



AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION

American Counseling Association Public Policy and Legislative Agenda for the First Session of the 112th Congress, 2011

(approved by ACA Governing Council, March, 2011)

MISSION: Increase support for professional counselors and their clients in all appropriate Federal and State laws, regulations, and legislation.

Mental Health, Substance Abuse Treatment and Related Services

- A. Increase recognition of Professional Counselors as qualified providers, and beneficiary access to quality behavioral health services, within health care and social services bills and programs, including:
 - 1. Medicare
 - 2. TRICARE
 - 3. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and other programs administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
 - 4. Federal Employee Health Benefits program
 - 5. Substance abuse treatment programs
 - 6. Department of Veterans' Affairs
- B. Monitor and support implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to promote extension of health insurance coverage to all Americans, and to increase access to counselors' services
- C. Promote confidentiality of client information
- D. Promote full implementation of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, establishing parity of insurance coverage for behavioral health (including substance abuse) treatment
- E. Support public investments in health care services and research, particularly in the area of mental health and substance abuse treatment
- F. Promote Medicaid coverage of mental illness and services needed by persons with disabilities

Education, Rehabilitation and Workforce Development

- A. Increase access to school counseling services within reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)
- B. Promote adequate appropriations for the Elementary & Secondary School Counseling Program and other counseling-related programs
- C. Monitor and address counseling issues in reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- D. Address counseling issues within reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act
- E. Address counseling issues within reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)
- F. Monitor and address counseling issues in federal higher education programs
- G. Promote and raise awareness of school-based mental health professionals (i.e., school counselors)
- H. Promote loan forgiveness for counselors
- I. Support anti-bullying legislation

Social Advocacy and Human Rights Issues

- A. Support universal access to health care services and health insurance coverage
- B. Support recognition of civil unions that are structured, committed relationships, regardless of sex, gender, or sexuality
- C. Support programs and services that promote public health, wellness, prevention, and consumer protection
- D. Oppose efforts to address federal deficits solely or primarily through cuts in health, education, and social services spending which will disproportionately impact less fortunate Americans.

State Counselor Legislation

- A. Provide assistance regarding licensure laws and regulations

- B. Provide assistance regarding professional school counseling Issues
- C. Provide assistance for Freedom of Choice/third party reimbursement of counselors legislation
- D. Support Medicaid advocacy for counselors
- E. Support portability of counselor licensure and credentials
- F. Monitor discrimination between national teacher and school counselor certification
- G. Support efforts to define when counselors are obligated to break confidentiality in order to protect clients or identified others from serious and foreseeable harm