groups in achieving optimal mental health, through personal and social development and adjustment to prevent the debilitating effects of certain somatic, emotional, and intra- and/or interpersonal disorders

2. Diplomate Professional Counselor: An individual is so certified as exemplifying the outstanding practice of and contribution to the field of professional counseling. The Certification Board is to determine the procedures and criteria for the Diplomate no later than July 1982

B. Qualifications of applicants for examination

1. Character and professional integrity: The applicant must submit endorsement letters from five responsible persons attesting to the character and professional integrity of the applicant

2. Education for professional counselors

a) Graduate degree in counseling: The applicant must have completed 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of graduate study, which are primarily counseling in nature, including a graduate degree in counseling from a college or university approved by a regional accrediting agency, or present other academic training or specialized experience acceptable to the Board of Certification as equivalent to the graduate degree in counseling. The graduate course work must include the following areas:

- (1) Individual counseling skills
 - (a) communication
 - (b) listening
 - (c) interpretation
 - (d) nonverbal communication (client and counselor)
 - (e) interviewing skills (intake process)
 - (f) termination skills
 - (g) referral skills
 - (h) use and interpretation of standardized tests
 - (i) assessment of client progress (note-taking)
 - (j) relationship building
 - (k) recognition of abnormal behavior
 - (l) development of treatment plan
 - (m) confrontation skills
 - (n) diagnosis and dynamic formulation
 - (o) integration (ability to integrate information by counselor)
 - (p) recognition of defense mechanisms
 - (q) information-giving
 - (r) inpatient and after care skills
 - (s) holistic approach (mind, body, and action)
 - (t) psychopharmacology
 - (u) history-taking
 - (v) theories of human behavior and personality
- (2) Small-group counseling
 - (a) group skills
 - (b) group dynamics
 - (c) group member selection
 - (d) Processing of group interaction
 - (e) sociometrics

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