



An Open Letter from the ACA President and President-Elect

The past few years have been significant for the counseling profession. Among other advancements, we have secured licensure in every state, crystallized our professional identity, and opened up new frontiers for employment. The new counselor job description in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and TRICARE independent practice status are clear examples of growth.

Advancing the profession is certainly important to our future. However, we are fully aware that recent changes have been cause for concern, anxiety, and stress for many ACA members. While the vast majority of counseling positions do not require increased educational requirements, we realize that the requirement of a CACREP degree for employment in the VA, paneling by TRICARE, and (starting in 2018) licensure in Ohio shuts out well-qualified ACA members who were trained in a time when these requirements were either not available or required.

We want to make it clear that while ACA is committed to advancing the counseling profession and committed to CACREP and its affiliate CORE as the accrediting body for the profession, **we are also just as committed to doing whatever we can to ensure that ACA members who do not have CACREP-accredited degrees will not be left behind.** ACA is working tirelessly for grandparenting provisions and holding meetings to address the need for flexibility with constituencies as new job options open for professional counselors. As examples:

- On Feb. 27, 2012, ACA submitted a letter to Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Jonathan Woodson and asked him to consider removing the stipulation that **only** counseling degrees from CACREP-accredited programs be recognized after this calendar year.
- In testimony to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Feb. 13, 2013, then-ACA President Brad Erford recommended that the VA **expand** the hiring eligibility criteria for Licensed Professional Counselors to include those who may have graduated from programs that were not CACREP accredited.
- In recommendations submitted to the White House Interagency Task Force on Military and Veterans Mental Health, ACA urged the Obama administration to direct TRICARE and the VA to **create alternative pathways** to hiring eligibility for LPCs who received their degrees from non-CACREP-accredited programs.
- ACA has held a number of discussions and meetings with CACREP and NBCC to secure their commitment to **promoting grandparenting** for those without CACREP degrees. These discussions will continue.

In closing, please know that **ACA values all of our members and fully recognizes the need to be an advocate for all who are struggling with workforce requirements.** We are as fully committed to members who graduated from non-CACREP-accredited programs as we are to members who graduated from CACREP-accredited programs.

Thank you for your continued support.

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ACA President, 2013–2014

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