



California Association for Alcohol/Drug Educators

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August 16, 2010

Dear CAADE Membership:

The Board of Directors of CAADE has been requested to address its concerns and to issue a policy statement which reflects CAADE's position on proposed legislation/regulations which would affect its stakeholders and constituents and thereby impact the certification and licensure of substance abuse counselors.

CAADE has participated in discussions with ADP and in stakeholder meetings where specific language and draft provisions of legislation/regulations resulted in piecemeal provisions that did not encompass CAADE's concerns. It is intended that this Position Paper will provide guidance to any future legislative/regulatory efforts in the field of addiction counseling. This position paper is not intended as an endorsement, proposed amendment or lack of support for any specific pending legislative/regulations, but will serve as the basis for resolutions of support for any legislation/regulations that encompass the positions adopted herein.

Warmest Regards,

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CAADE POSITION PAPER

AOD COUNSELOR CERTIFICATION and LICENSURE (August 16, 2010)

INTRODUCTION:

The California Association for Alcohol/Drug Educators (CAADE) is a statewide organization established as a California Non-Profit Corporation with a tax exempt status. CAADE has remained committed to establishing and assuring quality education and training programs in community colleges, state universities and private accredited colleges and universities within California and expanding to other Western Regional institutions of higher education.

CAADE, in collaboration with the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) has developed 40 Chancellor approved Alcohol and Drug Studies (ADS) programs in California Community Colleges. Additionally, CAADE has accredited ADS programs in other regionally accredited colleges and universities. These CAADE accredited ADS programs represent an estimated collective enrollment of 10,000 (ten thousand) students/counselors in workforce training in the field of substance abuse counseling. CAADE accredited ADS programs are held to rigorous curriculum specific education, training and supervision standards that exceed 550 (five-hundred fifty) hours of classroom instruction and supervised training by qualified educators and experienced supervisors.

EDUCATION:

CAADE remains committed to its high accreditation standards for ADS Programs, as well as to its rigorous standards for counselor certification. This process includes regular review of curriculum, instructional course content, supervised practicum and internship, and continuing education intended to assure effective and ethical service to the public by counselors who have demonstrated such competence. CAADE has developed proprietary testing instruments that are psychometrically valid, reliable and appropriate for measuring minimal competency for entry level counselors. CAADE has also developed educational, practicum, and supervised internship standards for advanced/specialty certification. A flexible tiered structure which recognizes academic achievement, advanced training and supervised work experience is required to achieve professional parity with other established human services, mental health, behavioral and addiction science professionals. Evolving national standards and models of education and training must be considered in the establishment of any California laws or regulations pertaining to certification and licensure. This will serve to achieve greater professional parity and reciprocity with other professions and other governing jurisdictions.

TIERED STRUCTURE:

Preserving and recognizing the important contribution of counselors comprising the current work force, and creating financial incentive for professional advancement, requires appropriate standards that recognize the importance of discipline specific continuing education, training,

supervision and quality academic programs that integrate current information from other traditional academic related disciplines. CAADE recognizes that advancement can be achieved through an appropriate balance of classroom instruction, seminars, online instruction, correspondence courses and remote instructional modalities. Basic certification must include real time, traditional classroom instruction, with a qualified instructor who offers those aspects of the curriculum that involve the presentation of evidence based material designed to develop core skills such as interviewing, assessment, active listening, individual counseling, communication styles, group leadership, family dynamics, conflict resolution and other interactive competencies. A tiered structure would allow for advanced/specialty certification for those counselors who have demonstrated skills beyond those required for basic certification. The tiered structure should define the scope of practice for each tier based upon the counselor's academic achievement, continuing education, training, supervised work experience, and ability to demonstrate basic competency required for the advanced/specialty certificate. A reliable and valid testing instrument should serve as the basis for final determination of competency at each level through licensure.

LICENSURE:

As articulated above, CAADE understands that evolving national standards and models of education and training must be considered in the establishment of any California laws or regulations pertaining to addiction counselor certification and licensure. Because licensed therapists/counselors can provide services in private practice settings, consumer safety is of primary concern; therefore, in the interest of public safety, CAADE has always maintained that a license in addiction counseling necessitates a Master's degree, a minimal number of addiction specific courses based on TAP 21 competencies, as well as supervised work experience and an appropriate licensing exam. Quality education and training coupled with appropriate standards of practice minimizes fraud and client abuse. The recent establishment of a National Commission for Accreditation of Addiction Studies Programs in Higher Education suggests the national trend toward standardized addiction education and degree level counselor certification and licensure. The rationale for requiring higher degrees for practitioners who treat addictions is based on the science and neurological basis of addiction and relapse, the development of medication-assisted therapies and the presence of co-occurring disorders in those who suffer with substance related problems. Similar professions that train practitioners to treat psychological and physiological problems in human beings have long since required that those practitioners obtain advanced degrees in their respective disciplines. CAADE strongly upholds and supports that tradition.