STATE OF GEORGIA

Senate Health and Human Services Hearing

SB 319 (Adding Diagnosis to LPC Scope of Practice)

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Senate Hearing, Wednesday, February 10, 2016 at 2:00 pm
Location: The Georgia State Capital, 4th floor, Room 450

“VOTE YES TO SB 319”
Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)

Professional Identity Overview

American Counseling Association
Definition of Counseling:

- Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals.

Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) Facts:

- A LPC is a highly trained mental health professional who has a masters degree or higher in counseling
- All LPC’s possess the equivalent to or if not more education, training, and experience than other master-level clinicians (Social Workers & Marriage & Family Therapists)
- All LPC’s have 3 or more years of clinical counseling experience consisting of 1800 or more direct hours and 90 or more supervised hours
- All LPC’s are licensed to independently practice counseling in the State of Georgia, and have to complete yearly continuing education and training hours required by the state
- All LPC’s have the training and experience to provide assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, treatment implementation, and counseling services
THE IMPACT OF NOT APPROVING SB 319:

If this bill does not pass, all LCSW’s, LMFT’s, and Psychologist will have to sign off and approve all progress notes and treatment documents for LPC’s.

LPC’s would lose their ability to independently practice in Georgia and will no longer be able to directly bill insurance companies for services rendered.

Picture of a future Social Worker, MFT, or Psychologist being overloaded with case work to sign for all LPC’s supervised

Pictures of future signs on all private practices owned and operated by LPC’s.

(THE END)
False Claim:
- The example of the master-level clinician used in the opposition letter from the GPA rep never indicated that the clinician was an LPC, LMFT, or LCSW, who are all considered master-level clinicians. The letter provided did not provide adequate justification for opposing SB 319.

Psychological Testing Facts:
- If psychological testing is to only be conducted by licensed psychologists and is the only assessment approach to consider in diagnosis, then this would also prohibit LCSW’s and LMFT’s from being able to diagnose.
- Not all mental disorders require psychological testing to confirm diagnosis, only a limited number need additional testing.
- The publishers of the assessment instruments determine the criteria level for testing use, many assessments designed for master-level clinicians.
- The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) is used as the most reliable resource used in the diagnosis of mental disorders, which all counselors are trained in!!!
Opposition from the Georgia Society of Clinical Social Workers (GSCSW)

False Claim:

- “The LPC’s request for diagnosing at this time is not in accordance with the Composite Boards noted scheduled rule changes relevant to our position which requires LPCs to fulfill new requirements regarding accreditation, supervision, examination, and course work by 2018.”

Program Accreditation Facts:

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)

- 2009 CACREP Accreditation Standards require that all Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs require a minimum of 60 semester credit hours for all students.
- 2009 CACREP Standards, the word diagnosis is listed 15 times.
- 2008 Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Standards, the word diagnosis or diagnostic is not listed one time.
- 2016 CACREP Standards, the word diagnosis is listed 4 times and diagnostic is listed 17 times.
- 2015 CSWE Standards, the word diagnosis or diagnostic is not listed one time.
- Assessment and Diagnosing courses are combined together into one class in Social Work master programs and in most programs is not a required course, but an elective in some programs.
Facts regarding LPC’s Training

2009 CACREP Standards
CMHC – Skills & Practices

- III.d.1-Uses the principles and practices of diagnosis, treatment, referral, and prevention of mental and emotional disorders to initiate, maintain, and terminate counseling

- III.d.2-Applies multicultural competencies to clinical mental health counseling involving case conceptualization, diagnosis, treatment, referral, and prevention of mental and emotional disorders

2016 CACREP Standards
CMHC – Skills & Practices

- 5.C.2.d-Diagnostic process, including differential diagnosis and the use of current diagnostic classification systems, including the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and the International Classification of Diseases (ICD)

- 5.C.3.a-Intake interview, mental status evaluation, biopsychosocial history, mental health history, and psychological assessment for treatment planning and caseload management
Facts regarding LPC’s Training

All counseling programs have required courses in:
1) Counseling Theories
2) Counseling Skills and Treatment
3) Professional Counseling Orientation
4) Counseling Ethics & Practice
5) Group Counseling Skills
6) Clinical Assessments and Testing
7) Diagnosis and Psychopathology
8) Social and Cultural Diversity
9) Human Growth and Development
10) Career Counseling
11) Research and Program Evaluation
12) Supervised Counseling Practicum & Internship (700 hours minimum)

Passing Grade on the Comprehensive Counseling Exit Exam required to graduate from program!!!

*** Typical completion of 60 credit hours is 2.5 to 3 years ***

Post-Graduate Experience for Licensure in GA:
- Passing score on the National Counselor Examination (NCE), which also covers Diagnostic and Assessments along with other core content areas.
- 3 years of clinical counseling work under supervision
- Minimum of 600 hours of counseling experience per year
- Minimum of 30 hours of documented clinical supervision per year
- Additional 35 hours of continuing education training every 2 years
- All training and experience hours are specialized in clinical work consisting of assessments/testing, diagnosis, treatment planning, and mental health treatment
Facts regarding LPC’s Training

Student Demographics:
- There are no accredited undergraduate programs in counseling.
- 80% of our students have an undergraduate degree in psychology or social work.
- Many choose our profession because they have a strong desire to provide clinical counseling, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment planning services within the community they’ve selected to serve.
- Students are not interested in a doctorate program, which is used primarily for advance research and testing, and teaching.
- Student population consists of working professionals who bring life experience and extended career experience to their counseling training.
- Some of programs provided counselor training to the United States Army Chaplin Programs for more than two decades training army chaplains who desire to become a Licensed Professional Counselor.

Faculty Demographics:
- All core faculty members are required to possess a doctorate degree in counseling and have clinical experience.
- Additional faculty members have included licensed psychologists, who many of them are licensed professional counselors (LPC).
- Doctorate level training for PhD in Counseling and PhD in Counseling Psychology are almost identical in curriculum and training, and many programs reside within the same training departments.
- Counseling textbooks are written by some of the best mental health professionals in the world, consisting of Psychiatrists, Psychologists, and Counselors.
- CACREP accreditation is the recognized training standard for counselors by the Institute of Medicine and the Veteran’s Administration.
Demographics and Mental Health Disparities

Mental Health Professionals
Demographics in Georgia:
- Licensed Psychologists 2399
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT) 811
- Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) 3630
- Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) 6112
- Total Professionals in Georgia – 12,952
- Georgia Population (2014) 10.1 Million
- Atlanta Metropolitan Population (2014) 5.5 Million

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2001), Report on Mental Health by the Surgeon General on Culture, Race, & Ethnicity:
- This report identified striking disparities in knowledge, access to care, utilization, and quality of mental health care for racial and ethnic minorities.
- The need for reducing barriers and promoting equal access to quality mental health services for all people who need them.

American Psychological Association on Advocacy Issues
- Reported that the lack of attention to the mental and behavioral needs of ethnic minorities and the inadequate provision of culturally appropriate mental health care in racial and ethnic minority communities demonstrates a clear need for encouraging collaboration and finding ways to close the gap in care.
Regulations Governing the Practice of Professional Counseling

18VAC115-20-10. Definitions. (Part B)

"Clinical counseling services" means activities such as assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and treatment implementation.

The curriculum and training requirements for counselor education programs are the same in Georgia and Virginia because all programs are accredited and mandated by CACREP.

https://www.dhp.virginia.gov/counseling/counseling_laws_regs.htm
Georgia ranked at #32, Virginia is ranked at #20, while the state with the highest prevalence of mental illness and lowest rates of access to care is Arizona ranked at #51.

http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/sites/default/files/Parity%20or%20Disparity%202015%20Report.pdf
Facts regarding who suffers most???

Lack of Access to Mental Health Providers:
- Your constituents lose access to master-level providers in their area
- Your constituents will have less choice who provides quality care to them
- Your constituents who own private practices and mental health agencies will no longer be able to do business
- Many providers will no longer be able to practice in Georgia
- Many state funded graduate training programs will have a significant drop in student enrollment, and potentially lose their programs altogether
- Strong potential for increase in constituents to go undiagnosed for mental illnesses due to lack of care
- Increase risk of potential suicide and homicide within our communities

Benefits of SB 319:
- Access to mental health providers is available with the ability to diagnosis and mental health services
- Mental health treatment can start immediately without extensive waits (3 months to 6 months for a psychiatrist or psychologist appointment/evaluation
- Your constituents have the ability to select who they feel comfortable with to provide them mental health treatment
- Your constituents will have access to screening and early interventions, which can drastically reduce the negative impact of mental illness on individuals and families
- Counselors have a wide-range of training in assessment, diagnosis, and treatment planning.
- Counseling have additional training in clinical specialties, such as trauma therapy, substance abuse, children and adolescents, marriage and family therapy, etc.

“VOTE YES TO SB 319”
References and Links

Counsel for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP):
- http://www.cacrep.org/home/message-from-our-cacrep-chair/

Counsel on Social Work Education (CSWE):

American Psychological Association (APA):

Parity or Disparity: The State of Mental Health in America (2015):
- http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/sites/default/files/Parity%20or%20Disparity%202015%20Report.pdf


Clinical Mental Health Counseling Programs:
- Georgia State University http://cps.education.gsu.edu/programs/mental-health-counseling/
- Columbus State University https://cfl.columbusstate.edu/counseling/communitycounseling_ms.php
- University of West Georgia http://www.westga.edu/coecps/1456_1511.php

Clinical Social Work Programs:
- Kennesaw State University http://wellstarcollege.kennesaw.edu/swhs/docs/MSW_CourseSequence.pdf
- Georgia State University http://msw.gsu.edu/curriculum/
WE NEED YOU, YOUR CONSTITUENTS NEED YOU, OUR COMMUNITIES NEED YOU... **PLEASE PASS SB 319!!!**

“VOTE YES TO SB 319”