

Year-in-Review 2010

A year-end report to the ACA membership



Advancing the profession of counseling is a common theme in this 2010 Year-in-Review report. As you read the highlights of 2010, you will note key achievements through our public policy work and other initiatives. Many new products and services were introduced or upgraded throughout the year, and the financial position of your association is solid. With steady gains in 2010, ACA membership as of December 1, 2010 stands at 44,958 an increase of 5.54% over the same period last year. On behalf of the entire staff, thank you for your membership in ACA and best wishes for a very Happy New Year. We look forward to serving you in 2011!

--Richard Yep, CAE
Executive Director



Department of Veterans Affairs Recognizes Mental Health Counselors

In a big step forward for counselors and the counseling profession, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) issued new occupational standards for Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselor (LPMHC) positions within VA healthcare facilities. Counselors have been working within the VA for years, but have not been recognized as full-fledged mental health service providers on par with other master's level professionals such as clinical social workers. With the new standards, counselors are now being hired as mental health clinicians by the VA, and will be eligible for positions at the same pay grade and level of supervisory responsibility as clinical social workers.

ACA is working with the VA to educate local facilities about the new standards, to establish eligibility for counselors on par with other providers, and to encourage the agency to adopt grandparenting provisions. The next step is the adoption of occupational standards for counselors for use in all federal agencies and programs.



Healthcare Reform: Gains Realized For Counselors

For years, ACA has joined other healthcare advocates in supporting the establishment of universal access to health insurance coverage for U.S. citizens. The work finally paid off in March with the enactment of the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act," making historic changes to the U.S. healthcare system to expand coverage to up to 32 million more Americans. The law will expand access by building upon the existing private healthcare system and providing subsidies and insurance pools for individuals and small businesses. The legislation also includes significant cost savings and provisions to reduce the rate of spending growth, and it will reduce federal deficits by billions of dollars over the coming years.

ACA pushed hard for inclusion of Medicare coverage of counselors in the legislation. Although this effort came up short, the new law includes provisions that will help counselors as healthcare providers, not to mention as healthcare consumers. Beginning in 2014, health plans will be prohibited from discriminating against providers on the basis of their type of license. In addition, health plans will be required to cover mental and behavioral health services as part of their benefit package. Combined with the recently enacted federal mental health parity law, these provisions should broaden insurance coverage for mental health services provided by counselors. ACA is continuing to advocate for Medicare reimbursement for counseling services and will also work to protect the new law from repeal efforts.



ACA Staffer Tapped to Co-Chair Education Policy Coalition

ACA Legislative Representative Dominic Holt was elected co-chair of the National Alliance of Pupil Service Organizations (NAPSO), a coalition of more than 20 national organizations working on education policy issues affecting school counselors and other student support personnel.

NAPSO members include the American Psychological Association, the National Education Association, the American School Counselor Association, the National Association of College Admission Counseling, the School Social Work Association of America, and the National Association of School Psychologists. This year, NAPSO members lobbied Congress and the U.S. Department of Education to maintain and expand support for programs focusing on student support services such as the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program. NAPSO will be a leading voice for these programs next year, when Congress is expected to take up reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, a.k.a. No Child Left Behind).



IOM TRICARE Study Supports Independent Practice Authority for Counselors; ACA Invited to Speak at Follow-Up Symposium

The long-awaited Institute of Medicine (IOM) TRICARE study, released in February, unequivocally recommends independent practice authority for professional counselors. The study was commissioned by Congress to provide guidance on whether to remove the physician referral and supervision requirement for counselors' services within TRICARE, the healthcare program serving members of the armed forces and their dependents.

ACA Chief Professional Officer David Kaplan was an invited panel member at the IOM symposium "A Quality Management System for Licensed Mental Health Counselors and Other Behavioral Health Professionals in the Military Health System." The October symposium sought to build on the recommendations made in the IOM report. ACA offered evidence that diagnosing and treating mental health disorders is well within the scope of practices of licensed counselors and emphasized that TRICARE scopes of practice and privileges should be based on the competency of the individual rather than the particular license held (e.g., counseling, psychology, social work, or marriage and family therapy).

Consumer Reports Includes Counselors in Annual Article on Depression

In a significant breakthrough for recognition of the counseling profession, *Consumer Reports* has for the first time included professional counselors in its annual article on depression. “Depression & Anxiety: Readers Reveal the Therapists and Drugs that Helped” appeared in the July 2010 issue. In the past, the magazine has neglected to include professional counselors on its list of mental health providers rated by readers, and ACA has written letters to point out the omission. Now, professional counselors are included and placed on par with social workers and psychologists.



2010 Conference & Expo in Pittsburgh Successful

ACA continues to see record-breaking numbers for the Annual Conference. Attendance at the 2010 Conference & Exposition in Pittsburgh, co-sponsored by the Pennsylvania Counseling Association, was over 3,600—the second highest in over 10 years. The conference also had a very high attendance by students, over 1,300, along with 120 student volunteers. From the keynote sessions by Gerald Corey and Patti Digh to the 500+ Education Sessions, the conference ratings by attendees were very high; more than 500 attendees signed up for the 2011 conference while in Pittsburgh.

We exceeded revenue projections in both registration and exhibits and saved on expenses by posting more information and forms online. For the first time, Education Session handouts were made available online, allowing attendees to view and download them prior to the Conference.

Through scheduling adjustments, ACA made it possible again this year to offer 20 CE credits, which will continue to be the standard for future ACA conferences. These 20 credits are available to attendees at no additional cost (other than a \$15 processing fee). At \$20 per credit, the value of this member benefit is \$400.

Two new ACA Academies were offered: Best Practices Academy and Social Justice Academy, and two new categories were added to the call for programs: Trauma and Wellness. Another first in 2010: ACA accepted conference proposals submitted in Spanish and selected reviewers to review them in Spanish.



CE Credit Opportunities Added; Nine Podcasts Developed

Nine new Podcasts were created and posted in 2010, bringing the total to 24. Following up on member requests, ACA now offers CE credit for 21 of them. To make it easier for members to locate all the options for CE credit, an electronic newsletter, *CE Connection*, was created for distribution on the first of each month. The popular CE of the Month program, which offers members 1 free CE credit each month, was highly successful in 2010—more than 5,000 free CE credits were processed; the program will be continued in 2011.

CE credit is also available by reading *Counseling Today*—now thru *CT Learning*, the revamped online program that offers readers up to 12 CE credits per year. The new version started with the October 2010 issue; tests are available online and in hard copy.

With the addition of 35 new ones in 2010, ACA now offers 103 online programs for earning CE credit. The offerings include book chapters, podcasts, *Journal of Counseling & Development* articles, *CT Learning*, and full online courses.



ACA Blog Growing in Popularity

The ACA blog at my.counseling.org has gone a bit viral! The number of bloggers has increased from four when it was introduced in 2009 to 40 as of December and the number of views has risen from several hundred last year to more than 3,000 per week.

Bloggers range from a soldier/PhD student blogging from Afghanistan, to a People to People delegate who posted a daily blog as the group traveled throughout India. The blog was added to the “Top Blogs in Counseling/Mental Health” list. Also, on the Counseling Jobs tab, ACA now posts information it receives about new positions.



Member Logo Debuts

A new member benefit was announced in April—the ACA Professional Member Logo—which can be used on business cards, personal stationery, websites, in private practice brochures, and in other ways. Displaying the ACA Member Logo demonstrates one’s commitment to the profession and its Code of Ethics; it was developed in response to member requests.



Ethics Activity Remains Strong; Code Supported in Lawsuit

The ACA Ethics & Professional Standards Department provided more than 4,000 ethics consultations to ACA members via telephone and emails. In addition, staff made 14 presentations on ethics to local university graduate programs and professional organizations.

The ACA Code of Ethics was strongly supported in an Eastern Michigan University lawsuit regarding appropriate referral of clients. The court ruled in favor of the university, citing the ACA Code in its July decision. The Code also was indicated in the ongoing Augusta State University lawsuit on the same issue.

Six cases regarding alleged violation of the ACA Code of Ethics were accepted this year for adjudication and are in various stages of resolution.



ACA Conducts Membership Survey

During the fall of 2010, ACA conducted an extensive survey of ACA members, lapsed members, and non-members to understand the attitudes, values, and motivations for each of these groups, and, in light of the current economy, to identify their changing needs. The data will be used to assist ACA in developing programs, products, and services for members.



New ACA Organizational Affiliate Approved: Child & Adolescent Counseling

At the fall ACA Governing Council meeting, the Association for Child & Adolescent Counseling was approved as a new organizational affiliate. ACA now has 19 divisions and one organizational affiliate—the first stage in achieving full division status.

New Interest Network Brings Total to 14

With the addition of a new one in 2010, entitled ACA Ethics Interest Network, ACA now has 14 different Interest Networks. These networks are designed to facilitate communication, predominantly online via a list serv, around a specific interest area. Some networks also arrange meetings at the ACA Conference for face-to-face collaboration. For a list of the Interest Networks and more information click [here](#).



Nine New Books Published; Publication Sales Highest Ever

Nine new books were published, including *Ethics Desk Reference for Counselors*; *Cyberbullying: What Counselors Need to Know*; *A Job Search Manual for Counselors and Counselor Educators*, as well as new editions of *Counseling and Psychotherapy: Theories and Interventions*; *The Professional Counselor*; and *Clinical Supervision in the Helping Professions*. ACA realized its highest sales ever with \$1,017, 416 in revenues and 28,509 units sold.



Counseling Today Covers Popular Topics, DSM Revisions

ACA's flagship monthly magazine published features on a variety of topics including integrated care models that combine medical and mental health care services, getting men more engaged in the counseling process, and techniques for overcoming client resistance. A special series was introduced—and will continue in 2011—on proposed revisions to the *DSM-5* and the effect those changes could have on counselors. *CT* was recognized for writing and design excellence, winning four awards in national contests.



Second ACA Institute for Leadership Training Held

In July, 112 participants from 36 ACA Branches and 14 ACA Divisions met in Alexandria, Virginia for the 2nd ACA Institute for Leadership Training. The Institute included leadership meetings, knowledge and skill-building presentations, and a visit to Capitol Hill where participants lobbied members of Congress. The Institute received high marks with more than 99% of the participants indicating they were very satisfied or satisfied that the Institute met their expectations as a leadership experience.



Eight Branches Receive Awards of Excellence

The ACA Branch Awards recognizes those ACA Branches that significantly advance and enhance the counseling profession through excellent programs, increased membership, quality communications, and community involvement. These Branches were honored at the National Awards Ceremony held at the ACA Conference in Pittsburgh:

Best Leadership Development Program

Illinois Counseling Association -Midwest Region

Maine Counseling Association - North Atlantic Region

Tennessee Counseling Association - Southern Region

Oregon Counseling Association -Western Region



Best Innovative Practice Award

American Counseling Association of Missouri – Midwest Region
European Branch – North Atlantic Region
Arkansas Counseling Association – Southern Region
Idaho Counseling Association – Western Region

The winning Branches received a check for \$250 plus one conference registration.



New Technology, Resources for ACA Leaders, Members, Committees, Task Forces

Staff completed the final phase of MemberClicks, an online communication tool, adding all ACA Standing Committees and Task Forces. Now the ACA Governing Council, ACA staff, Committees, and Task Forces all have easy access to the directories, calendars, a bulletin board to post documents and messages, and an electronic polling feature. A new Leadership Manual for Division, Regions, and Branches was developed.

Many new resources were added to the ACA website including new sections on Counselor Wellness and Impairment and a section on Trauma and Disaster. In addition:

- More than 250 syllabi were added to the ACA-ACES Syllabus Clearinghouse in 2010; the site now contains 376 syllabi in this ever-popular program for counselor educators.
- In 2010, 90 new articles and 5 new ACA Digests were added to the VISTAS Online component of the ACA Online Library. Now, members can access 488 searchable articles that make up part of the ACA Online Library's searchable collection.



FY10 Ends with Positive Position; Outlook Good for FY11

ACA finished the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2010 with a net profit of \$281,092. Membership dues, publication sales, and royalties from HPSO were all higher as compared to the prior fiscal year. Cash and investments also were higher than last year by more than \$1.1 million.

Five months into the current fiscal year, ACA has revenues in excess of expenses of \$5,819, which is \$21,272 better than last year at this time. Membership dues, publication sales, conference registrations, and royalties are all higher than last year at this time. Expenses are stable as compared with last year. The ACA Treasurer, along with the Financial Affairs Committee, reviews ACA's financial statements each month.

An Investment Subcommittee was created in 2010 to help the Financial Affairs Committee in its stewardship of the nearly \$4 million investment portfolio.

To assist the Governing Council in fulfilling its fiduciary duties, an Audit Committee was formed to provide oversight and guidance on the audit process and internal controls. This new committee led a rigorous auditor selection process in the summer, which resulted in the hiring of a new auditor, McGladrey, Inc.

HR Secures New Healthcare Insurance for Staff, Avoiding 38% Increase

Facing a 38% increase in healthcare costs for ACA employees, the Human Resources staff researched other options and ACA switched insurance carriers. ACA secured coverage for its 55-person staff with CareFirst, a subsidiary of Blue Cross/Blue Shield, with only a 3% increase in rates and a new tier of benefits.

ACA also secured separate outside coverage for those on our retiree group coverage, allowing ACA to provide the same high-quality benefit that retirees currently enjoy for significantly less money.

Staff turnover was a low 11% in 2010; the association norm is 21%. ACA attributes the low turnover rate to the superior environment provided for staff, good-quality benefits, recognition of hard work with extra days off, and an open, inclusive atmosphere. ACA visibility was raised throughout the nonprofit community by the appointment of Executive Director Richard Yep to the ASAE Board of Directors. ASAE is the nonprofit organization for association professionals.



High Volume of Operational Activity Recorded

Behind the scenes, ACA staff handles an extremely high volume of operational work such as renewing members, responding to toll-free inquiries, shipping books, processing conference registrations, upgrading the website and membership databases, and many other tasks. For example, in 2010, staff:

- Made payments in excess of \$6.7 million.
- Processed publication orders of 28,509 books.
- Administered royalties of \$131,000 to 116 authors.
- Processed receipts in excess of \$11 million.
- Provided accounting and management services for 14 divisions, one branch and one outside organization.

Through the toll-free line and other methods, Member Services responded to an average of 8,000 inquiries per month, mainly from members. ACA also upgraded its online registration programs to enable conference registrants to access their existing record and add to it, if desired. The online membership application feature also was enhanced to allow prorating of dues when adding a new ACA Division at any time throughout the year.

